

**Don't Let Evil get the Best of You,  
Overcome Evil with Good.  
Romans 12:17-21**

**Romans 12:17–21 (NKJV)**

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. <sup>19</sup> Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*" says the Lord.

<sup>20</sup> Therefore

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;  
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his  
head."*

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

## Introduction.

In Matthew 5:44, Jesus says one of the most profound things in all of the gospels. Something that is the absolute opposite of all of human disposition. It is the antithesis of all human experience. It is a command to do someone we cannot apart from devine intervention.

He says, “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you. pray for those who spitefully use you and persecuted you.”

He uses the strongest of all “loves” found in the Bible. The agape love, a love of total commitment, a love of self sacrifice for the needs of others.

Probably the greatest definition of this kind of love is found in

1 Corinthians 13:4–7

You are most likely familiar with it.

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely, does not seek its own....etc.

Now if we are not careful, we can fall into a christian lethargy regarding this text. We can be so familiar with it that we actually fail to apply it.

So what I would like to do is to take the text by add a direct object to it that would reflect what Jesus is calling on all of to do regarding our enemies.

### 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> Love suffers long with my enemy *and* is kind to my enemy ; love does not envy my enemy; love does not parade itself in front of my enemy, is not puffed up regarding my vengeance against my enemy ; <sup>5</sup> does not behave rudely toward my enemy, does not seek its own from my enemy, is not provoked by my enemy , thinks no evil of my enemy; <sup>6</sup> does not rejoice in iniquity of my enemy, but rejoices in the truth; <sup>7</sup> bears all things regarding my enemy, believes all things about my enemy, hopes all good things for my enemy, endures all things from my enemy.

It is easy to look a Biblical love in an abstract way. But when one loves his enemy, it puts meat on the bones and helps you and I see what true biblical love is.

But who is the enemy here.

Some have a tendency especially in the West to think in lighter terms of the word enemy.

Like,

Someone who has gossiped about me or slandered me. The person or even your spouse that speaks harsh to you and is unforgiving for a wrong done. Someone who lied about his accomplishments to get the Job that you deserved. Someone that over billed you for a product or service and stole money from you. The neighbor who threatened you or your animals because the dog came in their yard or barks to much. The man who opens his door in the parking lot and puts a dent in your car. The person lashes out in anger toward you for a small issue. The person you spreads nails in your driveway for pure meanness, like what happened to my mom a few years ago. The list would seem unending.

But, although, all of these could and should be included in the group of people who can do you wrong and should get the same response of love and forgiveness that an enemy should get... what the Bible is talking about regarding the enemy is much more than this.

**ἐχθρός *echthrós***; fem. *echthrá*, neut. *echthrón*, adj. from *échthos* (n.f.), hatred, enmity. Hostile, inimical.—-harmful, likely to cause damage, or have a bad effect, antagonistic, inhospitable, unfriendly, unpleasant, opposed, contentious, adversarial, conflicting, contrary, adverse, militant, belligerent, malicious, combative, pugnacious, quarrelsome, vindictive, rude, hateful, discourteous, inconsiderate

(I) In Rom. 11:28, enemies, in contrast to *agapētós* (27), beloved.

(II) In an act. sense, as a subst., *ho echthrós*, an enemy, adversary (Matt. 5:43;

10:36; 13:25; Luke 1:71; 19:43; Phil. 3:18, “enemies of the cross”); in a pass. sense, a person hated or rejected as an enemy (Matt. 5:44; 13:28, 39, the adversary, Satan; 22:44, the adversaries of the

Messiah; Mark 12:36; Luke 1:74; 6:27, 35; 10:19, Satan; 19:27; 20:43; Acts 13:10; Rom. 5:10; 11:28; 12:20; 1 Cor. 15:25; Gal. 4:16; Col. 1:21; 2 Thess. 3:15; Heb. 1:13; 10:13; James 4:4, of God; Rev. 11:5, 12). Metaphorically (1 Cor. 15:26).

**Deriv.:** *échthra* (2189), enmity, hatred.

**Syn.:** *enantíos* (1727), opposite, contrary, antagonistic; *anósios* (462), wicked, unholy; *stugnētós* (4767), hated, odious, hateful; *bdeluktós* (947), detestable, abominable; *misóúmenos*, the pres. pass. part. of *miséō* (3404), to hate, hated.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

367 אֵיב ( *’ō·yēb* ): n.masc. [oth subst.ptcp. of 366]; ≡ Str 341; TWOT 78—LN

39.1–39.12 enemy, foe, i.e., one in open opposition and hostility to another (Ge 22:17), note: 1Sa 18:29 may be interp as v. 366

Swanson, J. (1997). In [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew \(Old Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

to press, to compress (kindred to the root צוּר), hence—(1) *to bind up, to bind together* (Arab. صَرَّ), followed

by **כָּבַד** to wrap up in a cloth or bundle, Ex. 12:34; Job 26:8; Isa. 8:16; Proverbs 30:4. Metaph. 1 Sa. 25:29, “the life of my lord shall be bound up in the bundle of the living with God,” i.e. shall be under the protection of God. But in another sense, Hos. 13:12, “the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up,” i.e. reserved for him against the day of vengeance; comp. Job 14:17; whence **כָּבַד**.

(2) *to lay hold of*, Hos. 4:19.

(3) *to shut up*, 2 Sam. 20:3.

(4) *to oppress, to persecute, to treat in a hostile manner* (Arab. **خَسَرَ**),

Gesenius, W., & Tregelles, S. P. (2003). In [Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures](#) (p. 719). Logos Bible Software.

These are those that are hostile toward you, who work hard at causing you harm and discomfort. This word is used of the enemies of Israel, whom God instructed for them to go into the promise land and kill every living thing. They are destructive to your body and poisonous to your soul.

This is not talking about bad attitude of your boss or the man speaks ill of you, although these could be included. This is the enemy who intends to do you and your family harm, whether it is physical, financial or emotional. This is the person who would love to see you suffer and not succeed but would rejoice in your destruction and downfall.

This is the man or woman who is glad to see you get a divorce so they can have you all to

themselves. This with the man who plots and schemes to take all you have worked for all your life.

This is the man who desires to kidnap your child and take them away.

This is the man who would not hesitate to see you dead.

Luke 6:27–28 (NKJV)

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who **hate** you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who **curse** you, and pray for those who **spitefully use** you.

All of these are Present Tense verbs.

**μισέω *miséō***; contracted *misó*, fut. *misésō*. To hate.

(I) With the acc. of person, usually implying active ill will in words and conduct, a persecuting spirit. meaning to detest, abhor

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In The complete word study dictionary: New Testament (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

<sup>28</sup> **bless those who curse you**

**καταράομαι *kataráomai***; contracted *katarómai*, fut. *katarásomai*, mid. deponent from *aráomai* (n.f.), to wish something to happen. To wish anyone evil or ruin, to curse, to give one over to ruin (Matt. 5:44 [TR]; Mark

11:21; Luke 6:28; Rom. 12:14; James 3:9; Sept.: Gen. 12:3; Num. 24:9). In the perf. pass., to be cursed (Matt. 25:41).

**syn.:** *anathematízō* (332), to declare *anáthema* (331), accursed, devoted to destruction,

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

**28** and pray for those who **spitefully use** you.

**ἐπηρεύω:** to mistreat, with the implication of threats and abuse—‘to mistreat.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 756). United Bible Societies.

Matthew 5:44 (NKJV)

**44** But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and **persecute** you,

**διώκω *diókhō*;** fut. *diókhō*, from *díō* (n.f.), to pursue, prosecute,

persecute, but also to pursue in a good sense. **To prosecute, persecute, pursue**

**with repeated acts of enmity** (Matt. 5:10–12, 44; 10:23;

23:34; Luke 21:12; John 5:16; 15:20; Acts 7:52; 9:4, 5; 22:4, 7, 8; 26:11, 14, 15; Rom. 12:14; 1 Cor. 15:9; 2 Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; 4:29; 5:11; 6:12; Phil. 3:6; 2 Tim. 3:12; Rev.

12:13). To follow after (Luke 17:23). **To follow or press hard**

**after, to pursue with earnestness and diligence**

**in order to obtain, to go after with the desire of**

**obtaining**



Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Now, for clarity, God is not asking us to do something He is unwilling to do or that he has not done.

He has loved and does love His enemies.

But some would object and say, wait a minute. We have example after example of God destroying his enemies in the OT. And many example of God commanding the Israelites to kill all the Canaanites who where vile and wretched people who practiced child sacrifice and all the other pagan occupants of the promise land. God said of the Amalikites to wipe them and their memory of the face of the earth.

And add to this the Imprecatory Psalms, where God's servants like David are calling down fire and judgements on their enemies.

~~~~~ How is this loving your enemies.

This in fact this is what led the Jews to misinterpret the OT scripture to justify their hatred of the Gentiles and the Samaritans.

Matthew 5:43 (NKJV)

<sup>43</sup> *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’*

So how can God say love your enemies while saying kill all the Canaanites or not correcting David for praying the imprecatory prayers to destroy his enemies?

**Ps 69:22–28. LSB**

- 22 May their table before them become •a snare;  
And <sup>b</sup>when they are in peace, *may it become* •a trap.
- 23 May their eyes darken so that they cannot see,  
And make their loins quake continually.
- 24 Pour out Your indignation on them,  
And may Your burning anger overtake them.
- 25 May their <sup>a</sup>camp be desolate;  
May none dwell in their tents.
- 26 For they have persecuted him whom You Yourself have struck down,  
And they recount •the pain of those whom You have wounded.
- 27 Add iniquity to their iniquity,  
And may they not come into Your righteousness.
- 28 May they be blotted out of the book of life

And may they not be recorded with the  
righteous

[Legacy Standard Bible](#) (Ps 69:22–28). (2022). Three Sixteen Publishing.

Psalm 69:9 ()

9 For zeal for Your house has consumed me,  
And the reproaches of those who reproach  
You have fallen on me.

Psalm 139:19–24 (NKJV)

19 Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!  
Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty men.

20 For they speak against You wickedly;  
Your enemies take *Your name* in vain.

21 Do I not hate them, O Lord, who hate You?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against  
You?

22 I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
Try me, and know my anxieties;

24 And see if *there is any* wicked way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting.

We have to hold this tension between loving our  
enemies personally and yet also loving Justice for  
our enemies.

I can genuinely love the man who brutally assaulted my 90 year old mother and pray for his repentance and salvation, while at the same time praying that justice would be true and swift that God's law will not be dishonored

We are to seek justice for those who break the Law we are to seek an eye for an eye in the court of law

But at the same time we are to Love those who are our personal enemies, Just like God has done. He is the greatest example of loving your enemies but never at the expense of Justice.

He is the greatest example of loving someone who hates you and despises you, trashes you, disregards you, speaks evil of you and denies you.

He loves us when we were enemies.

Colossians 1:21 (NKJV)

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled

### Romans 5:9–10 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

<sup>10</sup> For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

### Romans 8:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.

When we were hostile toward God, and hated his intrusion into our lives, He sent His son to die in your place.

The punishment that you deserved for the Crimes you have committed against the supreme Law of the Universe that deserve eternal punishment for treason against the King of Kings, Jesus took on himself

Donald Grey Barnhouse writes:

When the nations were raging and the peoples imagining a vain thing, he did not move to destroy them. He did not destroy Adam when he sinned, but promised a

Savior and began the long course of history so that man could have opportunity upon opportunity to repent and return to God.... He did not destroy us when we were ungodly sinners. He came from heaven to save us. He came into the camp of his enemies and allowed them to do their will against him in order to establish the foundation for our redemption. When we were without strength, when we were enemies, Christ died for us. Note that he did not save us by demonstrating his mighty power in some miracle. He saved us—He saved us by letting us kill him. How astonishing this is!

And when he rose from the dead he did not judge those who behaved so wickedly against him. The Jerusalem to which he held out his arms before he died was still the center of his loving thought. He commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, but he commanded them to begin at Jerusalem. Was this not heaping coals of fire upon the heads of his enemies? And did it not melt the hearts of many?

Boice, J. M. (1991–). [Romans: The New Humanity](#) (Vol. 4, pp. 1611–1612). Baker Book House.

## Lesson

**The Command regarding Evil**

**The Consistency regarding Evil**

**The Contingency regarding Evil**

**The Conduct regarding Evil**

## I. The Command regarding Evil

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil.

μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες,

This is the polar opposite of the bent of our sinful nature. It is natural for our fallen flesh to lash out and give evil to someone who has done evil to us. It is natural for the sinful flesh to do harm to someone who has done harm to us.

This is the way of the world, the way of the lost and the way of the devil.

## I.The Command regarding Evil

## II. The Consistency regarding Evil

<sup>17</sup> Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

Romans 14:19 (NKJV)

<sup>19</sup> Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Psalms 34:14 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> Depart from evil and do good;  
Seek peace and pursue it.

Matthew 5:9–11 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> **Blessed are the peacemakers,**  
**For they shall be called sons of God.**

The Command regarding Evil

The Consistency regarding Evil

## 3. The Contingency regarding Evil



**19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord.

<sup>19</sup> Beloved, do not avenge yourselves

19 Never take your own revenge, beloved

[New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#) (Ro 12:19). (1995). The Lockman Foundation.

**Beloved**, these tender words highlighting “Paul’s awareness of the difficulty of this requirement

Ventura, R. (2023). [Expository Outlines & Observations on Romans: Hints and Helps for Preachers and Teachers](#) (p. 339). Mentor.

— —-do not avenge yourselves,  
Pres Act Part

ἐκδικέω<sup>b</sup>; ἐκδίκησις<sup>b</sup>, εως *f*: to repay harm with harm, on the assumption that the initial harm was unjustified and that retribution is therefore called for — ‘to pay back, to revenge, to seek retribution, retribution, seeking retribution.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 495). United Bible Societies.

Do NOT be seeking to hand out Justice yourself.  
Do not seek to be the vigilante

When you are done wrong, seek to leave it with God and the authorities he has ordained.

**19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, “*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,*” says the Lord.

— —-but *rather* give **place** to wrath

ἀλλὰ δότε Aorist A Imperative

**occasion** ⇔ **place n.** — an opportunity understood as if having the room or space to function or perform.

Ephesians 4:26–27 (NKJV)

<sup>26</sup> “*Be angry, and do not sin*”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, <sup>27</sup> nor give place to the devil.

“leave the place, and let wrath occupy it; or give place, as a man would do if attacked by a wild beast, stepping aside to let it rush by”, Haldane

Morris, L. (1988). [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#) (p. 454). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

The Command regarding Evil

The Consistency regarding Evil

The Contingency regarding Evil

## The Conduct regarding Evil

<sup>20</sup> Therefore

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;  
For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his  
head.”*

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

v. 20 Therefore—

**Therefore** or perhaps better translated from Greek text “but” or “on the contrary

Ventura, R. (2023). [Expository Outlines & Observations on Romans: Hints and Helps for Preachers and Teachers](#) (p. 340). Mentor.

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
If he is thirsty, give him a drink;*

*For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”*

This is quoted from **Proverbs 25:21-22**

It is sandwiched between some interesting proverbs

Proverbs 25:16–24 (NKJV)

- <sup>16</sup> Have you found honey?  
Eat only as much as you need,  
Lest you be filled with it and vomit.
- <sup>17</sup> Seldom set foot in your neighbor’s house,  
Lest he become weary of you and hate you.
- <sup>18</sup> A man who bears false witness against his  
neighbor  
*Is like* a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow.
- <sup>19</sup> Confidence in an unfaithful *man* in time of trouble  
*Is like* a bad tooth and a foot out of joint.
- <sup>20</sup> *Like* one who takes away a garment in cold  
weather,  
*And like* vinegar on soda,  
*Is* one who sings songs to a heavy heart.
- <sup>21</sup> If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat;  
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;
- <sup>22</sup> For so you will heap coals of fire on his head,

And the Lord will reward you.

<sup>23</sup> The north wind brings forth rain,  
And a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.

<sup>24</sup> *It is* better to dwell in a corner of a housetop,  
Than in a house shared with a contentious  
woman.

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;*

ψωμίζω connects with ψωμίον, “a morsel”, and means “*feed by putting little bits into the mouth, as nurses do to children*” (LSJ). But clearly here there is no question of the manner in which food is given; it is simply a matter of feeding a hungry foe.

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

ψωμίζω<sup>a</sup>:

**Present active imperative** of verb from ψωμος

Robertson, A. T. (1933). [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Ro 12:20). Broadman Press.

to cause someone to eat—‘to feed, to give to eat.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 248). United Bible Societies.

The implication is that we should give any help that is needed (and not confine our help to these two

articles of diet). This is no piece of lofty, ethereal advice without application to the practicalities of daily life, but something very down-to-earth. Cragg comments, “spiritual fare is poor sustenance for an empty stomach.... To a hungry person blessing means bread”.

Morris, L. (1988). [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#) (p. 454). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Exodus 23:4–5 (NKJV)

<sup>4</sup> “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. <sup>5</sup> If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.

Proverbs 24:17 (NKJV)

<sup>17</sup> Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,  
And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;

1 Samuel 24:9–19 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> And David said to Saul: “Why do you listen to the words of men who say, ‘Indeed David seeks your harm’? <sup>10</sup> Look, this day your eyes have seen that the Lord delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and *someone* urged *me* to kill you. But *my eye* spared you, and I said, ‘I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he *is* the Lord’s anointed.’

<sup>11</sup> Moreover, my father, see! Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that *there is* neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you. Yet you hunt my life to take it. <sup>12</sup> Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you. But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>13</sup> As the proverb of the ancients says, ‘Wickedness proceeds from the wicked.’ But my hand shall not be against you. <sup>14</sup> After whom has the king of Israel come out? Whom do you pursue? A dead dog? A flea? <sup>15</sup> Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand.”

<sup>16</sup> So it was, when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul said, “*Is* this your voice, my son David?” And Saul lifted up his voice and wept. <sup>17</sup> Then he said to David: “You *are* more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. <sup>18</sup> And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the Lord delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. <sup>19</sup> For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore

may the Lord reward you with good for what you have done to me this day.

*For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”*

It is clearly a metaphorical expression whose meaning is not obvious. From early times some have drawn attention to Old Testament passages expressing the idea of punishment (e.g., 2 Sam. 22:9, 13 = Ps. 18:8, 12; Ps. 11:6; 120:4; 140:10). The thought then would be that by doing your enemy kindness you were increasing his guilt and magnifying his punishment

Morris, L. (1988). [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#) (p. 454). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Moffatt’s translation gives the sense of it: “for in this way you will make him feel a burning sense of shame”.

Morris, L. (1988). [\*The Epistle to the Romans\*](#) (p. 455). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

William Klassen, however, has made a detailed examination of the problem and rejects such solutions. “The interpretation so widely accepted by interpreters that the coals of fire refer to shame, remorse, or



punishment lacks all support in the text.” He points to a custom attested in Egyptian literature whereby a penitent person carried coals of fire in a bowl on his head and to contacts between Proverbs and Egyptian writings and says, “In the Egyptian literature and in Proverbs the ‘coals of fire’ is a dynamic symbol of change of mind which takes place as a result of a deed of love.” Whether we prefer to go along with Moffatt or with Klassen, there can be no doubt that Paul is referring to the change in the enemy which deeds of love effect. As Barrett, Bruce, and Barclay all say in one form or another, we should use deeds of love to turn the enemy into a friend.

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#) (p. 455). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νίκα ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν.

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<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil

This is because to be overcome by evil means to respond to evil with evil, that is, to fight back, and that is the most natural thing for a sinful human being to do. It was summed up in a recent comic strip in which Hagar the Horrible tells his son, “Son, don’t let the sun go down upon your wrath.... Attack your enemy at once and waste him while what he did to you is still fresh in your mind.”

Boice, J. M. (1991–). [Romans: The New Humanity](#) (Vol. 4, p. 1631). Baker Book House.

**Pres. Pass Imperative** —do not be being overcome by evil

**νικάω *nikáō***; contracted *nikō*, fut. *nikésō*, from ***nikē*** (3529), victory. To be victorious, prevail (Rom. 3:4 quoted from Sept.: Ps. 51:4 where the Hebr. word means to be pure; Rev. 5:5). Used trans., meaning to overcome, conquer, subdue (Luke 11:22; Rom. 12:21). Spoken of Jesus or His followers as victorious over the world, evil, and all the adversaries of His kingdom with the acc. expressed or implied

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

to be overcome by evil means to respond to evil with evil. When we do this we simply increase the amount of evil in the situation. The command not to

do this is an important negative; evil must not be allowed to triumph.

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#) (p. 455). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

\_\_\_\_\_ but overcome evil with good.

ἀλλὰ—

overcome, Pres Act Imp. actively pursue doing good...

Luther, “Men commonly regard as the victor the one who has the last word and can deal the last blow, whereas, as a matter of fact, he who is the last to inflict pain is the one who is worse off, for the evil remains with him while the other is done with it.” Boylan comments, “Evil only grows through being requited.”

Morris, L. (1988). [The Epistle to the Romans](#). W.B. Eerdmans; Inter-Varsity Press.

Matthew 5:44–47 (NKJV)

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do

the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Lewis Johnson concludes his exposition of this chapter well when he reminds us that,

As we look over the chapter, it becomes clear that the apostle's emphasis is on the necessity of being something first, and then of doing something. Right conduct can flow only from right being and thinking. Thus, the first step in the fulfillment of 12:3–21 can be accomplished only by the “Christian offering” that Paul refers to in verse 1, and the transformation of the believer by the renewing of the believer's mind through the Word of God (set forth in v. 2).

Ventura, R. (2023). [\*Expository Outlines & Observations on Romans: Hints and Helps for Preachers and Teachers\*](#) (p. 341). Mentor.

Robert S. Candlish, devotes several pages in his study of Romans 12 to this problem, pointing out that if our Christianity is lukewarm, if we seldom openly identify with Christ's cause, the danger of

persecution and the resulting temptation to retaliate will be slight. But if we stand for Christ, for righteousness, and are persecuted, what then? “Can flesh and blood stand it?” he asks. “Can you abstain in your hearts from venting what is but too near akin to a malediction or a curse? Can you help yourselves from partly giving way to what may seem fully justifiable emotions of personal resentment and a personal sense of unprovoked and undeserved wrong?”

“No!” he answers. “Not unless you make conscience of blessing those whom you are thus tempted to curse.”

Boice, J. M. (1991–). [Romans: The New Humanity](#) (Vol. 4, p. 1608). Baker Book House.

So let’s learn to pray for and bless others. Robert Candlish says:

When you suffer wrong, call to mind the considerations which should bring the wrong-doer before you in a very different light. Look at his case rather than your own.... If you put yourself in his place, you will see much, very much, that should charm all your resentment away and turn it into tenderest pity and concern.... Ask yourself what, if his history had been yours, you would have been, how you—if his lot were

yours, his training, his habits, his companions—would be inclined to think and feel and act. You cease to wonder at his obtuseness and his opposition. You are drawn and not repelled by that too easily accounted for infatuation of his, which really hurts not you, but, alas! is ruining his own benighted soul. No thought of self can find harbor within you. All your thought is of him. Your bowels yearn over him and more for the very blindness and madness which make him a persecutor. And so you bless, and do not curse.

Boice, J. M. (1991–). [Romans: The New Humanity](#) (Vol. 4, p. 1609). Baker Book House.

5 things I would recommend for to help you practice this.

**1. Confess your sin** of your lack of love for your enemies

**2. Read the Scripture**

Become very familiar with how God loved you when you were His enemy.

**3. Bathe this in Prayer.**

**4. Seek to be filled** with the Spirit

**5. Die to self** —be willing to take up the cross.

When you're not forgiven, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you sting and hurt with the insult or the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ, that is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but you take it all in patient, loving silence, that is dying to self.

And when you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any annoyance, when you can stand face-to-face with waste and folly and extravagance and spiritual insensibility and you can endure it as Jesus endured it, that is dying to self.

And when you are content with any circumstance, any food, any offering, any clothing, any climate, any society, any solicitude, any interruption by the will of God, that is dying to self.

And when you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after any commendation from others, when you can truly love to be unknown, that is dying to self.

When you see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy nor question God while your own needs are far greater and your circumstances more desperate, that is dying to self.

And when you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart, that is dying to self.



## Psalm 135:1–10 (NKJV)

- Praise the name of the Lord;  
Praise *Him*, O you servants of the Lord!
- 2 You who stand in the house of the Lord,  
In the courts of the house of our God,
- 3 Praise the Lord, for the Lord *is* good;  
Sing praises to His name, for *it is* pleasant.
- 4 For the Lord has chosen Jacob for Himself,  
Israel for His special treasure.
- 5 For I know that the Lord *is* great,  
And our Lord *is* above all gods.
- 6 Whatever the Lord pleases He does,  
In heaven and in earth,  
In the seas and in all deep places.
- 7 He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the  
earth;  
He makes lightning for the rain;  
He brings the wind out of His treasuries.
- 8 He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt,  
Both of man and beast.
- 9 He sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, O  
Egypt,  
Upon Pharaoh and all his servants.
- 10 He defeated many nations  
And slew mighty kings—

## Hebrews 13:20–21 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, <sup>21</sup> make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.