

Responsibility to Others

- I. This study addresses our duties according to the second table of the Law (Ten Commandments).
 - A. There is general instruction for dealings with all men.
 - B. There is particular instruction for brethren in the church.
- II. Introductory thoughts.
 - A. No man is an island.
 - B. Love of self must yield to love of others.
 - C. There is a positive manner of covering sin.
 - D. There is a negative manner of covering sin.
 - E. There is a need for positive encouragement of others.
 - F. There is a need for negative discouragement of others.
 - G. There is a need for forbearance.
 - H. There is a need for rebuke.
 - I. There is a need for exposure of error.
 - J. There is a need for justice.
 - K. There is a need for accommodating weakness.
 - L. There is a need for not enabling weakness or folly.
 - M. There is a need for distinguishing between weakness and wickedness.
 - N. There is a need for protecting or relieving the weak or afflicted.
 - N. There is a need for empowering the weak or afflicted.
 - O. We may be accountable for not contributing to another's wealth (well-being).
 - P. We will be accountable for contributing to another's destruction.
 - Q. Collusion with sinners is generally not justifiable.
 - R. Opportunity regulates much of our good doings for others.
 - S. There is a need to be willing to be corrected by others.
 - T. There is a need for humility.
 - U. There is a need for empathy.
 - V. There is a need for selectiveness in companions.
 - W. There is a need for preserving another's rightful property and good reputation.
 - X. There is a need for impartiality in justice.
 - Y. Loving confrontation is better than hateful alternatives.
 - Z. God determines what is "good" for one's neighbour.
- III. There are in Scripture 157 occurrences in 144 verses of forms of "neighbour."
 - A. neighbour: One who lives near or next to another; one who occupies a near or adjoining house, one of a number of persons living close to each other, esp. in the same street or village. b. In echoes of Biblical passages (as Luke x. 27) inculcating men's duties towards each other, or in similar contexts. Hence sometimes taken in a widely extended sense.
 - B. The 144 verses reference all manner of dealings with others.
 - C. Paul sums them all up in **ROM 13:9-10**.
 - 1. The O.T. Law's great law of human interaction was "...thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (**LEV 19:18 c/w MAT 22:39**).
 - 2. Jesus taught a higher law of human interaction: loving neighbour *more* than self. **1JO 3:16; JOH 15:13**.
 - D. It was essentially an inordinate love of self that opened the door for sin's entrance in Eden. **GEN 3:6**.

- IV. Cain, by action and philosophy, rejected the holy principle of love of neighbour. **GEN 4:6-9.**
- A. keeper: One who has charge, care, or oversight of any person or thing; a guardian, warden, custodian.
 1. Cain, as firstborn, had pre-eminence and rule.
 2. Rule over others demands care of them. **2SAM 23:3; NEH 5:15.**
 - B. **GEN 2:18-24** implied value in human companionship and relationship that should be kept.
 1. Woman was made *for* the man (c/w **1CO 11:9**), her interest to not only be herself.
 2. Adam was to cleave to Eve: he had a vested interest in her well-being. c/w **EPH 5:28-29.**
 3. cleave: To stick fast or adhere... 4. To adhere or cling to (a person, party, principle, practice, etc.); to remain attached, devoted, or faithful to.
 4. Such mutual care was the message of love of another from the beginning. **1JO 2:7; 3:11-12.**
 5. Godly interaction with others (love of neighbour) allows humans to enjoy a slice of pre-Fall purity.
 - C. Doing good to others is especially appropriate among the faithful. **GAL 6:9-10.**
 - D. "A charitable concern for our brethren, as their keepers, is a great duty, which is strictly required of us, but is generally neglected by us. Those who are unconcerned in the affairs of their brethren, and take no care, when they have opportunity, to prevent their hurt in their bodies, goods, or good name, especially in their souls, do, in effect, speak Cain's language." (Matthew Henry)
 1. We are commanded to be concerned about the wealth of others. **PHIL 2:4; 1CO 10:24.**
 2. wealth: Spiritual well-being. Often in the testamentary phrase *for the wealth of (one's) soul*. *Obs.*
 3. The default desire should be the good edification (building up) of others. **ROM 15:1-2.**
 - a. This is the proper goal of authority. **2CO 10:8.**
 - b. This is the necessary restraint of one's liberties. **ROM 14:19-23.**
- V. Love of others may not always be received as such by them. **PSA 109:4-5.**
- A. Paul's interaction with Corinth was born of love but not reciprocated in love. **2CO 2:4 c/w 2CO 12:15.**
 - B. Children may not perceive it as a loving act when parents deny them what would be bad for them.
 - C. Juvenile delinquents may not perceive it as love when society puts a stop to their wicked ways but many have been saved from doing ill to others and from self-destruction by justice's measures.
 - D. The easy thing for someone who is responsible to limit the wayward is to ignore the wayward's destructive path and do nothing.
 1. This is commonly born of self-love rather than genuine love of the other. One values more the benefit to self that may be lost through correcting the other.
 2. True charity "...seeketh not her own..." (**1CO 13:5**).
 3. Refusal to issue needed rebuke is hatred of another. **LEV 19:17.**
 4. Refusal to warn another against the danger of sin brings wrath upon oneself. **EZE 3:17-18; HEB 13:17 c/w 1TH 5:14.**
 - E. **PSA 141:5** is the attitude of the godly towards loving correction by others.
 1. "We owe a great deal to the care of fellow-believers. It may take more love to smite than to soothe. The breaking of the box of precious ointment over our heads may

cause a momentary shock; but we must not refuse it, since the contents are so salutary; and we can return their well-meant kindness by praying for the righteous when their calamities are multiplied...” (F. B. Meyer on Psalm 141:5)

2. The Psalmist blessed the God Who afflicted him. **PSA 119:67, 71, 75.**
- F. **(PRO 27:5-6)** Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.
- G. **(PRO 28:23)** He that rebuketh a man afterwards shall find more favour than he that flattereth with the tongue.
- H. **(PRO 6:23)** For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

VI. Actionless love is vain and no demonstration of faith. **1JO 3:17-18 c/w JAM 2:14-18.**

VII. The great law of “love thy neighbour as thyself” (**ROM 13:9**) has qualifications.

- A. What if a wealthy stockman with 1000 cattle doesn’t even care if one of them gets stolen, and so doesn’t care about his poor neighbour whose only cow was stolen, or maybe he stole it?
- B. What if a parent doesn’t care about their own morality, diet or health and so corrupts his/her child similarly?
- C. What if someone is a self-destructive psychotic who routinely maims himself? Perhaps he struggles with “Body Integrity Identity Disorder” and is convinced that amputation of healthy body parts is necessary for personal fullness. Should he maim his neighbour or child or encourage such lunacy in anyone?
 1. Paul said, “For no man ever yet hated his own flesh...” (**EPH 5:29**).
 2. Underlying self-mutilation is not a genuine hating of one’s own flesh but rather an issue with lust, pride (narcissism: someone wants attention), deception, or fear, etc.
 3. Conversely, someone may be obsessed about having the “perfect” body and impose their expectations on others.
- D. Love of neighbour is subject to the love of God (**MAT 22:36-39**) Whose law qualifies love of neighbour by “...Love worketh no ill to his neighbour...” (**ROM 13:9-10**).
 1. ill: Evil, in the widest sense; opposite of good.
 2. Working no ill to one’s neighbour forbids *devising ill* against others. **MIC 2:1**.
 3. Working no ill to one’s neighbour also forbids *evil surmisings* (framing of conjectures; suspicion, esp. of evil). **1TI 6:4**.
 4. Working no ill to one’s neighbour also forbids withholding good when it is due. **PRO 3:27-29**.
 5. We are to especially reject the concept of “let us do evil that good may come” (**ROM 3:8**) whereby the ends justify the means and working ill is called “good.”
 - a. By such reasoning, one could “do good” for his neighbour by bumping off his annoying spouse for him/her.
 - b. This concept has been the basis of much religious persecution done for “the greater glory of God.” c/w **JOH 16:2**.
 - c. Josef Stalin’s apologist, reporter Walter Duranty of the New York Times, when Stalin’s atrocities were brought to light, loved to quip, “You can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.” The “eggs” were millions of men, women and children.
 - d. How many Christians use idolatry to teach their children about God Who forbids idolatry (e.g. Christmas)?

- VIII. We are to seek our neighbour's good (**ROM 15:2**), eschewing his destruction, and are likely to be held accountable if we contribute to his destruction by such things as:
- A. deliberate corruption. **PRO 28:10.**
 - B. bad leadership or example. **EXO 32:25; GAL 2:11-12.**
 - C. not warning about or securing against obvious danger. **EXO 21:28-36; DEU 22:8.**
 - D. stealing or damaging his property (goods, life, real estate, etc.). **EXO 20:15.**
 - E. bearing false witness against him. **EXO 20:16; PRO 24:28-29.**
 - F. not warning about or reproving sin. **LEV 19:17; PRO 24:11-12.**
 - G. enabling his self-destruction (humoring his bad habits or desires, spoiling him, etc). **PRO 29:5; 28:4; ROM 1:32; PRO 29:15.**
 - H. smearing his reputation. **PSA 101:5.**
 - I. not reporting his wickedness to legitimate authority when appropriate. **DEU 13:8.**
 - J. enticing him to do evil. **PRO 28:10.**
 - K. colluding with him in an evil enterprise. **EXO 23:1-2; PRO 11:21.**
 - L. flattery. **PRO 26:28; DAN 11:34.**
 - M. not supporting him when he is dependent upon you. **1TI 5:8; JAM 1:27.**
 - N. not relieving him when in genuine need. **LUK 10:29-37; JAM 2:15-17.**
 - O. exploiting him for personal advantage. **JER 22:13.**
 - P. deceiving or defrauding him for personal advantage. **LEV 19:13; JAM 5:4.**
 - Q. not showing mercy when appropriate. **JAM 2:13; MAT 6:15.**
 - R. not pleading the cause of the voiceless oppressed. **PRO 31:8-9; PSA 82:3-4.**
 - S. straining at his every gnat and speck without regard to human infirmity. **ISA 29:20-21.**
 - T. loading him with false burdens. **MAT 23:4; ACT 15:10.**
 - U. entrapping him with evil intent. **NEH 6:13; MAR 12:13.**
 - V. not praying for him. **1TI 2:1-4; MAT 5:44.**
 - W. not considering his weak conscience. **1CO 8:10-12.**
 - X. denying his inherent human rights (racialism, abortion, etc.). **JAM 2:8-9.**
 - Y. never praising his well-doing (esp. a child). **1PE 2:14.**
 - Z. withholding his due (reward, honour, tribute, respect, fear). **ROM 13:7.**
- IX. A major area of properly loving one's neighbour is how one deals with his faults.
- A. This brings up the following factors:
 - 1. Is it a private or public fault against God alone?
 - 2. Is it a private or public fault against you?
 - 3. Is it a private or public fault against others?
 - 4. Is it something that can reasonably be overlooked?
 - 5. Is it something of a criminal nature?
 - 6. Is it something wicked done to the defenseless (minor, infirmed, etc.)?
 - B. The general rule is that when a fault can be "covered" by *private* rebuke which evokes repentance, that is the first recourse. The sphere of knowledge of another's fault should be kept as small as possible.

LEV 19:17; PRO 25:9-10; MAT 18:15 c/w LUK 17:3; JAM 5:19-20; 1JO 5:16-18.

 - 1. This is charity at work. **1PE 4:8.**
 - 2. Carrying a neighbor's fault to others rather than confronting him is not covering anything but rather exposing him, which is NOT charity.

PRO 17:9 c/w ROM 13:10.
 - 3. The goal is to save your neighbor from damage from God Himself and also save him from public infamy where possible, sparing him from open shame.
 - 4. Not every fault can be thus covered. The following distinguishes between private

faults that only you know about and faults which are public knowledge.

- a. A public sin *against God Himself* (e.g. blasphemy, idolatry) is already exposed and must be appropriately dealt with by church judgment, delivering such unto Satan for buffeting. c/w **1TI 1:19-20**.
 - (1) By contrast, a private sin against God may be dealt with by personal rebuke. Examples: You hear a brother blaspheme God, or find out that he is dabbling in occultism, astrology or pretending to “honor” God with elements of idolatry.
 - (2) In such cases, your personal rebuke may humble him to repent and arrest his sinful trend, thus preventing his certain judgment from God Whose Spirit he is quenching and also preventing his exposure to others. It also puts him on notice that his actions are known by at least one who could be a potential witness against him in the court of the saints should he not repent.
 - (3) To broadcast a brother’s private sin against God to others does nothing to save him, unnecessarily poisons others’ minds about him, and opens you up to a charge of being a *talebearer* or *backbiter*. **LEV 19:16; ROM 1:29-32**.
 - i. talebearer: One who officiously carries reports of private matters to gratify malice or idle curiosity.
 - ii. backbite: To detract from the character of, to slander, traduce, speak ill of: a person absent.
 - iii. Such broadcasters fuel strife and have a hatred problem that is covered by deceit. **PRO 26:20-26; 10:12**.
 - iv. Such working of ill towards a neighbor works ill also to others who are drawn into it, and is likely to work ill to oneself by inviting God’s judgment.
 - v. Talebearing is carrying reports of *private* matters, NOT *public* matters as in **1CO 1:11; 5:1; 11:18; 2TI 2:17-18**.
- b. A public sin against God’s law for *personal conduct* (e.g. drunkenness, public nakedness) is already exposed and must be appropriately dealt with by church judgment. **GAL 5:19-21**.
 - (1) If the drunkenness was only a private matter known to you, the above-mentioned rules apply. It has injured nobody else and nobody else therefore needs to be involved.
 - (2) Public nakedness is publicly known and therefore cannot be swept under the carpet by private rebuke that wards off judgment.
- c. A public sin against God’s law for *human relations* (e.g. stealing, adultery, fornication) is already exposed and must be appropriately dealt with by church judgment (**1CO 5:1-5**) and may also require involving civil authority.
 - (1) If private, a fault against another may be handled by private confrontation where the fault is *repairable* (e.g. a stolen item returned, or an act of adultery forgiven by the offended spouse).
 - (2) A private sin against another may have to be first exposed to civil authority for investigation and the judicial process BEFORE the church separates company from such (e.g. murder, child molestation).
 - i. Such violations of humanity are not repairable and cannot be

redeemed with money, in keeping with the order of
NUM 35:31.

ii. Included in this category would be the *plot* to do such evil, as was the case in **ACT 23:15-22.**

- (3) In such cases, the victim may have no voice other than yours as a witness, and **PRO 31:8-9; ECC 4:1** would apply. Furthermore, saying or doing nothing may facilitate a repetition of the crime, which would be a *working of ill* (**ROM 13:10**) to *living* neighbors.
- (4) God has a particular regard to defenseless victims and especially so in the case of children. **ZEC 7:9-10; LUK 17:1-2.**
- (5) In such cases, "...neither shalt thou conceal him" (**DEU 13:8**) applies. Covering sin does NOT justify ignoring the victim as did the priest and Levite (**LUK 10:30-32**), nor not exposing the violator for an irreparable damage done to a voiceless victim. David erred greatly when he did not bring his son Amnon to justice for raping his sister, and this provoked a vengeful response from Absalom. **2SAM 13:14, 21, 28.**

d. Not every "fault" against a brother/neighbor is a sin against God's law for human relations.

- (1) The "fault" may be a matter of *perception*: an "injury" as perceived by someone who is "offended" but not by the "offender." Examples: someone's feelings got hurt, someone assumes that another's words or actions are wrong or sinful based upon an incorrect definition of the perceived wrong, etc.
- (2) The order for such matters in the church is a good model in general: confront the "offender" privately first. **MAT 18:15-17.**
- (3) Such are the judgments of "...smallest matters...that pertain to this life..." (**1CO 6:2-4**) that, when handled properly, do not spread strife, do not errantly blacken someone's reputation, reconcile differences, and which may be even overlooked by *forbearance* (see below), and so *work no ill to one's neighbor* (**ROM 13:10**).

C. Covering faults by forbearance is justified in minor cases. **PRO 19:11; EPH 4:2.**

1. forbearance: The action or habit of forbearing, dispensing with, refraining or abstaining from (some action or thing).
2. It is not necessary to make a "federal case" out of every slip-up, particularly against yourself. **ECC 7:21-22.**
3. If one's motive is impure, it may be evil to make a "federal case" out of the minor slips of another. **ISA 29:20-21.**
4. Haste to strive against another can backfire. **PRO 25:8.**
5. Where forbearing mercy can reasonably be applied, it may or even should be applied. **LUK 7:42; JAM 2:13.**
6. What one must be cautious against is by continual forbearing with an unrepentant sinner, you may embolden him in his sin. Better to render a sentence of judgment against him with your words of reproof than that. **ECC 8:11.**

D. There are wrong ways to cover faults. **PRO 28:13.**

1. Covering faults by multiplying faults as David did is only adding sin to sin. **2SAM 11.**
2. Covering for somebody else's wickedness by sin fares no better, as did Jezebel and her false witnesses. **1KI 21:8-19.**

3. Covering for somebody else's wickedness makes one a partaker of that wickedness. **PRO 29:24; 1TI 5:22.**
4. We are to reprove works of darkness, not have fellowship with them. **EPH 5:11.**
5. Where gross violations against legitimate authority are plotted or performed, rebuke is in order, and exposure of such to legitimate authority may be absolutely necessary. **EST 2:21-23.**