

ROMANS: CHARTER OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
"Part XVIII: God's Way Of Overcoming Social Relationship Evils"
(Romans 12:9-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Societal abuse, something we all seek to avoid when it comes to choosing the right place to own a home, send our children to school or hold a job, seems to permeate our society:

(1) On a Montel Williams talk show aired November 20th, Montel himself was moved to tears as he interacted with children on the set who had been rescued from very abusive environments.

In a dramatic address into the television camera near the end of the show, Montel urged us listeners to **care** about the muffled cries we hear in one of four homes down any street in America, and to **do** so to the point of *reporting* what we know to be abuse!

I was struck by his announcement that 25% of homes in America regularly host such atrocities against vulnerable children!

(2) This issue afflicts even upscale social groups! ABC's televised "20/20 Downtown" production the evening of November 20th described how a lawyer was convicted of murdering his young, beautiful and *pregnant wife* so he could marry a judge with whom he'd had a long, intimate affair! The **judge** has been removed from the bench under allegations of having unjustly directed cases to her former lover! **So, leaders in the halls of justice where we would EXPECT law and order to excel can themselves be soiled with social abuse!**

(3) This hits home as well: (a) The Torrington, Connecticut's Susan B. Anthony Project sent out a story just this week in its November, 2000 newsletter about a battered woman, Marie. It reports how Marie called the organization after "a nightlong episode of physical and sexual battering that had been building for months and included verbal, emotional and financial abuse." Marie was helped to find a safe home to raise her children, to finish obtaining her bachelor's degree and relocate to a new home in another town with a full time job in social services. (b) Coupled with this story have been times when I myself have heard domestic disputes fomenting in homes while walking in my **own** neighborhood. Once I also called the police over hearing prolonged cries of a child in great distress.

How then can WE overcome what is AROUND us, and maybe even what has affected US by way of social abuse?

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: "Wherever we look, abusive relationships seem to be all too common in our society! HOW are we supposed to FUNCTION well in a social context in PRACTICAL terms?!"

- I. **When Paul wrote Romans, he addressed believers who, like we Americans, were witnessing a rapid, great rise in social evils:**
 - A. Due to the Rome's dominance in Paul's day, wealth flowed into the nation so fast that it upset established labor pursuits and led to a lust for luxury. Morals hence decayed, The Camb. Anc. Hist., Vol. X, Preface and p. 434; Bible Knowledge Commentary, N.T., p. 436.
 - B. Also, 50 years of domestic war produced an influx of fierce war veterans into society, and land was brutally seized from farmers to reward them. Social unrest and brutality increased, Ibid., p. 435.
 - C. Similarly, America's industrial and technical revolutions with their resulting enormous influx of wealth, not to mention the effects of several major wars, and all within just three generations of time has similarly unsettled our nation's social structure, Ibid., p. 434.
- II. **Thus, Paul laid the theological framework in Romans 1-11 to deal with the sin in man that spouted the social abuses we face:**
 - A. First, as we learned in our study of Romans 1-11, one must believe in Christ for salvation from sin to become a child of God and be indwelt by the behavior-controlling Holy Spirit, Romans 3:23; 5:1; 8:5.
 - B. Then, by depending upon the Spirit, the believer is to present his life as a selfless servant to God to achieve **His** purposes, 8:3-4; 12:1-2.
- III. **Next, Paul applied this teaching to address SOCIAL EVILS:**
 - A. First, the believer relates to other Christians in a **socially constructive** way that unites a true love with a family relationship model 12:9-16:
 1. He exercises an **unhypocritical** love to fellow believers, a love that is **righteous**, Romans 12:9, Bib. Know. Com. N.T., p. 489.
 - a. The words "Hate" and "cling" (NIV) ["Abhor" and "cleave" KJV] are **participles**, describing just what makes such a love **unhypocritical**, UBS Grk. N.T., p. 564.
 - b. Hence, the **unhypocritical** love that is to be exhibited is one that is **righteous**, cf. 1 John 5:3; John 14:21a.
 2. He expresses this **unhypocritical** and hence **righteous** love in the **Church** modeled after the **healthy FAMILY** structure, 12:10-16:
 - a. Paul's call to have "brotherly love" (v. 10) is from *philostorgoi*, meaning "**family** affection," Bible Know. Com., N.T., p. 489.

- b. As such, relationships *in the Church* are to be **patterned after** the **healthy family** structure of relationships, cf. 1 Tim. 5:1-2.
 - 3. Thus equipped, he relates in **socially constructive** ways as follows:
 - a. Like in a healthy **family**, he is to be fervent and diligent in attitude as being accountable to **God** for how he relates, 12:11.
 - b. As in a healthy **family**, he exercises hope, joy, patience and prayer in all interactions with others in the Church, 12:12.
 - c. He desires to share of his possessions with the needs of other believers in the church **family**, even being hospitable, 12:13.
 - d. He is kind even to believers hostile to him in God's **family**, 14.
 - e. He is sensitive to the emotions of others in God's **family**, 12:15.
 - f. He becomes humble, enabling him more readily to cooperate with fellow believers in the Church **family**, Romans 12:16a,b.
- B. Then, he relates to abusers in **general** in **socially constructive** ways as follows, Romans 12:17-21:
 - 1. He responds to abuse by not taking vengeance, but acting so even the unsaved sees him as being uplifting and proper, Romans 12:17.
 - a. Though the **instinctive social REACTION** towards social abuse is for one to take vengeance, the believer recognizes the role and sovereignty of **GOD** in the matter, Romans 12:17, 19.
 - b. Accordingly, armed with this trust in **God's sovereign justice**, the believer reacts to an abusive party with God's grace, neutralizing the evil party's venom with kindness, 12:20-21.
 - 2. In doing so, the believer exists as peaceably as is humanly **possible** with others in a godless society, Romans 12:17-18.
 - 3. [Note: Paul implies in Romans 12:18 that some cases do not **allow** for coexistence with abusive parties: the afflicted should withdraw contact with such for protection acc. to 2 Tim. 3:1-5a, with 5b.]

Lesson Application: *To handle social abuse, we must (1) believe in Christ for salvation from our OWN sin FIRST (Jn. 3:16) and (2) rely upon the Holy Spirit Who then indwells us as believers to be ABLE to live socially constructive lives, Rom. 8:3-4. (3) Then, we express (a) an unhypocritical, righteous love to others in the church based on a healthy family model, and do so out of trust and accountability to our just, sovereign God. (b) To society in general, we absorb and thus quench the venom of wrongdoers by graciousness and trust in God, but WITHDRAW being exposed to their influence to the degree that self preservation warrants it.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

On Thanksgiving Day, a local television station ran a story about the current captain of the University of New Haven football team. His actual name is "Bubba"!

Bubba, an African American who weighs 300 pounds, is a force that, on the field, has caused many a quarterback who has seen him come crashing through the offensive line to shudder in great fear.

However, off the field, he is an even more remarkable story.

Bubba was raised in a governmental housing project in Hartford that has recently been destroyed. It was a center for drug users and dealers. His mother, a drug addict, was unable to raise the family, and his father has long since left them on their own. On top of this, Bubba's sister was shot and killed by a criminal, leaving her young son and daughter with no parent to raise them.

Himself apparently a fairly new believer in Christ, Bubba took it upon himself to get a job, attend the University of New Haven and raise his nephew and niece as a family unit. He harbors no disrespect for his mother, no vengeance toward the man who killed his sister and no hatred for his estranged father, but said irresponsible living was not for him. He went out for football at college and became the captain of the team. His coach claims Bubba is also the team's **spiritual** leader: one moving scene showed him leading the team in prayer on the field!

Bubba will graduate this December with his bachelor's degree, has produced a 3.6 GPA average the last marking period, and will take a job helping troubled youths get out of the drug culture.

Though touched myself by this account, what encouraged me most was the response of the new men. After the story aired, several of the people in the newsroom remarked what an outstanding person Bubba was, and how they hoped all the best for his future! Bubba had made a great impression for His Lord BECAUSE of his response to ABUSIVE wrongs he OVERCAME!