

Jesus Did This To Save Me

Romans 12:14-21
(black Bible page 950; Children's Bible page 1419)

Our series continues: *Healthy: Life & Church in Romans 12-16*

Discussing healthy church: why are there so many denominations?

- One reason is theological differences. For instance, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount versus forgiveness through the cross. Which should be given priority?

How Christians respond to our passage (Romans 12:14-21) in different ways:

- "This is what it means to be a Christian, to do these things." vs. "Hmm... That sounds like moralism and works-righteousness! To be a Christian is to believe in the cross."

Let's take a lengthy side trip on three levels of ethics:

- Level 1: "Enlightened self-interest." *"Hey, let's make a deal to not hit each other over the head, because we'll both be better off."*
- Level 2: Justice. *"It's wrong, it's unjust, to hit someone over the head. And if you do, justice will be served and you will be punished."*
- Level 3: Beyond Justice. *"You hit me over the head, and you deserve to be punished. But I forgive you."*

You can only find the third level in religion, Dr. Kreeft says! Not secular philosophy.

- Why? Because any command to go *beyond* justice seems to destroy the concept of justice. Think about telling a person that they *must* forgive.

Back to our passage – note the appeals to a Level 3 ethic:

- "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" (12:14)
 - o *"But they've mistreated me, and justice demands that they..."* But Jesus calls us beyond justice.

Pushback: "But what about the gospel, the cross, and forgiveness?"

- The amazing cross of Christ: Level 2 and Level 3 ethics are both satisfied!
- Level 2. Justice: death is the punishment for sins. See Romans 1:32, 3:25-26, 5:17, 6:10.
- Level 3. Beyond justice: grace, forgiveness! See Romans 3:24, 5:8-11, 5:18-19.
- It's not just any religion that can do this. You need a divine payment for sin, an atonement.

Let's read our verses again. Jesus (and Paul) didn't merely command us to do these things, *He did them Himself*. Moreover, *He did them for our salvation*.

- Example: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink..." (12:20) This is what Jesus did *for me*, giving me food and drink. And even His own body and blood as my food and drink! (The atonement, see 1 Cor. 11:23-26.)

Please return next week for part two! We will see how Level 2 and Level 3 ethics apply to the government and the church, and why both organizations are indispensable for society.