

Harrowing Hospitality

Romans 12:9-21

⁹ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹ not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³ contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

These verses can be said to describe a season of “happy hospitality.” There is enough to share, and we are in it together!

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷ Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹ Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. ²⁰ “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Realistically, if we are to practice hospitality, we will also need to prepare for seasons of difficulty.

Proverbs 27:10

¹⁰ Do not forsake your own friend or your father’s friend, And do not go to your brother’s house in the day of your calamity; Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother far away.

Here are Paul’s rules for cases of harrowing (acutely distressing) hospitality:

1. Leave room for the wrath of God (banish all revenge or punitive behavior from your mind) Leave room, and remember that God is Judge.
2. Fill up the difficult person with acts of kindness and grace for as long as the season may last. Fill their life up to the fullest measure with the grace and peace of Christ.

1 Peter 1:1-2

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

How do we get from here to there?

We have to ask the Spirit to help us see people as Jesus sees people!

Romans 5:6

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.

Luke 23:34

³⁴ But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

Romans 5:8

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.