

“14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. 16 *Be* of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Ro 12:14-21 AV)

Last week I pointed out that the great Apostle continues in this passage to exhort us as members of Christ to enter fully into the life of the church, for our unity with Christ and with one another is an organic unity. We are not just a pile of bones, or a pile of members, but we are joined one to another. There are specific things that bring us into conflict with the organic union we have with Christ and with one another—things that every Christian is subject to and must put off as belonging to the old man. I spoke of five of the specific things last week: 1. Be not ashamed of persecution for it is the common lot of those who live godly; 2. Enter into the joys and sorrows of one another; 3. Be of the same mind; we spoke of creeds and confessions and constitutions that are means that we are to use to seek obedience in this matter; 4. Mind not high things. Seek to serve and not to advance yourself; 5. Do not take revenge upon yourself, for God has reserved that for Himself.

There is a wonderful exhortation that goes to the heart of the matter. It is found in verse 16 and shows what is a major hindrance to us doing what is commanded in this chapter: why we don't offer ourselves up body and soul to Christ. It is simply because we are wise in our own conceits. Paul says, “Stop doing that.”

My text is the last part of verse 16. “Be not wise in your own conceits.” The NKJ says “Do not be wise in your own opinion.” It is in the context of the exhortation to enter fully into the life of the people of God: rejoicing with those that rejoice; weeping with those that weep; being of the same mind; don't mind high things; be content with low things. Being wise in your own conceits will get in the way of that. I want to do three things this morning: 1. I want to speak on the doctrine, or teaching; 2. I want to look at three incidents in the life of Christ. 3. I want to make some applications.

- I. The doctrine. We are not to be wise in our own eyes. The word translated “conceits” in the New Testament is the reflexive pronoun. We not wise of yourselves. It refers to the inner man. Don't flatter yourself in your inner man; in the eye of your soul. In the Old Testament the word is “eyes.”
 - A. Your inner stronghold. The fortification of your own heart. This we have heavily protected from our youth. It is defended by emotion, by stubbornness, by philosophy, logic, and many other things, including scripture.
 - B. It is right that it be fortified, for we are to keep our hearts with all diligence, but we also must surrender our hearts up to the Lord to keep, or we will be defending the wrong things and causing harm.
 - C. For the heart is a well from whence many things come. Out of the heart proceed the issues of life as Jesus said, for it is not that which enters into the man that defiles the man, but that which comes out of the man.
 - D. The inner man or his conceits will color his actions: The ten unbelieving spies saw themselves as grasshoppers in the sight of the giants of the land; Joshua and Caleb were convinced that the

strong cities and the giants would be overcome by the power of God. It had to do with the inner eye, the eye of faith, or the eye of conceit.

1. Proverbs 3:7: Don't be wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.
2. Prov. 3:21: Don't let sound wisdom and discretion depart from thine eyes

E. Other places: a few selections of many:

1. Matt. 3:9 "Say not within yourselves, We have Abraham to our Father."
2. Matt 9:21: She said within herself, "If I can but touch the hem of his garment.." Jesus rebuked her because of this objective mysticism, as though there was magic in objects. Faith, though imperfect, is the key; not the garment.
3. Matt. 12:38: The husbandmen "reasoned among themselves...."

II. There are three incidents in the Life of Christ in Luke 18 that illustrate why we are NOT to be wise in our own conceits, for it is the way to destruction and misery, not eternal life and blessing. I will read them one at a time and comment.

A. Two Men Praying in the Temple: Luke 18:9-14

1. This was spoken against those who were wise in their own conceit: boasted in their righteousness, and despised others.
2. Pharisee:
 - a. Right Place: in the temple
 - b. Right Action: Praying
 - c. Right Prayer: Giving Thanks.
 - d. Wrong Spirit:
 - (1). prayed with himself, even though addressed to God.
 - (2). Trusted in God's gifts and not in God.
 - (3). Despised the publican.
3. Publican: He was not a bum. Not a ne'er do well. He was probably a man of substance and wealth. A tax collector, despised by the Jews. But he didn't despise the Pharisee. Smote upon his breast and confessed his sins; not his righteousnesses. Not wise in his own conceits. He knew that in himself he was a sinner. This is not what the Pharisee understood about himself; it was this that made him a Pharisee.

B. The Apostles: objecting to the babies: Luke 18:15-17.

1. Apostles wise in their own conceits. The babies cannot be worthy to enter the kingdom of God. They have no faith. They have no experience; they have no repentance. They did not see the organic nature of the church; we are members one of another. Solomon's idolatry; Rheboam; etc. Because of David God preserved Solomon's kingdom until after his death. For David's sake he saved two tribes for Solomon's son. What you do affects your family and your church, for there is an organic unity. Both sins and blessings accrue to others because of you.
2. Jesus said, we are passive in receiving the kingdom. Under Arminianism "receive" has become an active verb. You "receive" Jesus, you take Him, you seize Him with the strength of the flesh, when in reality, He gave Himself to us when we were yet sinners and without strength; this life from Him enables us to lay hold on him and grow up in him. We lay hold on Him through the gift of faith, not by human strength.
3. No one enters except as a babies: Ye must be born again. The new birth is not a process, for a person either has life or does not have life; but growth is a process and we are to grow up and mature in Christ. But we have nothing to do with our natural birth, and we have nothing to do with our second birth.

4. We do not remain infants in the kingdom of God, but we come in that way. Covenant union is also an organic union. What was only partly seen in Israel is even more manifest in the church, because of the greater work of the Holy Spirit and the glory of Christ our head.

C. The Rich Young Ruler: Luke 18:18-27

1. He came to Christ, but not as an infant, not naked, and not poor in spirit.
2. His fatal riches were not in this world's goods, but in his moral and spiritual goods. There is little difference between this rich man and the Pharisee. Both were wise in their own conceits.
3. "All these have I kept from my youth up." The smugness comes through. He just wanted to have all his bases covered. A young yuppie to knew how to identify a problem and solve it. He was self-possessed and full of himself.
4. This is shown by the sorrow he felt as he left. Too bad that Jesus disappointed him; he had such high hopes for Christ, but few people measured up to the standards that this young man had erected for himself.
5. The disciples were astonished, as right they might be: Who can be saved if the bar is so high that even this good man, the rich young ruler, could not get over it?
6. Only God can humble the heart and teach real meekness and bring poverty of spirit. It is impossible to men, but possible to God.

Application: The central work of the Spirit is precisely this: Repent every one of you for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit: Salvation is the work of God and it is through the preaching of the Cross.

When I behold the cross and Christ dying for me, then I realize how poor I am before God. O God, do you mean that I have nothing to bring? Yes, my son, you don't have anything. Oh God, do you mean that my Lord Jesus supplies me everything I need without any debt to me? Yes, my son, you are complete in Christ. O Lord Jesus, you mean I have no spiritual riches of mine own, that they are all supplied by Christ's sufferings and resurrection from the dead? Yes, my son, Jesus Christ my Son and Your Lord, has finished the work. He is my gift to you, through faith. Do not trust your own heart or your own conceits for I have made Him to be you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

Ga 6:14 But God forbid that I should glory [have any conceits], save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Dear Lord Jesus. We confess that by your grace we have received your gift of eternal life. Because of this, we are not our own, for we belong to Jesus Christ, and give ourselves up completely to you. All that we have is yours. We take up our cross, dear Lord, and rejecting our own conceits, we would bring every thought captive to Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glory forever. Amen.