

# Bible Lessons

*Quarterly Lessons for Adults and Young People*



## Real Christianity

*Romans 12:9-21*

Volume 57, No. 4

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# Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 57      October • November • December      No. 4

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*Publishing Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.*

*In this issue, Reflections are contributed by: D. Doolittle, R. Cox,  
D. Adams, S. Herron, D. Clay, T. Browne, P. Phillips, E. Doolittle,  
R. Cole, Dan Doolittle, E. E. Gracey, J. Booher*

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Bro. Kevin Sorrell, 5722 S Sooner Rd, Guthrie, OK 73044

Phone (405)-414-8646

**Bro. Clifford Cole, Editor**

Phone: (417) 621-1965

# REAL CHRISTIANITY

4TH QUARTER, 2025

The Apostle Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit with godly advice for the young church in Rome. By the Lord's help, we will look into a summary of this exhortation as it is recorded in the thirteen verses of Romans 12:9-21. These thirteen verses also help the world identify who is a true Christian and who is not.

It is God's will that we be found possessing these attributes when we meet with difficulties. If we are found short in any area, God will help us obtain these graces when we ask Him for them.

Caleb told Joshua in Joshua 14:12, "Give me this mountain!"

**Romans 12: 9** Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

12 Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;

13 Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

14 Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

15 Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

OCTOBER 5, 2025

**LOVE UNFEIGNED; ABHOR EVIL; CLEAVE TO THE GOOD**

**Romans 12:9** Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.

**John 12:1** Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

**Luke 22:1** Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.

2 And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people.

3 Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve.

4 And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.

5 And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.

6 And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.

**Matthew 26:47** And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.

48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying,  
Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.

49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and  
kissed him.

50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?  
Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.

**MEMORY VERSE:** I speak not by commandment, but by occasion  
of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

—2 Corinthians 8:8

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:9 “**Dissimulation**”: without sincerity; hypocritical  
(*Strong’s*).

Romans 12:9 “**Abhor**”: to detest utterly; to have a horror of  
(*Strong’s and Thayer*).

Romans 12:9 “**Cleave**”: to glue together; to join oneself to  
(*Strong’s and Thayer*).

John 12:3 “**Spikenard**”: a highly aromatic plant from India, from  
which was made a costly perfume, used in ancient baths and feasts  
(*TSK Cross Reference*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Lazarus, Martha, and Mary were some of Jesus’ closest friends. He and His disciples visited them often when in the area. Martha expressed her love for Jesus by acts of service, while Mary showed her love by sitting at His feet, listening to His teaching with rapt attention. On the occasion we read of in John 12, Mary further expressed her love by anointing His feet with her most valuable possession, spikenard. It seems no words were exchanged at this time, but Jesus understood her devotion, accepted it, and deeply appreciated it.

While Mary’s love for Jesus continually grew, there was someone else in attendance whose love was steadily ebbing away. Judas Iscariot witnessed Mary’s expression of love as she poured the valuable perfume on Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair. He could not comprehend her love for Jesus but saw only what he perceived as waste. He calculated what the spikenard could bring and how much

weight it would have added to the bag of money he, as treasurer of Jesus' disciples, carried. Greed had taken over his heart, whereas love had filled Mary's heart to overflowing. —C.L.C.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. Mary loved Jesus before she anointed His feet with spikenard. How much do you suppose she loved Jesus after her great demonstration of love?
2. How can our capacity for love of God and others be made to continually increase rather than gradually ebb away?
3. How likely would it have been for Mary to have carried out her act of love for Jesus if she had concentrated on what others might think of her costly sacrifice?
4. Why was Judas not able to appreciate Mary's act of love as she sacrificed her spikenard?
5. Describe the step-by-step process Judas' mind and heart took as he descended into the darkness of betraying Jesus with a kiss.
6. How can continually filling a vessel with one thing help prevent other things from entering?
7. Describe how choosing to fill our minds and hearts with the good things of God helps us to abhor evil and ultimately helps our love for God and others to be without hypocrisy.

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Everything we know in our natural lives changes continuously: our bodies experience growth stages and then mature into old age, the habitat in which we live rotates through various cycles, scientists believe our universe is expanding, and empires rise and fall. Our love for the Lord is not static either—it is either increasing or decreasing.

Just as there are forces that bring about changes in our natural life and environment, certain things influence our love for God and for our fellow man. Fortunately, we have control of the two most important influences: our decision to abhor evil and our decision to cleave to that which is good. The more we allow evil to influence our lives, the less we will cling to the good. Allowing evil thoughts to stay and grow in our minds soon also opens the door for them to enter into our hearts.

Evil stains our minds and hearts, much like dirty water stains on the container that holds it. On the other hand, the more we cling to good, the less room there is in our hearts and minds to harbor the bad.

We don't know exactly what happened in Judas Iscariot's mind and heart, but the evidence of his actions leading to Jesus' crucifixion point to a process wherein he allowed evil thoughts to overtake good. He did not abhor evil and cling to that which is good. The result was a feigned love that ultimately led to the betrayal of Jesus Christ.

*"Dear Lord, help me feed on all the good you provide in your Word. Help me meditate on the benefits of living for you rather than focusing on the difficulties I may encounter along the way. Help my love for you and for your people to be unfeigned and ever increasing. Amen!"*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Why did the Apostle Paul feel the need to caution us to make certain our love was genuine? Ananias and Sapphira come to mind. They wanted the social prestige of having "given all" without actually having done so. Judas Iscariot loved the position of being Treasurer, as well as the financial advantage of being able to dip into the purse. The Bible cautions us about "Measuring yourselves among yourselves." Comparison, at its root, is driven by a desire for preeminence. To appease others to get them off your back, to avoid conflict, or to simply be a rule-follower without conviction can also indicate a lack of genuine love.

Our verse instructs us to abhor evil and cleave to good; this is both right and necessary, but it's not an indicator of love in and of itself. Remember how that Ephesus couldn't bear them that were evil, but they had lost their first love (Revelation 2:2). Lot's righteous soul was vexed, but the vexation of his soul did not prompt him to action. He evidently wasn't concerned about ungodly influences enough to relocate his family.

How can I tell if love is sincere or not? One way is if the public and private behaviors are the same. Another is that love holds steady when things are tough; it doesn't quit. Perhaps one of the most precious commodities love gives is time to others.

1 John 3:18 exhorts us, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." Love involves action. Real

love is consistent. It shows up when it's easier not to. It contributes; it doesn't just take. It is there when work needs to be done, not just letting others "get the blessing." Love pushes us out of our comfort zones, resulting in personal growth. Trying to love difficult people can feel like a pretense. One of Bro. Joseph Gellenbeck's messages, *The Paradigm of Love*, challenged us to love God by loving others as He would. Ultimately, in order to glorify God, we must possess a right spirit and reflect His love so that we can carry out the remaining verses of Romans chapter 12.

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

**OCTOBER 12, 2025**

**KINDLY AFFECTIONED; PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER**

**Romans 12:10** Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.

**John 13:34** A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

**Galatians 5:13** For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

**Genesis 13:5** And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks, and herds, and tents.

6 And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

7 And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

8 And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

9 Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.



**Matthew 20:25** But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

26 But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:

28 Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

**Philippians 2:2** Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

**1 Peter 5:5** Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

**MEMORY VERSE:** Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! —Psalm 133:1

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:10 **“Kindly affectioned”**: generally referring to the mutual love of parents and children, as well as the love in marriage; the love shared among Christian brothers and sisters (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

Romans 12:10 **“Honour”**: recognizing the price paid for a person or thing, especially when the price is high; recognizing high rank; deference (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

Romans 12:10 **“Preferring”**: to go before and show the way, to go before and lead, to go before as a leader (*Strong’s & Thayer*).

Genesis 13:5 **“Strife”**: personal or legal contest, chiding, controversy (*Strong’s*).

Matthew 20:25 **“Minister”**: servant of a king; a waiter who serves food and drink; a deacon charged with care for the poor; a Christian teacher and pastor (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Lot accompanied Abram when God called Abram to leave his homeland for a destination not yet revealed to him. After reaching the land of Canaan, a famine soon arose, causing Abram to journey south into Egypt for the sake of his family, flocks, and herds.

Soon after leaving Egypt, Abram realized he and Lot would need to part ways due to the size of their flocks and herds. Abram could have kept the best fields for himself and left the rest to Lot, but he let Lot have first choice. Abram showed Lot by example the proper way to divide anything of value—let the other person have first pick. By preferring Lot rather than himself, Abram demonstrated true servant-leadership, an attribute that portrayed the best way to live life and keep peace. —C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is the primary obstacle of brotherly love?
2. How does preferring one another demonstrate brotherly love?
3. Why does the definition of “prefer” mean “I’m willing to show the way by example as a leader” rather than “I prefer someone else to go ahead of me and show me the way”?
4. How does loving one another demonstrate to the world we are Jesus’ disciples?
5. What reaction do unbelievers have when they see a lack of love from a professing Christian who failed the grace of God?
6. What would have happened if Abram had taken up the cause of his herdsmen who strove with Lot’s herdsmen when the grazing became scarce?
7. How did Abram show Lot by example the proper way to resolve conflict?
8. How did God reward Abram for his selflessness?
9. Why does serving our brothers make us great in God’s eyes?
10. Why does God resist the proud but give grace to the humble?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Years ago, a group of poor miners packed cooked potato peelings for their daily lunches, leaving the potato flesh for their families. They

believed they were giving the best to their families, not knowing potato peelings are full of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber. The selflessness of the miners provided them more nutrition than they realized.

Abram believed he was giving Lot the best when he allowed Lot to have first pick of the land. God turned the situation around and promised to eventually give the whole land to Abram—even the portion Lot took.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the great sacrifice of sending your only Son to die for my sins. Help me see when I have opportunity to sacrifice for others. Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

The Greek word for “kindly” denotes tender affection which ought to naturally exist between parent, children, and siblings. Paul is telling us that Christians should, in the same way, cherish one’s brothers and sisters, united by the same principles and interests. To be kindly affectioned one to another signifies not only to love, but to have a *readiness* to love with kindness and tenderness. How sad it is when blood members of a natural family cannot get along and when there is no love, affection, or concern one for the other.

I recall working in the home of one of my customers and having a conversation with them about this very thing. I was told they had not seen nor spoken with their brother for over 22 years and only had an expectation of seeing him in his casket. How sad that they both had the same bloodline and DNA running through their veins, yet could not find enough love to forgive one another. How sad to say that some professing children of God do not have affection or love for their spiritual brothers and sisters in the Lord, while still claiming to share the same spiritual bloodline as our Heavenly Father.

I remember sitting on a jury while the prosecuting attorney brought forth evidence that the DNA found at the crime scene was that of the accused. As I sat in my seat, the thought crossed my mind, “Am I, through my actions and dealings with my fellow man, leaving DNA evidence of my Heavenly Father?”

May we learn to be kindly affectionate one toward another with love. “A new commandment I write unto you, That you love one

another...By this shall all men know ye are my disciples if you have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

—Bro. Rick Cox

**OCTOBER 19, 2025**

**NOT SLOTHFUL IN BUSINESS; FERVENT IN SPIRIT; SERVING THE LORD**

**Romans 12:11** Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

**Proverbs 6:6** Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise:

7 Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler,

8 Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.

9 How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?

10 Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:

11 So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.

**Genesis 39:1** And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither.

2 And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

3 And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

4 And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him: and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

5 And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field.

6 And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat. And Joseph was a goodly person, and well favoured.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. —Ecclesiastes 9:10

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:11 **“Slothful”**: tardy, sluggish (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

Romans 12:11 **“Fervent”**: to boil or glow; earnest; zealous (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Solomon made the wise observation that everyone has the same number of hours in a day. What is done with that time is left up to individual choice.

Solomon appreciated the faithfulness of the lowly ant. Of all creatures, the ant is one of the most diligent. Rarely does an ant stand still, except for brief micro-naps, but works day and night for the good of its colony by carrying food, tending the young, nursing the sick, and repairing or building the nest. Research estimates eighty percent of an ant colony are awake at all times, while twenty percent are taking a one-minute nap ([Kingstownelawn.com](http://Kingstownelawn.com)).

As Joseph worked for Potiphar, he decided daily whether he would make his time as a servant profitable or if he would waste his time in a thousand little ways. Thankfully, he wisely chose to make the best of his situation and put his whole heart and mind into his duties. Because of this decision, God blessed him far and above his human efforts and gave him great favor with his master. —C.L.C.

### POINTS TO PONDER

1. How effectively can God use a lazy person?
2. Why is faithfulness in our business dealings tied with being “fervent in spirit” toward God?
3. Who tells each individual ant to “keep working”?

4. Joseph could have been bitter over his circumstances. What attitude did he choose instead?
5. How did Joseph maintain his good attitude?
6. What did God think of Joseph's mindset?
7. Joseph had twenty-four hours in a day, just like everyone else. How did he regard that time?
8. Why does God bless those who choose faithfulness?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"Jerry" swept the shop floor and kept everything tidy at the machine shop where I worked as a draftsman several years ago. He was a hard worker. After finishing his daily tasks, he looked for other things to do. He sorted the inventory and made everything as neat as possible. The boss soon gave Jerry additional duties with shipping and receiving. It wasn't long before he had memorized most of the part numbers of the items the shop made, along with the shipping addresses of regular customers. In a few short years, Jerry was promoted to shop foreman. After another few years, he became the general manager. The shop now has new owners, but they wisely let Jerry continue to run the operation. I doubt they can find a better manager.

I have seen other faithful men and women, as well as some who were not so faithful. Those who are faithful in small things usually prove faithful in larger responsibilities. The unfaithful in seemingly insignificant things are also unfaithful in larger responsibilities. Time management and being honest about mistakes are foundational to faithfulness in the workplace. Willingness to accept additional responsibilities without complaining is also important.

*"Dear Lord, help me be faithful to you, to my own soul, and to others. Amen."*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Romans 12 is about being a genuine, wholehearted, sincere Christian/child of God. Specifically, Romans 12:11 notes, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." This is a reasonable expectation for someone who is genuine, wholehearted, and sincere.

The other verses used in the lesson today give us an example of and demonstrate the “how-to” of living this verse out, along with showing us rewards that come when we live by this precept.

Sloths, slugs and ants are creatures noted for their very slow movements. One of the dangers to a baby sloth is that if they fall from a tree, their mother moves so slowly that a predator can find them and have them for lunch before their mother will be able to climb down to rescue them. The ant's virtue is not necessarily its speed but its constant consistency. It seems that an ant is laser focused on accomplishing its objective, and very little will deter it.

As a young boy, I was mesmerized more than once by ants marching to and fro to accomplish some feat. Many times, this was under the old tabernacle when my attention span during a camp meeting service was challenged. Of course, I interjected obstacles into their paths just to see if they could be deterred. I found it nearly impossible to prevent them from dismantling a large insect and then carrying it back to their nest.

The challenge of these verses is to be prompt, precise, and unwavering in our objective to make heaven our home. Our enemy, satan, will attempt to deter us with spiritual by-paths, spiritual slothfulness, and spiritual sluggishness.

I Timothy 3:7 talks about having "a good report of them which are without." One of the easiest ways to have a good report of those that are "without" is to follow the instruction of Romans 12:11. Satan will try to trick us into being slothful or sluggish in our business affairs; this will, in turn, detract from our testimony of Christianity.

—Bro. Dan Adams

**OCTOBER 26, 2025**

**REJOICING IN HOPE; PATIENT IN TRIBULATION; CONTINUING  
INSTANT IN PRAYER**

**Romans 12:12** Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation;  
continuing instant in prayer.

**Romans 5:2** By whom also we have access by faith into this  
grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

**Hebrews 6:13** For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

14 Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

**Genesis 32:24** And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

25 And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

26 And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.

27 And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob.

28 And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

29 And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there.

30 And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

31 And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. —Romans 15:13

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:12 “**Instant**”: to be earnest toward, to persevere, to be constantly diligent (*Strong's*).



Genesis 32:24 **“There wrestled a man with him”**: possibly Jesus Christ (*Clarke and Meyer*).

Genesis 32:28 **“Jacob”**: to supplant; to circumvent by tripping up the heel (*Strong’s*).

Genesis 32:28 **“Israel”**: to prevail and have power as a prince (*Strong’s*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Jacob was used to “wrestling” his way through life. He obtained the birthright by taking advantage of his hungry brother. He tricked his father to get the blessing intended for his brother. He used cunning methods to get the healthiest cattle for his own herds, leaving the less desirable cattle for his father-in-law.

The day finally came when Jacob heard Esau was coming to meet him. He grew desperate for God’s help. After he sent his family, flocks, and herds across the stream Penuel, he began to pray. During the night, a “man” came to him and began grappling with him.

Jacob soon understood he was not wrestling with a mortal man, but a heavenly messenger. Believing this man was sent from God to help him, he was determined to overcome his adversary to obtain that help. As he wrestled, however, the man touched his hip, instantly throwing it out of joint. Jacob no longer held on to his adversary to overcome him, but to keep from falling.

God blessed Jacob that day because he now realized his own thinking was not enough to see him through his difficulties. He soon met his brother Esau and made peace with him. Jacob was a changed man from then on. He no longer lived up to his old name Jacob, or supplanter, but was now Israel, having power with God as a prince! —C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. How does hope in God bring joy?
2. Why is patience necessary in difficulties?
3. How is earnest, persevering, and diligent prayer different than casual prayer?

4. Why does God allow circumstances that elicit our earnest prayers?
5. Describe the process God used to help Jacob realize that his own thinking was not enough.
6. Why was an out-of-joint hip a blessing in disguise for Jacob in his night-time struggle?
7. What would Jacob have been tempted to think if God had blessed him without first afflicting him as he wrestled?
8. How can our great difficulties prove a blessing to us if we persevere in prayer and are patient in the process God uses to bless us?

### COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

“Dr. Peddington,” president of a local community college several years ago, spoke at a school assembly. He encouraged the students to reach high and stretch beyond themselves, but to never forget they would need the help of others on their journey through life.

To illustrate his point, Dr. Peddington told of a time he thought he had the world under control, but later regretted that thinking. As an Air Force pilot in training, he occasionally enjoyed aggressively pulling his T-38 jet trainer off the runway and reaching several thousand feet in altitude by the end of the runway. One day while pulling off this particular maneuver, he found himself in the clouds and quickly became disoriented. Desperate for help, he keyed the mic and called for help. Fortunately, his instructor was on the frequency and talked him through his difficulty.

Just as Dr. Peddington’s instructor was a call away, Jesus is only a prayer away when we cry out to Him for help. We all face times when we come to the end our ability or understanding. Sometimes it happens suddenly, as it did with Dr. Peddington, or it can happen over a process of time, as in Jacob’s case. When our time comes, it pays to be “instant in prayer”!

*“Dear Lord, help me rejoice in the hope I have in you. Help me to patiently and continually petition your throne for my needs and the needs of others, knowing you WILL answer my prayer. Amen!”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Recently, I had one of those hard days, and I hadn't handled the difficulties of the day very well. By the end of the day, I was disappointed with myself, but I knew The Lord wanted to help me. I humbled myself and sought The Lord for His help. The next day He put in my mind a better method of handling the problems that I had mishandled the day prior. It made such a difference! The day ended and I was encouraged, but more than that, I was uplifted by God's care in instructing and helping me by showing me a better way.

It reminded me of something someone shared with me about their boss and how he handled things when an employee did something incorrectly. He didn't put the employee down by saying, "You're doing that wrong." Instead, he said, "That's not up to standard," then explained or showed them how to bring it up to the company standard. The overall atmosphere in that workplace was one of encouragement while still striving to meet the high standard that was expected.

God is a good Father, and He wants to encourage us, His children, in doing right—not crush us or cut us off when we fail to meet His standard. Rather, He corrects, teaches, and helps us to meet the standard of Holiness. Living a holy life produces many benefits, not just for us, His own children, but for everyone who is touched by our lives. Let us be encouraged, even when we fail. Our Father wants us to be holy as He is holy, and He will teach us and help us to meet that standard.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**NOVEMBER 2, 2025**

### **DISTRIBUTING TO THE NECESSITY OF SAINTS; GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY**

**Romans 12:13** Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

**Acts 9:36** Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

37 And it came to pass in those days, that she was sick, and died:

whom when they had washed, they laid her in an upper chamber.

38 And forasmuch as Lydda was nigh to Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent unto him two men, desiring him that he would not delay to come to them.

39 Then Peter arose and went with them. When he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

40 But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning him to the body said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes: and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand, and lifted her up, and when he had called the saints and widows, presented her alive.

**Acts 10:1** There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band,

2 A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3 He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius.

4 And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.

5 And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter:

6 He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.

**Romans 16:1** I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea:

2 That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also.

**1 Corinthians 16:15** I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

**Hebrews 13:2** Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

**MEMORY VERSE:** And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

—Matthew 25:40

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 9:36 “**Almsdeeds**”: and Acts 10:2 “alms”: compassion exercised towards the poor (*Strong’s*); mercy, pity, charity (*Thayer*).

Romans 16:2 “**Succourer**”: a female guardian, protectress, patroness, caring for the affairs of others and aiding them with her resources (*Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Joppa, today known as Tel-Avive-Yafo, was a seaport on the Mediterranean Sea that belonged to the tribe of Dan. Solomon used this port to bring in timber for the temple at Jerusalem. Years later, Ezra utilized it to import materials for rebuilding the temple. Jonah boarded the ship for Tarshish at this port also.

Until Herod built an artificial port in Caesarea, Joppa was the only port of significance in Israel. Joppa was an established and busy place of commerce, which contributed to the presence of all classes and occupations of people. The poor and infirm, as well as wealthy merchants, lived there. It was here that Dorcas exercised her gift of helping those in need.

Cornelius was a centurion over one hundred Roman soldiers, and most likely part of the personal bodyguard of the Roman governor living at Caesarea. He was an honest and devout man, having rejected the emptiness of idolatry. His sincerity not only affected his household, who also feared God, but moved God on His throne to bring him into the fold of His saving grace. Cornelius was the first Gentile to be saved.

It seems Peter had not yet left Joppa after praying for Tabitha to be raised from the dead. God, through the angel in a vision, instructed Cornelius on where to find Peter, the man whom He had chosen to proclaim the more perfect way of salvation to Cornelius, his household, and his friends. —C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. God “owns the cattle upon a thousand hills.” Why does He often use us to help those in need?
2. Of all the people who had died around the time of Tabitha’s death, why was she specifically so missed—to the extent many desired her to be brought back to them?
3. The angel who appeared to Cornelius told him his prayers and his alms had come up as a memorial before God. How does this statement emphasize the importance of alms, or helping others, in the sight of God?
4. What importance did Paul ascribe to the fact that Phebe was a succorer to many, including himself?
5. Stephanas and his household “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” Why did Paul regard this addiction so highly?
6. How does being shown hospitality make one feel?
7. Who needs hospitality? Why?
8. We are exhorted to “be not forgetful to entertain strangers.” Besides missing out on a chance to entertain angels, what might we miss if we do not exercise hospitality?
9. Why will whether or not we have helped “the least of these my brethren” be part of the criteria upon which we are judged on Judgement Day?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Maya Angelou once said, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Helping others in time of need and showing hospitality is the best way to express God’s love. It strikes deep into the heart and will never be forgotten.

Romans 2:4b tells us, “...The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.” There are times when God uses mankind to show His goodness. God’s intention is for His manifested goodness to lead all to Him.

*“Dear Heavenly Father, help me to be mindful of opportunities to help others, that I might show some of your goodness. Amen!”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

What better way to exemplify Christ than to distribute to the necessity of saints and to be given to hospitality? When we read about Christ's life while He was here on this earth, we see that He set an example of caring for the needs of others, and He calls us, as His people, to follow Him! The scripture says, "... and took upon him the form of a servant..." He set the bar high in caring for others, and we are challenged to do the same! Another scripture says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." In distributing to the needs of the saints and in having hospitality, we manifest the life of Christ. Jesus provided for the needs of people on many levels because of His great love and compassion for them. His love for them and for us had no limits. Today we can show forth His great love in our hearts in the same manner.

We want to have a sensitivity for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we see a need, we want to be willing and ready to provide for it in any way that we can. In this scripture, distributing is an action word. It is like coming to the rescue or aid when there is a need. The love that is shown among God's people to and for one another is unique. It endears and draws to Christ others who are looking on. It is that "love one to another" that warms the heart and draws them.

When we are given to hospitality, we again are called to action in a way that reaches out to others. What a beautiful life of Christ is exemplified in this action! It is the act of welcoming others into our homes and into our lives. Jesus spent much time in the homes of people. He was not aloof from them, but sat at their tables, eating and drinking and allowing himself to be a part of their lives. In having hospitality, we share our lives with others on a personal level and in a way that is Christ-like.

May we be challenged to action by distributing to the needs of saints and by having hospitality. In doing this, the life of Christ will shine out as a light to the world.

—Sis. Doris Clay

NOVEMBER 9, 2025

## BLESS THEM WHICH PERSECUTE YOU

**Romans 12:14** Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.

**Matthew 5:43** Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

**Acts 7:54** When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

**1 Corinthians 4:12** And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it:



13 Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

**1 Thessalonians 5:15** See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

**1 Peter 3:9** Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. —Luke 23:34a

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:14 **“Bless”**: to speak well of, to thank, to wish to prosper, praise (*Strong’s*); to pray God to bless it to one’s use (*Thayer*).

Romans 12:14 **“Curse”**: to wish evil upon (*Thayer*).

Romans 12:14 **“Persecute”**: to make to run or flee, put to flight, drive away; to pursue in a hostile manner (*Thayer*).

Matthew 5:43 **“Neighbour”**: where two are concerned, the other person; according to Christ, any other man irrespective of nation or religion with whom we live or whom we chance to meet (*Thayer*).

Matthew 5:43 **“Love”**: to welcome, to entertain, to be fond of (*Thayer*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The far-reaching effect of Jesus’ words on the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” is more than we can calculate. The Old Testament taught “an eye for an eye.” The New Testament dispensation that Jesus ushered into the world was the polar opposite—“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Stephen, the first martyr, exhibited the spirit of Christ in his last words, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Saul, later known as Paul, heard Stephen’s intercessory prayer. Paul wrote later of being “pricked” by the dealings of the Holy Spirit. Stephen’s last words were probably part of the pricks.

A few years later, Paul was under house arrest in Rome and chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day for two years. Imagine the impact Paul's life and testimony must have had on the soldiers! Josephus, a notable historian during that time, stated the Praetorian Guard took four-hour shifts guarding Paul. Assuming the Guard did not consist of the same six soldiers every day, think of the ripple effect! Some of the soldiers, as well as members of Nero's court, believed the gospel and were saved.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. Describe the differences in Jesus' doctrine "bless your enemies" and the old practice of "an eye for an eye."
2. If we blessed only those who blessed us, how would souls be won to the Lord?
3. How can blessing our enemies affect them?
4. Of all the ways God uses to advance His kingdom, why does blessing those who persecute us spread the gospel the fastest?
5. Why is Jesus' commandment of "being perfect" tied with blessing those who persecute us?
6. What is the source of power that enables us to bless those who persecute us?
7. Why did Stephen desire forgiveness for those who stoned him to death?
8. What hope would there have been for Saul if Stephen had not blessed his persecutors?
9. What hope would there be for you and me if Jesus had not forgiven those who persecuted Him?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

Christianity is not fear-based; rather, it is love-based. 1 John 4:19 says, "We love him, because he first loved us." Many religious practices use fear to force conformity to a set of rules or to keep people in subjection; yet, God never forces anyone to serve Him. When a person yields to God, however, and the love of God begins to grow in their heart, that love becomes an unbreakable bond.

Although exact numbers are not known, many people have come to Christ in some of the most heavily persecuted places in the world. The same thing happened when the early Church was persecuted. The scattering of the people only served to spread the gospel further!

One of the reasons persecution serves to spread the gospel is centered on the concept of the persecuted blessing the persecutor. The intent in the persecution is to discourage true Christianity, but the effect is the exact opposite. Persecution only proves that Christianity is real and that it works! A Christian response often causes the persecutors to see something real and dynamic—and they want it!

*“Dear Lord, help me to share your love with those who need it most. When I am persecuted for your sake, help me convince them your love is real. Amen!”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Jesus Christ endured the vilest persecution and rejection by His own people. John 1:11 says, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” Yet, he loved them until the end, remaining on the cross until his death. Jesus Christ demonstrated to humankind the power of forgiveness—God’s love in action.

Living a saved and sanctified life also gives us all access to the power of God operating within and through us; without this power, we will find it difficult to forgive or extend blessings to those who persecute us.

We must be aware there is an ongoing spiritual battle always taking place—God versus the devil. We must change our thinking; persecution is a spiritual attack; not against us individually but against God and His spirit within us. In the same way that God uses those who serve Him to advance His kingdom, satan uses those who serve him to try to hinder God's work by persecuting God's people.

One of the keys to blessing and forgiving our persecutors is to separate the persecution or offence from the person and give the blame to the devil where it belongs. Stephen’s last few words are a beautiful example of this. Those words of blessing and forgiveness spoken by Stephen had a considerable influence on Saul (Paul) who was present at Stephen’s death. They contributed to Saul’s eventual

conversion and acceptance of salvation. Everyone, at some point, has been on the wrong side of persecution. Thank God for mercy!

**Romans 6:16–18:**

*16 Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 17 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. 18 Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*

—Bro. Tavis Browne

**NOVEMBER 16, 2025**

**REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP**

**Romans 12:15** Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

**Luke 15:22** But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

**1 Corinthians 12:26** And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.

**Job 2:11** Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn with him and to comfort him.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

**Job 42:7** And it was so, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath.

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of me the thing which is right, like my servant Job.

9 So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

**John 11:33** When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

34 And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.

35 Jesus wept.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. —Hebrews 13:3

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:15 **“Rejoice”**: to be full of cheer; calmly happy (*Strong’s*).

Romans 12:15 **“Weep”**: to sob and wail aloud (*Strong’s*); signifying pain and grief (*Thayer*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

The Father-heart of God is exemplified in the parable of the prodigal son. He longs after every wayward soul who chooses their own path. He understands the pain and sorrow sin brings. When repentant souls return to him, there is joy in Heaven!

Jesus pointed out in His parable the possibility of some not entering into His joy over a returning prodigal because of a mindset of “fairness.” Just as the son who did not waste his inheritance was envious of the attention given his brother, it can be tempting to have a self-righteous attitude for not wasting as many years in sin as others may have. In reality, all of us need salvation.

News of Job’s great calamity reached his three friends, who soon journeyed together to comfort him. Upon seeing him at a distance, but hardly recognizing him because of the sores that covered him from head to foot, they tore their garments and sprinkled dust on their heads as a symbol of their empathy.

Job’s three friends said nothing for seven days and nights. They more than made up for their initial silence, however, when they finally started speaking. The majority of the book of Job outlines their theories of how Job “must have sinned,” and Job’s defense against their accusations.

God, after a time, stepped in and helped Job understand the error in his thinking regarding his great losses and painful affliction. God’s displeasure at Job’s three friends’ assumption that Job had sinned is remarkable. These men would have done far better helping Job in his misery if they had left their opinions at home and simply wept and prayed with him. —C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. Why did the “faithful son” not rejoice with his father when his wayward brother returned?
2. In the human body, when one member hurts, how does the rest of the body react?
3. Why did God set up His church, or spiritual body, to rejoice and weep one with the other?
4. What great wrong did God ascribe to Job’s three friends?
5. Job’s three friends expressed their sorrow eloquently for the first seven days of their visit. What could have prompted them to “fix” Job’s problem?
6. Jesus knew he was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Why, then, did He weep?
7. What are the most comforting expressions or actions by which people have comforted you in a time of great sorrow or pain?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When a baseball player makes it safely to home plate, the whole team is happy. The point scored benefits the team, not just the individual. The players work together as a team and rejoice as a team when any one of them is successful.

A member of Christ’s body overcoming sin is a point scored for the whole body of Christ, not just the individual. We all rejoice when our brothers and sisters live victoriously by the grace of God!

Paramedics, first responders, doctors, nurses, etc., do not try to figure out who caused an accident; they leave judgment to law enforcement and the court room. Similarly, when we try to comfort someone in emotional or spiritual pain because we see “something happened,” we do best to leave it to God to divide between right and wrong. Our job is to assist in the healing process, not see into the heart of man.

*“Thank you, Lord, for every time you help my brother and sister in Christ overcome temptation. May you bless and prosper each one in every way you see is best for them. Dear Lord, please help every one of your children who are in any distress. Comfort them as only you can and help me do my little part. Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Can you rejoice at the blessings of others though you may have never experienced such blessings? We are commanded to rejoice when we hear of the health, happiness, or prosperity of others. This is a part of our duty and yet it is much more than just a duty. We are to labor for a compassionate mind and heart.

“Jesus wept!” Christ exhibited a characteristic that showed His humanity, His sympathy, and His compassion. His life, with all of its ups and downs on earth, showed us an example of the intended nature of man. We should weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. We should feel some measure of empathy for others, especially those of the household of faith. To be indifferent about the experiences of others brings about a separation and coldness of heart that God does not desire for His people. The lack of empathy often indicates a lack of love.

We have a High Priest who is neither cold nor unfeeling concerning our temptations, afflictions, and trials. How discouraging would it be if He was without feeling for us? Would we be able to find consolation in One who was not touched by the feelings that we have? Jesus knows!!

Jesus is also thoughtful of our joys; therefore, He blesses us in our walk with Him. I’m reminded of parts of two songs: “I tell Him all my sorrows, I tell Him all my joys. I tell Him all that pleases me, I tell Him what annoys; He tells me what I ought to do, He tells me how to try, And so we walk together, My Lord and I.”

“And sometimes we laugh together, sometimes we cry, Sometimes we share together heartaches and sighs.” The depth of our empathy expresses an indication of our love that the world sees.

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Are we Pharisees or disciples??

—Bro. Paul Phillips



**NOVEMBER 23, 2025**

**BE OF THE SAME MIND; MIND NOT HIGH THINGS; BE NOT WISE IN  
YOUR OWN CONCEITS**

**Romans 12:16** Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

**1 Corinthians 1:10** Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

**Philippians 2:1** If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

**James 2:1** My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;

3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:

4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?

8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:

9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

**Proverbs 26:12** Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.

**Isaiah 5:21** Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!

**James 3:13** Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge

among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.

14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.

15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.

16 For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

—Philippians 2:5-8

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:16 **“Be not wise in your own conceits”**: Be not wise by yourselves. Do not suppose that wisdom and discernment dwell alone with you. Believe that you stand in need both of help and instruction from others (*Adam Clarke*).

**Hierarchy**: a system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority (*Oxford Dictionary*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The religious practices of the Israelites had degenerated into hierarchy by the time of Jesus and the apostles. The “men at the top” made the rules and everyone else was expected to abide by them, unjust as they were. The elite expected and received reverential treatment.

When Jesus' disciples tried to establish a pecking order in their little group, Jesus simply said, "But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant." (See *Matthew 23:1-36* and *Luke 22:24-30*)

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. Name a few people used of God who did not dress impressively, live in a nice home, or have much of this world's riches.
2. What can be missed if we judge only by the outward appearance?
3. Why is it so easy for mankind to fall into the trap of establishing a hierarchy?
4. What happens in a hierarchy?
5. How does God regard hierarchy?
6. Why is there not a hierarchal system in the body of Christ, other than Jesus being the head of the church? (Colossians 1:13-18)
7. In what ways can we regard our own opinions too highly?
8. What happens when we think too much of our opinions?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

I enjoy the game of Boggle from time to time. Boggle is played by randomly placing cubes in a square framework with letters on each face of the cubes. Players form words from the letters connected in a straight line, with longer words getting more points. Rarely do I win the game, especially when I play with my sons-in-law. An interesting pattern has emerged, however, that always intrigues me. After each round, when the players count their own words no one else found, my list is usually the shortest—but I almost always get at least a few! Taking a life lesson from this, there is rarely a situation in life where the least capable in a group cannot contribute something for the collective good of the group.

In the old days of sailing, lookouts perched high up in the ship's rigging would call out to the others what they spotted from their vantage point. Everyone understood the lookouts could see things the men on the deck could not see. The lookouts could not steer the ship, however, or do anything else while they were in their lookout

posts. Their job was important, though, because their reports helped everyone else do what needed to be done at the time.

Sailors took turns as lookouts. It was a tiresome and dangerous job. The men on the deck were not jealous of what the lookouts spotted, but understood the lookouts were merely reporting the facts as they saw them. Neither did the sailors take lightly what their mates saw. It could be a serious infraction of everyone's safety to ignore the sightings of trouble, even if it was not yet visible from the deck.

The body of Christ operates in a similar fashion. The Lord does not show everything at once to only one person at any given time, but He gives it out by measure to several. These revelations do not contradict, but complement the whole. His intention is that His body on earth share with one another in an impartial manner, not taking glory to self, nor giving glory to anyone but God.

*"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for each member of the body of Christ. Help me regard your body as you view it. Amen."*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Too many times, we can become important in our own eyes, even to the point where we will refuse help from the very person best suited to help us. We don't see that person as good enough or important enough. Maybe we think they don't treat us with the level of respect we think we deserve. An example is Naaman, who was asked by Elisha to go dip in the river Jordan to cleanse his leprosy. He became offended at the prophet because he was expecting more show, something more in line with his status. After all, kings and dignitaries of two countries had met and arranged for him to get an audience with the prophet. Surely, that was an indication of his importance, but the prophet did not even come out to see him.

Naaman's servants chose to look out for him despite his arrogance and pride. Their gentleness and care for him won his logic and then his heart, reigniting hope for a cure. His willingness to humble himself and listen to others, mere servants, resulted in him being healed and recognizing the one true God.

We also remember the woman with the expensive ointment that she poured on Jesus. We read of the indignation that arose, not from

the outsiders and onlookers, but from Jesus' very disciples; they were indignant because this ointment could have been sold and used to support the poor. In addition to pointing out that this act was done out of respect for Himself and in preparation for His burial, Jesus responded that the disciples would always have the poor with them.

There is more to following Jesus than just providing money to the poor. We may give money to support the poor. We may give them a warm meal and a place to sleep for an evening—and we feel satisfied with ourselves that we have helped the poor and done something good in Christ's name. Yet, we might be neglecting Christ Himself because of our own thoughts and desires—because of not seeking Him first. Here, instead of the disciples recognizing the somber acknowledgement of the anointing for what Christ was about to do for all mankind, they chastised Him for accepting the honor, believing it better that a few bellies might have been filled. May we always seek the will of God in all our actions.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

**NOVEMBER 30, 2025**

**RECOMPENSE TO NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL;  
PROVIDE THINGS HONEST IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN**

**Romans 12:17** Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

**Proverbs 20:22** Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

**Matthew 5:38** Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

**1 Peter 3:9** Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

**1 Corinthians 6:6** But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

7 Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?

8 Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.

**2 Corinthians 8:21** Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

**1 Thessalonians 4:11** And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

**1 Thessalonians 5:21** Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22 Abstain from all appearance of evil.

**1 Peter 2:12** Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

**1 Peter 3:16** Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

**MEMORY VERSE:** See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. —1 Thessalonians 5:15

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:17 **“Recompense”**: to give back or repay that which was given to you (*Strong’s*).

## **LESSON BACKGROUND**

Roman law allowed a Roman soldier to compel a citizen to carry his pack one Roman mile, or 1000 paces. This burden often weighed as much as 100 pounds! Jesus taught to voluntarily carry the load another mile, giving birth to the saying, “go the extra mile.”

Another Roman law permitted Jews living in Corinth—which included the believing Jews—to settle smaller matters among themselves without having to go through the Roman courts. Paul’s admonition, therefore, that church disagreements be settled through arbitration within the church, rather than through the Roman legal system, was all the weightier since arbitration was also encouraged by the Roman government. —C.L.C.

## **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. What happens when people “repay” a hurt by hurting in return?
2. How does repaying evil with good help stop the cycle of pain?
3. What enables us to “bless” those who cause us difficulties?
4. How much humility does it require to take someone to court? How much humility is needed to settle matters peacefully in order to maintain Christian fellowship?
5. If someone professing Christianity is dishonest, who notices, and who does it affect?
6. How can we maintain an honest report?
7. How does living honestly and suffering wrong without retaliation affect those who inflicted an offence?

## **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

The door burst open revealing soldiers who demanded the worshipers cease and desist. The soldiers then ordered all “true Christians” to remain, but everyone else was free to leave. Some in the room hurriedly left, but several believers stayed to face what seemed to be certain death.

After the door closed behind those who fled, the soldiers laid down their rifles and said, “We are actually Christians in search of true believers. We wish to worship God with you!”

<https://universal.org/en/bispo-macedo/clandenstine-faith/>

There are times when those who cause conflict are looking for truth in our lives. Their agitation is a “test” to see if what we have is real.

Several years ago, during a “Children’s Bible Adventure” gathering at our chapel, one particular boy did not want to go in with the rest of the children when it was time to transition from play activities to singing and Bible stories. I stayed outside with him and tried unsuccessfully for a while to get him to come inside without causing a major scene. Knowing I couldn’t leave him alone, I stayed with him. He crawled through a culvert, ran around to the other side of the chapel, and did various other “tricks” in his efforts to elude me. Finally, when he saw I would not leave him, he gave me a hug and went inside the chapel with me.

The boy came from a troubled background. He lacked security and grounding in his home life. When he finally figured out his efforts to shake me off would not work, he felt a measure of that security for which he longed. His way of thanking me was expressed by a big hug.

How many times do those who “cause me problems” look for the reassurance “we are not going anywhere,” even when they hurt us?

*“Dear Lord, help me see my fellow man more as you see them—someone who needs love even when they seem unlovable. Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

From childhood, the story of Joseph in the Bible has always been my favorite. I think what impressed me so much was how Joseph didn’t retaliate personally when he was rejected, mistreated, falsely accused, and forgotten time after time. He let God take care of him—and God did!

Joseph’s submission to the mistreatment and his reliance on God to be his Defender “allowed” God to work some true miracles. God was planning and working on something so much bigger than what Joseph, his family, or the Egyptians could imagine. However, there



were difficult steps Joseph had to be willing to go through before he could be placed in the position where God ultimately wanted him. Joseph not only needed to submit to others mistreating him, but he also had to submit to God and what He was allowing him to suffer. Somehow, he knew he couldn't turn his back on God.

But where was the fulfillment of the inspiring dream that Joseph had been so excited about when he was younger and still at home? He probably hit "rock bottom" when he found himself a forgotten prisoner all alone in a foreign land. He might never even SEE his brothers again—the ones who were supposed to bow to him someday! But God had not forgotten him. God was orchestrating many things—and on a grand scale!

When God finally put all the pieces of His great plan together, Joseph had become second in command in Egypt. Joseph's family and many others were able to see and benefit by God's handiwork rather than sadly observing disastrous results that would have been the reality if Joseph had retaliated in his own wisdom and strength. Joseph didn't fight back, and he didn't charge God foolishly! Oh, how thankful Joseph must have been that he was patient and kept trusting his God.

Lord, help me to be patient and trust you through it all! That is part of what being a real Christian is all about.

—Bro. Ron Cole

**DECEMBER 7, 2025**

**AS MUCH AS LIETH IN YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN**

**Romans 12:18** If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

**Romans 14:19** Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.

20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed *are* pure; but *it is* evil for that man who eateth with offence.

21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

**Psalms 34:12** What man *is he that* desireth life, *and* loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

**Ephesians 4:1** I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

**Hebrews 12:14** Follow peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled.

**James 3:16** For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work.

17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. —Matthew 5:9

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 14:19 “**Follow after**”: to be thoughtful and purposeful in our pursuit. “Unkind criticism or ridicule, or the strong pressure of our arguments and reasons may impede the divine life in weaker natures by leading them to act in defiance of their own conscientious convictions” (*F.B. Meyer*).

Romans 14:19 “**Peace**”: from the primary verb *eiro*—to join. Harmony and concord. Security, safety, and prosperity (*Strong's and Thayer*).

## LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul was called by God to preach the gospel where idolatry was commonplace. He was not tempted with idolatry if he was offered

meat that potentially had been offered as a sacrifice in idolatrous worship. He would not, however, eat the meat in the company of anyone who would be tempted to return to idolatry if he partook or if there was a chance they would think he was honoring the idol if he ate the meat. Paul was purposeful to not offend with his liberty.

Historically, those who did not follow peace and godliness soon fell into conflict with those who crossed them. Bitterness overtook them, and that bitterness often passed down to their descendants. Cain was the first to commit murder. After killing his brother, Cain lived in constant fear of retaliation. That fear and dread passed down to his family. Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, one of Noah's three sons, is another example. Ham's disdain for his father, and the God of his father, passed down the line to Nimrod. Nimrod was the driving force behind the tower of Babel, and therefore directly responsible for the confusion of languages and the scattering of the people over the face of the earth. —C.L.C.

### **POINTS TO PONDER**

1. How much control do we have in our ability to live peaceably with others?
2. What things do we have to "follow after" that will "make for peace" and edify others?
3. How can partaking of certain things destroy the work of God?
4. Why can our partaking of things we regard as pure, yet offensive to someone else, be evil?
5. How effective would Paul have been if he had not refused to eat or drink anything that would offend?
6. How can our tongue offend and hinder peace?
7. Why is humility and longsuffering necessary to keep peace?
8. How intentional do we have to be to "follow peace"?
9. Why is following peace with all men coupled with holiness and our home in Heaven?
10. How do we get the grace to sow peace?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Robert Nisbet, a Quaker from North Adams, Massachusetts, woke up at midnight during the middle of the week in 1777. He felt a strong impression to leave immediately to visit the Quakers in Easton, near Saratoga Springs in New York. Dressing quickly, Robert began his forty mile walk to Easton.

When Robert arrived the next morning, the Quakers of Easton had started gathering for their Thursday prayer meeting. As they were praying, someone in the group noticed a Native American warrior peering in at them through a window. The warrior looked confused, seeing people gathering quietly, unarmed, and seemingly unalarmed at his presence. The warrior then beckoned to the rest of the warriors to join him at the window. They were all armed, covered in war paint, and obviously on the war path.

Robert was the only one at the meeting who knew how to communicate with the warriors. He went outside and told them that the Quakers were peaceful and did not participate in the conflict with Great Britain. He invited them to join them in prayer. The warriors agreed, laid down their weapons, and sat with them.

After the meeting was over, the Quakers shook hands with the warriors. Zebulon Hoxie, the clerk of the meeting, went home and brought back food for everyone. The Quakers and warriors shared a meal in friendship. As the warriors left, they pinned a large white feather over the door of the meeting house as a sign to other Native Americans that these people were friends and could be trusted.

<https://springfieldfriends.org/2019/11/17/and-none-shall-make-them-afraid/#:~:text=He%20got%20up%20in%20the,day%20to%20remember%20what%20happened.>

*“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the peace you grant us. Help me to share your peace with the world around me. Help me to follow after peace and pursue it. Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Many years ago, The Lord taught me a valuable lesson about Proverbs 15:1, “A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.” I had become very discouraged because my attempts at living peaceably with a certain individual were not

successful. I had tried being quiet and not responding in kind, but it wasn't working. I decided that I might as well say whatever I wanted to say. As you might have already guessed, things got worse in a hurry, and I quickly sought The Lord for help. He corrected me with the verse above, emphasizing the "soft answer." My quiet, non-responsive approach not only didn't help the other person, but it also left me in a state of stewing quietly inside myself. As I applied Proverbs 15:1, I found it brought more peace for me and for the other person, as well.

My mother, Sis. Maxine Busbee, also had a revelation concerning this verse. Someone came to her and said they didn't believe that this scripture was true because it didn't turn away the other person's wrath. Immediately she was inspired with this answer: "Then it is your wrath that is being turned away."

All of us have people with whom we find it difficult to live peaceably. Bro. Bob Wilson once said in a message that there are problems that cannot be resolved because both parties aren't willing to right their wrongs. The good news is that The Lord has practical answers that really work. It may not work for the other person, but it can bring peace to your own heart.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

**DECEMBER 14, 2025**

### **AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES, GIVE PLACE UNTO WRATH**

**Romans 12:19** Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

**Leviticus 19:18** Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

**1 Samuel 24:1** And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi.

2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

3 And he came to the sheepecotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in

the sides of the cave.

4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.

6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work. —Proverbs 24:29

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:19 **"Vengeance"**: retaliation, vindication (to prove right), punish (*Strong's and Thayer*).

Romans 12:19 **"Give place unto wrath"**: Do not execute wrath; leave it to God; commit all to Him (*Barnes*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul's admonition to the Roman church was taken from Leviticus 19:18 where God told His people they should love their neighbor as themselves instead of avenging themselves or bearing grudges.

David had a prime opportunity in the cave to exact revenge against King Saul. However, when he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, he immediately felt condemned. His words of regret helped restrain his men from killing Saul themselves.

When a person feels tempted with revenge, their friends will usually side with them since they are more likely to see their side of the situation. When a person exercises restraint instead of seeking revenge, they are then capable and disposed to restrain their friends.

—C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. What is necessary to avoid holding a grudge?
2. What is the next step after allowing a grudge to linger?
3. How is it possible to avoid seeking revenge if we harbor a grudge?
4. How contagious is a grudge?
5. Who is likely to take on our grudge?
6. How will it affect those who take on our grudge?
7. If someone takes up our grudge, how likely are they to also seek revenge for us?
8. Who are the “winners” if we give over our hurts, offenses, and grudges to God and let Him heal our hurts?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Samuel anointed David as the future king of Israel while he was yet a youth. Not long afterward, with God’s inspiration and help, David overcame Goliath. King Saul sent him out on forays against the Philistines where it soon became evident God was with him. After one of their great victories, the women came out of all the cities of Israel and sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (I Samuel 18:7). From that point on, Saul “eyed David” and sought opportunity to kill him.

David did nothing wrong—rather, it seemed he did everything right! Saul could tell God’s blessing was upon David, even as it had withdrawn from Saul himself. His jealousy grew into a rage as he tried unsuccessfully several times to kill David.

Once when King Saul went to sleep in the front part of the cave where David and his men were hiding, David took advantage of the situation and cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe. David realized, however, he had crossed a line. Even if David intended it to be a “prank,” this small act was the start of seeking revenge, so he immediately repented of the deed.

What if David had not openly acknowledged he had done wrong? His men were not content with a small piece of Saul’s clothing. They wanted to slay Saul as he slept and claim it was “God’s providence” for them to do so. David’s initial act of cutting off Saul’s robe almost escalated into full-scale revenge!

David did not bear a grudge against King Saul. If he had harbored a grudge, he would not have repented of taking the bottom of Saul's robe. Additionally, he would have been powerless to stop his men from escalating the event to murder.

The nature of a grudge, unless repented of quickly, is that it grows into revenge. It also spreads among our friends and family, who will often take our side. The Hatfield–McCoy feud, that lasted close to thirty years and cost at least twelve lives, is a more modern example of a grudge growing into revenge that called for yet more revenge.

*“Dear God in Heaven, thank you for your great wisdom that sees forgiveness is infinitely better than a grudge. Help me to forgive rather than hold on to the pain that could ultimately destroy me and many others! Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

To pass the test of this lesson, I need to pray this prayer, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me” (Psalms 139:23-24).

As a Christian, I know that I must not physically avenge myself, but how much time do I spend avenging myself mentally by thinking, “God is going to get them!”

In a heated moment in Acts 23:1-5, Paul was commanded by the high priest to be smitten on the mouth. Paul's response was, “God shall smite thee, thou whited wall.” Paul quickly recanted, realizing he had crossed a law of God. Paul had rebuked the high priest.

“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36). An attitude of mercy will temper even the thought of God's vengeance on the matter at hand.

In Acts 7:60, Stephen, while being stoned, did not avenge himself physically by tossing a stone back or verbally by saying, “God is going to get you for this.” Instead, he said, “Lay not this sin to their charge.”

Jesus, while hanging on the cross said, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

“When He was reviled, reviled not again; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:21-23).



“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

“Give me Lord the mind of Jesus, Keep me holy as He is; May I prove I’ve been with Jesus, Who is all my righteousness” (Song #175 ELS).

—Bro. Dan Doolittle

**DECEMBER 21, 2025**

### **THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD**

**Romans 12:20** Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

**Proverbs 25:21** If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

22 For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

**2 Kings 6:8** Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp.

9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 And he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15 And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

18 And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.

21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?

22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

**MEMORY VERSE:** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. —Matthew 5:44-45

## WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:20 **“Enemy”**: one who is passively odious, or actively hostile; adversary (*Strong’s*).

Romans 12:20 **“Heap coals of fire upon his head”**: Various sources state that in ancient cultures a neighbor would loan another coals of fire from their own hearth to rekindle an extinguished fire. The coals were usually carried on top of the head in a clay pot or special basket. Head turbans insulated the head from the heat. Showing kindness to an adversary can rekindle the fire of their spirit and encourage them in a good way.

## LESSON BACKGROUND

The Syrians, under King Benhadad, made numerous incursions into Israel, plundering the land and terrorizing the people. Benhadad waged a war of attrition, hoping to wear down the Israelites.

Naaman, who had just been healed of his leprosy, could have been the one who advised Benhadad that God was telling Elisha all of the king’s strategies, who then warned the king of Israel of each planned encampment. If Naaman was the general who led the large Syrian force tasked with capturing Elisha, he would have been struck blind with the rest of his men, then given his sight again once inside Samaria—then served a meal! One can only imagine what the soldiers told Benhadad when they returned to Syria. —C.L.C.

## POINTS TO PONDER

1. In the context of Romans 12:20, how is “heaping coals of fire” on the head of an adversary a blessing to them?
2. Proverbs 25:22 states the LORD will reward those who “heap coals of fire upon his head.” By inference, what will the LORD do for those who refuse to do good to their enemies?
3. Is “heaping coals of fire on his head” intended to teach a hard lesson to our adversary and force them into a corner? Or does it show a better way in a disarming manner?
4. How frustrated do the adversaries of God’s people become when God intervenes?

5. Frustration often leads to more drastic measures by the aggressor. How is this a good opportunity to “heap coals of fire” on their head rather than retaliating?
6. What would our adversaries believe if we responded in like manner, rather than with kindness?
7. What glory does God get when we have the opportunity, and the grace, to “heap coals of fire” on the heads of our enemy?

## COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A certain young man, “Jim,” had an adversary in junior high school who repeatedly made unkind remarks to him in the hallway and in various other ways made his disdain for him apparent. Jim had no idea what caused “David” to dislike him.

One day, David, accompanied by his girlfriend, approached Jim in the hallway. As they drew closer, David’s girlfriend stumbled and dropped several books on the hall floor. Jim quickly picked up the books and handed them to the young lady. David gave a half smile and remarked, “So you’re the good Samaritan now!” Something changed that day. David never bothered Jim again.

Treating our adversaries with kindness may not “fix” every problem instantly, but it does give the best opportunity for the aggressor to reconsider. Responding in like manner, however, usually escalates the problem to a higher level.

Many instances of road rage, which turned into violence and death, could have been averted had the driver who was first treated unkindly simply backed off a little or not responded in a manner that caused even further aggression.

*“Dear Lord, thank you for your great wisdom in advising me to treat my adversary with kindness rather than retaliation. Help me to allow the greatest chance of reconciliation by having the grace and wisdom to ‘heap coals of fire’ on his head. Amen.”*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Sometimes I wonder just how Lot felt after he had so greedily chosen the best for himself,

then was taken captive and Uncle Abraham rescued him. I guess he was thankful; I don't know.

Saul sought to kill David. The Bible teaches that he that diggeth a pit for his neighbor shall fall therein. Twice David could have killed Saul, but he did not. Each time Saul seemed to be momentarily grateful.

The ultimatum seems to be, "Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house." Let us do good to those that despitefully use us. Vengeance is mine saith the Lord, I will repay.

—E.E. Gracey

**DECEMBER 28, 2025**

**BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD**

**Romans 12:21** Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

**Genesis 44:14** And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house; for he was yet there: and they fell before him on the ground.

15 And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

16 And Judah said, What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants: behold, we are my lord's servants, both we, and he also with whom the cup is found.

17 And he said, God forbid that I should do so: but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

18 Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant: for thou art even as Pharaoh.

19 My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother?

20 And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

21 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

22 And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

23 And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

30 Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us; seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life;

31 It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die: and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

32 For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

33 Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren.

34 For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

**Genesis 45:1** Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

2 And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard.

3 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence.

4 And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

5 Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life.

6 For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

7 And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

8 So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

14 And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck.

15 Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

**MEMORY VERSE:** Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. —1 Peter 3:9

### WORD DEFINITIONS

Romans 12:21 “**Evil**”: worthless, depraved, injurious, harmful, wicked (*Strong's*); troublesome, destructive (*Thayer*).

### LESSON BACKGROUND

Joseph's ten older brothers allowed their jealousy of him to grow to the extent that they sold him as a slave. As he disappeared over the horizon with the Midianites who bought him, they assumed they would never see his face again. They then deceived their father by sprinkling goat's blood on Joseph's coat of many colors before presenting it to him.

Rather than allow bitterness to overwhelm him, Joseph put his case in God's hands. Twenty-two years after selling him as a slave, Joseph's ten older brothers came to buy food in Egypt. Joseph tested them to see if they still had jealous spirits. The greatest test for his brothers came when Joseph's cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Joseph's decree was that the one who was found with his cup would be his bondservant. Joseph's tender heart could refrain no longer when Judah offered to take their youngest brother's place. Commanding all Egyptians to leave, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers and wept with them. —C.L.C.

### POINTS TO PONDER

1. How many who serve God will have opportunity to overcome evil with good?
2. How much of the “evil” in life will come through the avenue of people?

3. Why does God allow us to face this type of difficulty?
4. What choice did Joseph have to make regarding the treatment from his brothers?
5. If Joseph had not forgiven his brothers, how likely would he have been to have the positive outlook on life that allowed God to prosper him in all circumstances?
6. If Joseph had not already forgiven his brothers long ago, how difficult might it have been for him to forgive them when he finally saw them—and had the power to exact revenge?
7. If Joseph had taken advantage of his position as overseer of Egypt to punish his brothers for selling him, how might their story have ended?
8. What effect does my choice about overcoming evil with good have on those who follow after me?

### **COMMENTS AND APPLICATION**

I have a choice to make when treated in a less than kind way—a choice that is quickly narrowed down to three options: 1) treat the other person unkindly in return; 2) treat the other person with kindness, or 3) treat the other person in a way I estimate to be “neutral.”

If I chose the first option, to respond with anything less than kindness, this would send the message that I am escalating the conflict. This action often provokes the other person to respond again in a hurtful manner, thus solidifying the situation to a war-like status. The strife will only grow worse until one or both individuals de-escalate the conflict with an apology or an act of kindness. Many wars have started when the first option was chosen.

If I chose the second option, to repay evil with good, the chances of further strife are greatly diminished. There is an old saying, “It takes two to fight.” If one party refuses to retaliate when faced with evil, the one bringing the hurt has less reason to persist in antagonism.

The third option, remaining “neutral” or indifferent, very seldom ends well. The sad story of Tamar, Amnon, and Absalom in 2 Samuel 13 illustrates the danger of “stuffing down” anger. In verse 22, “Absalom spake unto his brother neither good nor bad: for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar.”



Absalom's hidden anger eventually resulted in the murder of his brother. A few years after that, Absalom tried to take his father's throne. If a person is unable, or unwilling, to properly address a hurtful situation, ignoring it will not fix it. (*For real-life application, see REFLECTIONS, pg. 42*)

*"Dear God, please help me submit my case to you when I feel threatened by evil. Help me to not resort to revenge nor to ignore the pain in hopes it will go away. Help me to have the grace and wisdom to overcome evil with good. Amen."*

—Bro. Clifford L. Cole

## REFLECTIONS

Pain is a natural feeling when treated unkindly, but how wonderful to feel both the healing release that forgiveness brings and the victory of having overcome evil by God's grace in and through our earthen vessel. The natural man is overcome of evil by avenging himself, which is both a violation of God's commandment and a perpetration of evil. Spiritually dark minds ruled by evil spirits will only be brought to God when they witness the supernatural unconditional love of God toward them through us. Therefore, God commands and enables all His children to love those who hate them and to return good for evil. We do not have to let Satan's subjects bring us under the same evil revengeful spirit and conquer God's spirit of love in our hearts. God wants to disarm the sinner with His unnatural love portrayed by His people when they are abused. According to Adam Clarke, "A moral enemy is more easily overcome by kindness than by hostility."

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses both of ancient and present-day Christians who have chosen to return good for evil. In recent years, Halima, a displaced Somalian Christian convert from Islam, was attacked by two men hired by her hostile Muslim brother. Thankfully, a policeman stopped the beating and arrested the perpetrators. As she was kneeling in prayer after arriving home, bleeding and with swollen face, she heard God tell her to go to the police station and get her attackers released. The next morning, she prepared breakfast for them and gave it to them after signing for their release. Nine months later while near the same location where

she had been beaten, she met one of the attackers who told her that he had struggled to sleep for six weeks until finally placing his faith in Jesus Christ.

Another recent account of returning good for evil involved a North African Christian pastor's widow visiting and helping one of her husband's murderers in his time of need. If these saints and myriads of others have pushed through the pain to return good for evil, so can we.

Sadly, too many professing Christians gloss over the twelfth chapter of Romans, which is full of practical applications of all the truths expressed in the preceding chapters. Lord, we want to allow you to continue transforming us and renewing our minds that we exhibit the true spirit of Christ's reconciliatory love to our enemies. May God help us to beat the swords of our natural carnality into "plowshares" to soften hard hearts with the seeds of the gospel while bearing up against great injustices, just as God's ancient prophets predicted we would do.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

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