

# Abounding Grace Christian Church

## A Study through the Epistle to the Romans – Part 35

### I. Exposition of Chapter Twelve. (Continued)

#### A. Verses 9-21 – The Outworking of Righteousness in Relationship with Others.

##### 1. Verse 14 - Relating to those outside of the Christian family.

###### a. “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.”

- 1) The word “bless” can mean either “to speak well of” or, “to pray God to bless”<sup>1</sup>  
According to Kenneth Wuest – “The exhortation is to bless our persecutors in the sense of returning kindness and love to those who mistreat us because of our testimony to the Lord Jesus. It is ‘to speak them good’”<sup>2</sup>
- 2) The word “curse”, in contrast, means; “to wish someone evil or ruin.”<sup>3</sup>
- 3) It seems Paul is repeating Jesus' instruction here (cf. **Matthew 5:44; Luke 6:27-28**).
- 4) **Note:** The word “given” in **verse 13** for “given to hospitality” is the same Greek word for “persecute” here in **verse 14**. The definition of the word “persecute” is; “to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, to run after.”<sup>4</sup> It can also mean “pursue” either in a good sense or bad. Vincent states: “Pursue hospitality toward the brethren as the wicked pursues them.”<sup>5</sup>

###### b. Attitudes we’re to have when Persecuted.

- 1) **Live holy and forgiving lives - Matthew 5:44; I Peter 2:11-23; 3:16.**
- 2) **Rejoice – James 1:2-4; I Peter 4:12-13.**
- 3) **Rely on the promise of God’s grace and Presence to endure - II Timothy 3:10-11; 4:14-18; I Peter 4:14; Hebrews 13:6.**
- 5) **Pray - Ephesians 6:18; Matthew 5:44.**

##### 2. Verses 15-21 - How to get along with people both inside and outside the church.

a. **Verse 15 – “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”** – In relating to all people, believer or unbeliever, we’re commanded to sympathize (share with their feelings) with what they are going through. Obviously we never “rejoice in iniquity” (**I Corinthians 13:6**) but we’re to show genuine sympathy when others are rejoicing or weeping in valid ways. (cf. **I Corinthians 12:26**). Remember: **“People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.”**

b. **Verse 16 – There are three exhortations in this verse:**

1) **“Be of the same mind toward one another...”** – The fact that Paul uses the phrase “one another” indicates that this command is intended for believers. To be of “the same mind” is to be in harmony. (cf. **Romans 15:5; Philippians 2:2**). This would include loving one another, putting up with one another and knowing that we’ll never agree on every single thing but we can still have a harmony in our relationships. **Picirilli adds: “But even that inner harmony, that ‘loving unanimity’..., is necessary for our service to sinners They must see a church with unity of mind and purpose if they are going to respect the church and listen to the Christian.”**<sup>6</sup>

2) **“Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble.”** – If we’re going to have harmony, it seems obvious that humility will play a large part in that.

**“Minding high things is seeking self-exaltation, considering oneself better than others and thus too good for such menial tasks or places as one considers beneath his dignity. Some Christians seem willing to accept only such offices as they regard truly important, but that is not the spirit of Christianity. Selfish ambition will always kill the possibilities of harmony in the church and is the very opposite of the submissive spirit required for real Christian service.”**<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

<sup>2</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 216.

<sup>3</sup>Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary*. (AMG Publishers; Revised edition, 1993)

<sup>4</sup>Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*

<sup>5</sup>Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament: Vol. III, The Epistles of Paul* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Co.) 160.

<sup>6</sup>Robert E. Picirilli, *Romans*. (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1975), 258.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

3) **“Do not be wise in your own opinion.”**

**“Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty (snobbish, high-minded, exclusive), but readily adjust yourself to [people, things] and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.” – Romans 12:16 – Amplified Bible**

c. **Verse 17 – “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”**

1) **“Repay no one evil for evil.”** – First, this tells us that there will be people who will do evil to us. We are not exempt from that. The exhortation is that we’re not to have an attitude of revenge. Revenge is what the world seems to always seek but it’s not to be a part of the Christian’s life. (cf. **I Peter 2:23**).

**“Someone has said that to return evil for good is devil-like; to return evil for good is man-like, but to return good for evil is Christ-like.”<sup>8</sup>**

2) **“Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.”** – The word **“regard”** means, **“to think beforehand.”** The idea is to think about something ahead of time, giving it careful thought and consideration, with the thought that that will enable one to act appropriately. In this context, instead of reciprocating evil for evil, we should think out ahead of time how we will respond in a godly and good way that brings glory to God.

d. **Verse 18 - “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.”** –

Paul knew that we would not be able to live peaceably with everyone, especially those of the world, but we are responsible to keep our side of the relationship with others right, regardless how others act or even abuse us. (cf. **I Peter 3:8-13**)

e. **Verse 19 – “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** – Another exhortation pertaining to not taking revenge. The phrase **“...give place to wrath...”** is better rendered, **“...but leave the way open for God’s wrath...”** The quote is from **Deuteronomy 32:35**.

f. **Verse 20 – This is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22.** – **“...for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”** – There are various views as to what this means. Some believe it refers to God judging harsher those who we do good to. Others propose the following; **“The meaning of ‘heaping burning coals on his head’ is hardly open to doubt. It must refer to the burning pain of shame and remorse which the man feels whose hostility is repaid by love. This is the only kind of vengeance the Christian is at liberty to contemplate.”<sup>9</sup>**

g. **Verse 21 – “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** – This verse seems to be a summary of this last portion of **chapter 12**. The word **“overcome”** means; **“to conquer”** and **“to carry off the victory.”<sup>10</sup>** This tells us that, **contrary to what the world says, good is more powerful than evil!**

**B. This Chapter and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Many scholars point out the similarities between this portion of Romans 12:9-21 and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7.**

1. **Prayer – Romans 12:13 with Matthew 6:1-15.**
2. **Blessing and Cursing – Romans 12:14 with Matthew 5:11-12, 44.**
3. **Evil and Good – Romans 12:17 with Matthew 5:38-39.**
4. **Overcoming Evil with Good – Romans 12:21 with Matthew 5:39-42.**

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<sup>8</sup>Picirilli, *Romans*.260.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 220.

<sup>10</sup>Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*