

Rom. 15:1-3 (LD 40) "Pleasing Your Neighbour"

For the Children: Now that you are stuck at home for a while, you might be tempted to be unkind to your siblings or rude to your parents. This not God's way. He commands His children to love others, to be kind and patient with them, to seek their good. He even says we have to do this with enemies. Though you may feel at times as if other family members are your enemies, they are not. In a way, it is even worse to treat family members and others from your church in a way that harms them. The Lord Jesus was so concerned to do good for others, even enemies, that He even died on the cross for us. If we are thankful for that, we will want to do good to our neighbour – and especially our family and church-family. Questions: What is good in God's eyes? What are some good and up-building things can we do for others? What good has the Lord Jesus done for us?

Introduction:

First Point: Bearing Weaknesses

- 1) Help Rather Than Mere Toleration: Bearing weaknesses is not just a matter of tolerating those we consider weak, but helping and supporting them. This is the positive side of the 6th commandment – acting for the welfare of the neighbour's life. This commandment is closest to expressing the concern of the whole "2ⁿ Table of the Law." Q 107 outlines this positive side. It is not the same as the humanistic idea of being kind to others.
- 2) Strength and Weakness: Egalitarianism is concerned with equalizing things between those who "have" and those who do not. The apostle is more concerned about the pride and selfishness in those who see themselves as strong – those who, in their selfishness, do not consider the effect they have on others. For the 6th commandment implies that we are to protect our neighbour and avoid harming him, whether by thought, word or deed. We are even to avoid being a *party* to this in others and to avoid *risking* harm.

Second Point: Pleasing Others

- 1) Pleasing Others and Self: It is not wrong to do lawful things that we enjoy. The problem comes when we do so in a selfish or careless manner – when we don't act for God's glory or in consideration of what effect we are having on others. For our neighbour is made in God's image and the Lord has commanded that we protect and help our neighbour.
- 2) For Good and Edification: Our neighbour may want us to help or please him in a way that is not helpful from a Biblical point of view. The apostle therefore qualifies, that each of us is to please his neighbour for his *good*, to his *edification*. Q 91 defines what is good: it must be for God's glory, according to His Word and done in true faith.
- 3) Neighbours and Brethren: The 6th commandment is to be upheld with respect to our neighbour (Lev. 19:16, 18; Mt. 22:39; Rom. 15:2). But it is doubly important to do so with our brethren, for whom Christ died and in Whom we are one. We can edify our brethren in a way that we cannot do with unbelievers.

Third Point: As Christ Did

- 1) He Always Pleased God: V. 3 quotes Psalm. 69:9, which teaches that the Messiah would be consumed with zeal for God and His House. John. 2:17 applies this to Christ. He was filled with a "protective love" for God's honour and church. If we follow His example in this, it will lead us to help and protect others, especially His people, for the sake of His glory.
- 2) He Endured Reproaches: Christ was even willing to pursue this zeal to the cross, for God's glory and the life of His people. This is the ultimate in fulfilling the positive side of the 6th commandment. His work is not only an example of upholding this commandment; it provides the only basis on which we can keep His law and have our works accepted by God as "good and edifying." It also explains why we are to do good even to enemies – as Christ did for us (Rom. 5:6-10). See Ex. 23:4-5; Mt. 5:44-45; Rom. 12:20. True kindness is grounded in Christ's work, following His example, in thankfulness for His salvation, according to His Word.

Conclusion: