

Harmony, Honor, and Peace; Romans 12:16-18

I. Portrayals

- A. The media portrays Christians as angry people who will not tolerate the beliefs and lifestyles of other people
- B. We are called bigots, racists, homophobes, and many other things
- C. That portrayal is based off of an idea that if we don't agree with it, then we must hate everyone who lives that way
- D. That simply is not the case — we are called on to live peaceably, to be honorable, and to live in harmony with one another

II. Harmony

- A. Romans 12:16 (ESV); Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.
- B. Clic as defined by the Urban Dictionary — “a close group, a network of friends who from the beginning are never part of any other group”
 - 1. They tend to view anyone else as outsiders and beneath them
 - 2. I think these are very prevalent in High School (*Mean Girls, The Breakfast Club*)
 - 3. But, we also find these kinds of groups in other settings, church (the people) being one of them
 - 4. This is an admonition against that behavior — God shows no partiality and neither should we
- C. The idea behind harmony is to be in agreement
 - 1. “There is nothing wrong with a godly argument.
 - 2. An argument is an attempt to get at the truth through the exchange of ideas, through criticism of false ideas and so on.
 - 3. It is one thing to have a good, healthy, positive argument; however, it is another thing to have an argumentative spirit that seems to thrive on disunity, discord and conflict.
 - 4. Going back to the previous wrong attitude of a contentious spirit, we are to remember that it is arrogance that produces an argumentative spirit.
 - 5. Pride is seen where we are not interested in anybody else's opinion, and where we just assume that anybody that disagrees with us must be wrong.
 - 6. What Paul is saying is that we need to be teachable.
 - 7. We are to have convictions, but those convictions have to be established on a sound basis and received with a humble heart and a humble attitude.”¹
- D. Arrogance and pride are also part of this verse, “do not be haughty,” “never be wise in your own sight”
- E. Haughty — arrogant, proud
 - 1. This blends right in with the idea of clics
 - 2. Those who are arrogant only associate with their clic — those they feel are on the same “level” as them
 - 3. We are admonished to let go of arrogance and associate with everyone, regardless of their social or economic status
- F. Conceited — the idea that we are always correct and those around us are always wrong
 - 1. We cannot be so proud as to think that other peoples' ideas should not even be considered
 - 2. We all have our ‘blind spots’ — events that have happened in our lives that make it really difficult to see the truth through our experience
 - 3. It is arrogant and conceited of us to brush off people and not give an honest hearing and consideration to their ideas

¹ R. C. Sproul, *The Gospel of God: An Exposition of Romans* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 205.

- G. James 2:1–4 (ESV); ¹ My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ² For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?
- H. James 2:9 (ESV); But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

III. Honorable

- A. Romans 12:17 (ESV); Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.
- B. “There is a sense in which even pagans applaud civic virtues of righteousness. Even the pagan will appreciate a man who keeps his word. The pagan will appreciate a man who does his business dealings with integrity. Pagans can appreciate righteousness, at least where they are the beneficiaries of that righteousness.” ²
 - 1. This may have been true in years past — but in the recent past this has proven false
 - 2. Some of the leaders of our society — in our own government, those who have the public ear — have openly mocked Christianity and widely criticized people who are behaving in a christian manner
 - a) Vice President Mike Pence’s wife recently returned to teaching at a school where she previously taught for 12 years
 - b) This school believes in Christian values and plainly states expected Christian behaviors on the application
 - (1) ‘According to a job application... applicants must initial a passage promising to “live a personal life of moral purity”.’¹
 - (2) “It lists homosexuality along with premarital sex, polygamy, sexual harassment and sex abuse, among other factors, as examples of moral misconduct.”³
- C. It seems that no matter what we do in our society today, we will be persecuted
- D. But that should not stop us from acting honorably
- E. “Of moral quality, good, noble, praiseworthy, contributing to salvation” ⁴
- F. We find our honor in moral, Godly behavior

IV. Peace

- A. Romans 12:18 (ESV); If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.
- B. Living at peace with all seems like it is impossible
- C. 2 Corinthians 11:23–26 (ESV); ²³ Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death. ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;
- D. Paul said and did many things that offended people
- E. Are we to forego truth for the sake of peace?

² Ibid, 206.

³ “Vice-President's Wife Karen Pence to Teach at Anti-LGBT School.” BBC News, BBC, 16 Jan. 2019, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46898143.

⁴ William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 504.

1. "But, while allowing theoretical situations where peace could not honorably be maintained, we should strictly heed the principle of avoiding discord.
 2. Christ taught that people should give the cloak also, go the second mile, turn the other cheek, and avoid conflict by any honorable means whatsoever.
 3. What a shameful contrast is the conduct of some persons, allegedly Christian, who are ever spoiling for strife, and who, far from avoiding it, actually seek and enjoy all kinds of confrontations that lead to bitterness and contention."⁵
- F. We should live out our Christian lives avoiding conflict where we can
1. In today's society that seems almost as impossible as it was for Paul in the 1st century
 2. But Paul is the one who wrote this to the church in Rome
 3. "So far as it depends on you" — we are the ones who remain peaceable in the face of conflict
 4. Someone else may be contentious, full of conflict — but that is not the Christian!
 5. 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV); but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,
- V. Freedom
- A. John 8:31–32 (ESV);³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples,³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
 - B. The truth has set us free — free from arrogance (harmony), free from sinful behavior (honor), and free from strife (peace)

⁵ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on Romans 12:17". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/romans-12.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.