

Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Zoom Meeting ID:

 **828 7580 6094** ► **Thursday May 8, 2025**

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Romans 14:8 (NLT) If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Supernatural Living—Part 2 Continued

The fourth circle in Paul's list of basic characteristics of the supernatural Christian life widens again to include our responsibilities to personal enemies.

Romans 12:17–21 (NASB95)

17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. **18** If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. **19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. **20** "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

POINT 4 - OUR DUTY TOWARD PERSONAL ENEMIES

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NEVER RETURN EVIL FOR EVIL (12:17a)

First, we are **never** to **pay back evil for evil to anyone**, reiterating and extending the second aspect of the principle taught in verse 14. We not only are to bless those who persecute us and *not* curse them, but certainly are never to move beyond a verbal curse to an act of revenge.

The Old Testament law of “eye for eye, tooth for tooth” (**Ex. 21:24**; cf. Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21) pertained to civil justice, not personal revenge. Not only that, but its major purpose was to prevent the severity of punishment from exceeding the severity of the offense. In other words, someone guilty of destroying another person’s eye could not be punished with any greater penalty than that of forfeiting one of his own eyes.

A few verses later in this letter Paul declares **Romans 13:3–5 (NLT)**

³ For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. ⁴ The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong. ⁵ So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.

But that very authority, which not only is divinely permitted but divinely mandated for civil government, is divinely forbidden for personal purposes.

“See that no one repays another with evil for evil,” Paul warned the Thessalonian believers, “but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men” (**1 Thess. 5:15**). Peter echoes the same truth in nearly the same words: “To sum

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up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3:8–9).

ALWAYS RESPECT WHAT IS RIGHT (12:17b)

A right attitude toward enemies involves **respect** of **what is right in the sight of all men**. If we genuinely **respect** others, including our enemies, we will have a “built in” protection against angrily repaying them evil for evil and will be predisposed to doing **what is right** toward them.

Such **respect** will help us develop the self-discipline necessary to prepare ourselves beforehand for responding to evil with what is good instead of with what is bad. Believers should respond instinctively and spontaneously with what is pleasing to God and beneficial to others.

Right refers to that which is naturally good, proper, and honest. It also carries the idea of being visibly, obviously **right**, as emphasized in its being fitting and proper **in the sight of all men**. Paul is not speaking of hidden feelings but of outwardly expressed goodness. Our forgiving, gracious behavior toward our enemies should commend us to them and to others who witness that behavior. It will also “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect” (**Titus 2:10**).

LIVE IN PEACE WITH EVERYONE (12:18)

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Fulfillment of the next characteristic is conditional; in that it partly depends on the attitudes and responses of our enemies. **If possible**, Paul therefore says, **so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men**. Whether between nations or individuals, peace is two-way. By definition, a peaceful relationship cannot be one-sided. Our responsibility is to make sure that our side of the relationship is right, that our inner desire is genuinely to **be at peace with all men**, even the meanest and most undeserving. Short of compromising God's truth and standards, we should be willing to go to great lengths to build peaceful bridges to those who hate us and harm us. We must forsake any grudge or settled bitterness and fully forgive from the heart all who harm us. Having done that, we can seek reconciliation honestly.

NEVER AVENGE YOURSELF (12:19)

The last two characteristics Paul lists here are both stated again, he denounces returning evil for evil, declaring, **Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God**. If a wrong has been done to us, no matter how serious and harmful it may have been, we are never qualified for or have a right to render punishment for the offense ourselves. We are to leave that to **the wrath of God**. Quoting from the Mosaic law (Deut. 32:35), the apostle reminds his readers that **it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord** (cf. 2 Sam. 22:48; Nah. 1:2; Heb. 10:30). In His divine time, the wrath of God will come (Col. 3:6), and just retribution awaits the unforgiven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **There are two things you must never do when people do evil things against you according to these verses. What are they?**

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2. There are three things you should do according to these verses. What are they?

3. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson?

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD (12:20–21)

But merely not returning evil for evil does not fulfill our responsibility. And sometimes the positive part is more difficult. To withhold vengeance is one thing. It requires only doing nothing. But to actually return good for evil is quite another.

Yet that was the obligation of the godly man even under the Old Covenant. Paul quotes from **Proverbs 25:21–22**, citing God’s centuries-old injunction: **“But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.”**

The phrase **heap burning coals upon his head** referred to an ancient Egyptian custom. When a person wanted to demonstrate public deep sorrow, he would carry on his head a pan of burning coals to represent the burning pain of his shame and guilt. The point here is that, when we love our enemy and genuinely seek to meet his needs, we shame him for his hatred.

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The admonition **Do not be overcome by evil** has two meanings and applications. First, we must not allow the **evil** done to us by other people to **overcome** and overwhelm us. Second, and even more important, we must not allow ourselves to be **overcome** by our *own evil* responses. Our own evil is infinitely more detrimental to us than is the evil done to us by others.

In each case, it is the **evil** itself that must be **overcome**, and that can be accomplished only **with good**.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In vss. 2021, what is the biblical way to conquer evil done against you by other people? Can you think of any illustrations of people actually doing this?
2. What stood out to you in this section of the lesson? How can you apply it to your life?

Closing Prayer