

Blessed: Overcoming Evil With Good - Rom. 12:14-21

500th University of the Reformation – Oct 31st, 1517

Illus. Cursing the guy who rear ended us!

Introduction: Last week we looked at verse 9-13. ***We are called to be an Authentic Community where the real me shows up to meet the needs of others. We are called to Fervent Service for our Lord which is both enthusiastic and Spirit empowered. We are called to Hopeful Living in a fallen world; in which we minister to the needs of believers and others.***

Paul transitions from speaking about ministry and behavior primarily within the Body of Christ and directs us to thinking about ministry and behavior primarily to those outside the church family.

1. *Committed Christ Follower – Determined Disciple (12:1)*
2. *Renewing My Mind – Transforming My Life (12:2)*
3. *Members of One Another – In This Together (12:3-5)*
4. *Gifts, Grace and Community (12:6-8)*
5. *An Authentic, Fervent and Hopeful Community (12:9-13)*
6. ***Overcoming Evil With Good in the Community (12:14-21)***

Theme: ***Overcoming evil with good in the larger community in which we live is our goal both as individuals and as a church family. And it takes each of us being a committed, transformed, Spirit-empowered Christ follower who is exercising his/her gifts, talents and abilities as a part of the local church to truly honor God in our communities.***

Illus. – ***Another shopping list; I cannot be all things and meet all needs; it takes a community. But I can take the place that Christ has for me in this church and in the community that he has placed me in. However as a Christ follower I am to be living as Christian and we are to be a Christian community within the larger community.***

1. Bless Others (vv. 14-16)

a) Ask God to bless our persecutors - ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. *“To bless’ someone means to wish someone well, to desire God’s favor and blessing upon their lives. By contrast, ‘to curse’ means to pray against, to call down doom, to wish for their disaster, failure, and misfortune.”* Chip Ingram, *Living on the Edge*, p. 223.

Jesus says - ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:43-45a (NIV)

“Not only to refrain from desiring that harm should come to those who are persecuting us, but to desire good for them and to show that this desire is not mere pretense by actually praying for God’s blessing upon them...this I clearly opposed to what is natural for us. [As Gaugler points out,] ‘All these requirements make sense only if they are required of the disciple, of the congregation,

which is being transformed by the renewing of the mind, which is ready to renounce the fashion of the world.” CEB Cranfield, Romans vol.2, p. 640-641.

Illus. – personal failure as a Christian: Rejoicing over an adversary’s job loss.

b) Share in the ups and downs of life with those God has placed in your life.

- i.** Which is harder to ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice’; **Or** to ‘mourn with those who mourn’?
- ii.** **How can you rejoice and mourn when their rejoicing or mourning is tainted?**
- iii.** **Rejoicing** – Wanting others to succeed, be blessed by God and prospering in every way.
Illus. - Can we put our envy, jealousy and selfishness aside for someone who is blessed? A spouse while you go without? A child while you wait? A job promotion? A new car, house, and etc.?
- iv.** **Mourning** – Being there when hard times hit.
Illus. – How should you respond when someone suffers loss: death of a parent, family member or friend? Loss of a job? A troubled marriage or divorce? An auto accident or hospitalization?

“Love never stands aloof from others people’s joys or pains. Love identifies with them, sings with them and suffers with them. Love enters deeply into their experiences and their emotions, their laughter and their tears, and feels solidarity with them whatever their mood.” John Stott, Romans, p. 333.

c) Proper thinking as a Christian community.

- i.** **Harmony** - ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. ‘be of the same mind’ *But in regard to what? How you live before the watching world. (Yes, in the church family). Present a united front before the world.*
- ii.** **Humility and Respect** – ‘Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.’

What will lack of harmony, pride, aloofness and conceitedness do to the witness of the church?

Illus. – Bob R. asking our server – How can we pray for you?

Illus. – Star Wars

2. Seek No Retaliation - Don’t Give In To the Dark Side (vv. 17-20)

a) Never let evil change who you are supposed to be in Christ. (v. 17) ¹⁷ Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.’

¹⁵ Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. **1 Thessalonians 5:15 (NIV)**

⁹ Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. **1 Peter 3:9 (NIV)**

- **Not Christian – ‘I don’t get mad I get even.’**

b) Seek peace without compromising your beliefs. (v. 18) ¹⁸ Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.’

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. **Matthew 5:9 (NIV)**

Payback – so natural, seems right, it is the basis of many Hollywood hits.

c) Do not take your own revenge rather let God judge righteously. (v. 19) ¹⁹ Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the LORD.’

- i. **OT -¹⁸** "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. **Leviticus 19:18 (NIV)**
- ii. **Judaism – ‘Test. Gad 6:7: “and if he be shameless and persist in his wrong doing, even so forgive him from the heart, and leave to God the avenging.’** Cranfield, p. 647.
- iii. *Whereas the teaching of Judaism limited it to fellow Jews, Paul applies this teaching to everyone, as did Jesus.*

“There are “two compelling reasons why we shouldn’t pursue personal retaliation. First, because you usurp God’s authority and role as judge when you take retaliation into your own hands...second... personal retaliation is an ineffective means to accomplish peace...at the end of the day, when I give evil back for evil, it’s like bad spiritual math- evil simply multiplies!” Ingram, p. 245.

Illus. – More dependent on God or more bitter and angry?

“If one is to continue to live by grace, then one cannot do other than make a way for God’s (this) wrath - to do otherwise would be to cease to live by grace. To give place to the wrath is to leave vengeance to God in the knowledge that He is the God who smites in order to heal. When we recall what God has done for us ‘when we were enemies’ (Rom. 5:10), we cannot but hope that His mercy will finally embrace those who now are our enemies. “We give place to wrath,’ says Calvin. ‘...only when we wait patiently for the proper time for our deliverance, praying in the meantime that those who now trouble us may repent and become our friends.’ It is certainly does not mean hoping and praying for God to punish our enemies.” Cranfield, p. 648.

- d) **Seek the good of others while doing good. (v. 20)** ²⁰ Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” (See Prov. 25:21-22a – it adds, ‘and the Lord will reward you.’)

Cranfield suggest these *“...as signifying the burning pangs of shame and contrition...(which may be brought on by us) ...ministering to one’s enemy’s needs...”* P. 649.

“A possible cultural background, outside the Bible, for the connection between burning coals/fire and the purging of sin/evil is to be seen in the ancient Egyptian custom in which the penitent demonstrated his repentance of a wrong committed by carrying a dish of burning coals on his head...(they go on to say) ...When the adversary is treated with kindness, when good is returned for evil, then evil may be overcome; the antagonist may be transformed by the renewal of the mind, a change of orientation from darkness to light.’ Walter Kaiser, et al, *Hard Saying of the Bible*, p. 573.

3. Summary Verse - Conquer Evil With Good (v. 21)

- a) **In Christ we can conquer the evil that seeks to conquer us. ‘Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.’**

“To retaliate is to be overcome both by the evil of one’s enemy and also by the evil of one’s own heart which responds to the other’s evil...The victory of the believer...is the victory of the man who has been justified by faith, who is borne up by the grace of God in Christ, who is indeed confident, but confident in the knowledge of the victorious power of the gospel, and not in any sense of his own moral superiority.” Cranfield, p. 650-651.

³³ "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." **John 16:33 (NIV)**

Am I an overcomer in the power of Jesus? Or am I one who has been overcome by evil?

Illus. – Started praying for Kathy to be healed as well as God to bring the guy good. Kathy is slightly improved, God is good.

2. *Blessed: Overcoming Evil With Good*

a. We are to bless others

- i. Asking God to bless our persecutors.***
- ii. Sharing in the ups and downs of life with those God has placed in your life.***
- iii. Practicing harmony, humility and respect as Christians when out in our community.***

b. No Retaliation - Don't Give In To the Dark Side

- i. Never let evil change who you are supposed to be in Christ.***
- ii. Seek peace without compromising your beliefs.***
- iii. Do not take your own revenge rather let God judge righteously.***
- iv. Seek their good while doing good.***

c. Conquer Evil With Good

- i. Doing good, helping our enemies is the only weapon which can overcome evil.***
- ii. Seeking justice is not the same as personal retaliation. Ingram, p. 251-252.***

Application: *Blessed: Overcoming Evil With Good*

- 1. Am I willing to choose to bless and pray for my enemies or people who have wronged me?***
- 2. Have I accepted that retaliation or personal vengeance is bad spiritual math – that it actually causes evil to multiply?***
- 3. Am I committed to overcoming evil by doing good?***

The question for us as a church family is this:

Are we a community that practices harmony, humility and respect in the larger community for the glory of God?