

Building Others Up

Romans 14:19

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

The verse we are studying today is Romans 14:19, "Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."

There are two ways to train your body and I'll outline one of them. The brain sends a message to the left hand and sends a message to the right hand. It says to the right hand, "Get ready to receive that sheet of paper that the left hand is going to give you." So the right hand gets ready and the brain sends the message to the left hand, "Lift the sheet of paper and give it to the right hand", then the left hand gets the sheet of paper but then on its way over to the right hand, it drops it. And the brain sees that the left hand has to be disciplined and taught not to do that again. So it sends a message to the right hand and the right hand says, "You stupid, clumsy left hand, can't you even hold a sheet of paper?" Then it starts to hit the left hand and then it gets the hammer and it hits the left hand and it hits the knuckles and the fingers until it's a bleeding, flattened, pulp of flesh.

Then the brain says, "Right hand, get ready to receive that Bible that the left hand is going to give you." The right hand looks at the left hand, it's a bleeding, flattened, pulp of flesh and it watches the left hand trying to get a grip on the Bible. Then it realizes that every blow of the hammer was a blow against itself. Every time it struck the left hand to punish it and to train it and to discipline it, it really incapacitated the left hand. Every time it incapacitated the left hand, it incapacitated itself because there was no Bible for it to receive.

We have a tendency to say, "Well, I mean our bodies don't behave that way. We know that. We're not that stupid. We know that if we use one limb to punish and discipline another limb until it is incapacitated, we know we're incapacitating ourselves. We're incapacitating the limb that does the punishing. We're incapacitating the body itself. We don't behave like that. We know that even from a purely selfish viewpoint. We know that if we destroy part of our own body, we're destroying ourselves. So even if we have no unselfishness in us, even if we're totally selfish, we know from a purely selfish point of view, that's a stupid thing to do. And that's of course what the Bible says; you might want to look at it.

Ephesians 5:29, "For no man ever hates his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church." No man ever hates his own flesh, he nourishes it and cherishes it. Of course, especially so if you're acting out of love because love is always wanting the best for the other person or the other being. So if you act out of love even for your own body, you want the best for that left hand. You don't want the worst for it; you want the best for it. For that unselfish reason, you'll want to do everything to nourish it and cherish it.

Of course, the same truth applies to the people who are part of you -- the people who are part of you just as your limbs are part of you, so you are close to many loved ones who are part of you and the same truth applies to them. That's what it says in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." That's it. Love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Love your wife as if it's really yourself you are loving.

There it is in Ephesians 5:28, "Even so, husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife, loves himself." Then it says, "For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it." So, you wouldn't think of bashing your limbs to bits to discipline them and make them behave better and so of course, you wouldn't think of doing that to your wife, either, or would you?

"Can't you even get air in the tires? Can't you?" "Don't bother reversing it into the garage, it'll cost us too much money, I'll reverse it in myself." "Your soufflés aren't so good, are they? Maybe if we just take them out for dinner." "Oh my mother she was a housekeeper." Yet we say, "Yeah well, I mean you have to tell them. They're not going to change if you don't tell them." But it's interesting, have you noticed that they do the things better? Now, have you? Have you noticed that they do those things better, or have you noticed that they now retreated from those things and they don't even try them? Have you noticed that in a strange way, you're like the right hand? You end up with more tasks yourself because you've actually incapacitated them. You haven't helped them to do it better; you've pretty effectively stopped them doing it. Or you ladies, you wives, or you roommates or you friends or you dads or you moms or you sons or you daughters, are you killing people softly? "I've never lived with anybody just as careless as you." "Can't you ever pick up after you?" "Do you know that a lot of people think this about you?" "For years, I've expected you to change but I've given up, you're never changing now. You're just the same as you always were. You haven't improved one bit since we've been roommates, not one day." "Well, I have to tell it like it is, you know, that's it."

But really, seriously, do you find it stimulates them and encourages them? Do you? Have you found that they're encouraged to do better and to improve and to change after you've said those things to them? Well, put it this way, what's your reaction when somebody says that to you? What's your reaction when somebody says to you, "You're never going to change?" Do you not agree that it becomes a massive obstacle that you have to somehow get over by putting it out of your mind in order to get up any kind of vigor or energy to do anything? Then, is this love? Oh no, no it's not love. It isn't if you look at I Corinthians 13:6, "It (love) does not rejoice at wrong but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love wants the best for the other person. "Well, that's what I want for them. I want them to improve, that's why I tell them exactly like it is. I want them to improve, but it doesn't come home to them like that. It doesn't come home to them as love and encouragement. Well, that's their problem. When I release my mouth, it's love. If it gets to them and it's hatred, it's their problem." But the amazing law of love is that if the other person doesn't receive it as love, it isn't love. It doesn't matter how it left you when it gets to them, that's what counts.

Does it come to them as love? Does it come to them as love that wants to help them and up build them and encourage them? Or does it come to them as a hammer that beats them into a fleshy pulp that can do nothing? Well, why do we do it? Oh, because of love, because of love -- self-love. We do it because of self-love. That's why we batter them to bits. We love ourselves so much that we end up hating them and we love ourselves so much that the only way we can build up our own self-righteousness is by bashing theirs down and destroying theirs.

The problem is that we cannot bash enough heads. We cannot destroy enough self-esteems. We cannot incapacitate enough people to finally establish our own self-righteousness satisfactorily. So it is an exercise in futility, because every time we do it, we're not only failing to establish our own self-righteousness but every one of those that we destroy, every roommate, every wife, every son, every daughter, every husband, every wife that we incapacitate, we affect our own futures adversely,

because they are part of us. When we incapacitate them and when we unfit them for active, productive life, we unfit ourselves. We are hammering to death our own left hand and our own right hand will suffer sooner or later, because of it.

It's hatred that's what it is. We smooth it over but it is hatred. It is love of self and hatred of others. Such hatred works disaster and tragedy in the domestic scene. It works tragedy in school. It works tragedies in work. It works tragedies among friends and relatives. It works blasphemous disaster in the body of Christ. I'll show you it in Ephesians 5:29-30, "For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body." We are together members of his body. You are a foot. I am an arm. You're a leg. She's an eye. He's an ear. He's an ankle. We are members of his body. "Well, I mean you have to tell them where they're wrong, don't you? You have to tell the pastor where he is wrong and you have to tell the music director where she is wrong. You have to tell the elders where they're wrong. You have to keep them on their toes, that's the way it goes. You just tell them. A little criticism keeps them sharp and just to make absolutely sure that we totally incapacitate them for any action, we won't tell them. We'll tell everybody else, and that way, they stand no chance of improving. That way we make sure that we just destroyed them." It's madness. I mean it's madness.

It's a blasphemous disaster, loved ones. Where we do it is in Christ's body. It's the greatest achievement of hatred to destroy while it professes to strengthen, to build yourself up while you actually succeed in eliminating somebody else completely. Why do we do this kind of thing? Oh because we don't exercise faith. Every time we try to live in this life by our own strength, we end up in this kind of blind alley, in this kind of no-win situation. We just don't exercise faith.

What do I mean? Well, a surgeon can only really cut away bad stuff, that's about all he can do. In a few instances in transplants, he can transplant some good stuff from somebody else but most of a surgeon's time is spent cutting away bad stuff. He cuts away the bad stuff and the body he knows has incredible powers of renewal and healing and so he hopes that by cutting away the bad stuff, he'll let the renewing life power begin to recreate new cells, and that's why one of those most ancient medics said, "I sow up the wound but God makes the skin join together." Because the surgeon knows that he can do very little to actually cure or to heal. He actually just cuts away the bad stuff and he depends on the life-giving power of the body to cure itself.

It's exactly the situation with your wife. It's exactly the situation with your colleague at work. It's exactly the situation with your roommate. The cure is not cutting away the bad stuff. Indeed, cutting away the bad stuff is such a precise operation in regard to the human personality, that God doesn't even trust us human beings with it. It requires such laser-like precision in cutting away that he has appointed one special person to do it and that one special person is part of the Godhead and he is called the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "When John, when Mary, when Rich, when Ernest, when Gentry has come to the world, they will convict the world of sin." No, no. We cannot do it. We have not the precision. We have not the fine discriminating power to do it, only the Holy Spirit does. Jesus said when the Holy Spirit comes he will convict the world of sin. The Holy Spirit will convict your wife of sin. The Holy Spirit will convict your colleague at work of sin. The Holy Spirit will convict your roommate of sin. That is taken care of, you can't do anything but smash and thump and destroy and kill. Only the Holy Spirit can cut away the bad stuff and he will do that faithfully.

The only thing that you and I can do is build up the life, that's it. The only thing that you and I can do is build up the life, build up the life power. Why is your husband so coarse that he can't see the things that you want him to see? Because of a lack of life, that's it. He doesn't hate you.

He isn't out to destroy you. He can't see. You say, "Oh, he can see, he can see it." Yeah, well he hasn't the life to enter into what he sees. Your roommate isn't stupid. She wants most of the same things as you want but the life isn't there to rise into it. Do they like being called careless all their lives? No, they don't. Do they like being told that they don't care about you? No, they don't. Do they like being told that they're hopeless and they're failures? No, they don't. They don't want to be that. They don't want to be those things. They're like you and me. They want right things. They want good things but they haven't the life. They need the life.

How do they get the life? Oh well, they actually already have it. If you look at Ephesians 2:4-6, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." That's them. That's all of us. Christ died for all of us. All of us died, all of us have been raised, we have the life. What then do they need? They need the faith to realize that. It will be "unto them according to their faith." [Romans 12:3] How do they get the faith? Not by you preaching at them. Not even by preaching the Bible to them. Not even by giving them books. But faith comes from them sensing the heart of God, that's what gives you faith.

I can tell you about a certain person, "Oh he's reliable", but you won't have faith in him until you find him reliable yourself, until you get to know his heart. Faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of God, not this written word of God but the "rhema", the word of God. God speaking to a person's heart, "I am your dear Father. I can lift you up. I can give you power to do these things. I can give you strength and life to change and to improve", that's the kind of word that they need. That's the kind of faith that they need.

What can you do for them? You can build that faith up in their hearts. How? First, reject from now on any critical thoughts about them that come into your mind. First do that, just start right there. Reject from this moment on any critical thought that comes into your mind about your wife, about your husband, about your roommate, about your son, about your daughter, about your colleague at work, about your boss, about the person who works for you. Start right there. Reject from now on, any critical thought. Any negative thought that comes into your mind. Why? Because that is death and a poisoned arrow that goes right into their heart. First, reject that.

Second, stop any longer saying anything negative or critical to them. Stop it, stop it. It does nothing. You may as well pick up a hammer and batter them to death, that's all you're doing. You're just rendering them a bleeding, flattened, flesh pulp, that's it. Cease to say any more critical words or negative words to them.

Thirdly, take this dear Book and turn to a verse like Phillipians 4:13, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Memorize that verse, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Then get down on your knees at night and say, "Father, will you put that verse into my wife's heart and spirit so that she knows that she can do all things in you who strengthen her. Lord, will you put that into her heart and her spirit, even while she is sleeping tonight?" Get down on your knees and pray for your roommate, "Lord, will you put this verse into my dear roommate's heart? Will you make it part of my roommate so that he'll find a Spirit rising up within him, the Spirit of Jesus that says, 'I can do all things in him who strengthens me.'?" Loved ones, as you begin to pray that prayer, it doesn't matter how inexperienced you are in praying, or how new you are to Christianity God, your dear creator, will take your love and your simple faith and he will begin to build life into your roommate. That person will begin to get strength and health. Then they'll begin to be

changing themselves and changing their actions and changing their behaviour. You'll begin to find not a left hand that is beaten to a pulp and trying to hold the Bible up, but you'll find a strong left hand that picks up the Bible and gives it to you. Your own life will be stronger and more powerful because of the strong roommate, the strong wife, the strong daughter, the strong son, the strong colleague that you have beside you.

Why? Let us pursue what leads to peace and what leads to mutual up building, that's it. That's why we're here. We're not here to destroy each other. We're here to build each other up and there are so many verses in this dear book. We are more than conquerors. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." [Romans 8:37] Memorize any of these verses. Romans 8:32, Ephesians 3:16, any of those verses and begin to pray God to put them into your loved one and you will be amazed at the change that begins to be worked.

Loved ones, will you see it? Will you see what we're doing to each other and let's stop doing it? Let's stop doing it right now. So I ask you now, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." Will you think during these next few quiet moments of a person close to you that you have also beaten to a bleeding pulp and will you now commit yourself before Jesus never to think another critical thought about them? Will you never speak another critical negative word to them and then will you pray that prayer for them?

Lord, will you put that promise and that verse into their hearts that they can do all things through him that strengthens them, and Lord will you give them that sense inside their spirits and put that into their spirits so that that life begins to rise up within them. In a matter of days, you'll see a beautiful life beginning to live beside you. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we want to do that right now. Lord we want to reject any negative, critical thought that comes into our mind from this day forward about our wife or our husband, about our son or daughter, about our colleagues at work, our friends at school, about our relatives. Lord, we now commit ourselves to rejecting any poisonous, destructive, negative thought that Satan sends into our minds about these dear people.

Secondly Lord, we commit ourselves never to utter another negative, critical word, either about them or to them from this day forward. We commit ourselves to speaking only whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report. We now reject any further killing them softly.

Oh Lord, forgive us. We reject from this day forward any critical negative word. Then thirdly, our Father, we would mention their names in the quietness before you and we would ask you to put in their hearts, the Spirit and life of that verse, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

Lord, we pray now for them that you will put that Spirit into their spirits. You will put that life into their hearts so that they begin to sense the reality of it: that they have been raised up and they have been made to sit with you in the heavenly places and they can do all things in you that strengthen them.

Lord, we ask you to put that in their heart and their spirit, this very moment. Now, our Father, we walk out of this auditorium to a new life, to a life of positive upbuilding love where we will pursue peace and mutual upbuilding of one another and no longer destroy those that belong to us and therefore ourselves. We commit ourselves to you for this purpose in Jesus' name.

The grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and evermore. Amen.