

Romans – Gospel of God Exalted

Facilitated by Sister Patricia Weaver

Zoom Meeting ID:

 **828 7580 6094 ► Thursday May 1, 2025**

Women of Excellence

Bible Study 7pm

Memory Verse

Romans 13:8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the law*.

Supernatural Living—Part 2

Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (12:14–16)

The third circle in Paul's list of basic characteristics of the supernatural Christian life widens broadly to include our duty to everyone in general, believers and unbelievers.

POINT 3 - OUR DUTY TO ALL PEOPLE

BLESS THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU (12:14a)

This section begins with a very difficult warning, one that is completely contrary to unsaved human nature: **Bless those who persecute you.** The obedient Christian not only must resist hating and retaliating against those who harm him but is commanded to take the additional step of blessing them.

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Paul is essentially paraphrasing the Lord's own words: "I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you" (**Luke 6:27–28**; cf. Matt. 5:44). Jesus referred to the same self-giving, heartfelt, unhypocritical, willing love (*agapē*) that Paul admonishes in Romans 12:9. Lest anyone think he was speaking simply of kind feelings, the Lord gave several specific illustrations of what genuine love does in response to mistreatment. "Whoever hits you on the cheek," He commands, "offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back" (**Luke 6:29–30**). Commenting further about our attitude in such situations, He explains, "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same" (vv. 32–33). To truly **bless** those **who persecute** us is to treat them as if they were our friends.

Some years ago, in the store where he was working, a nephew of mine was murdered by an addict looking for drug money. Although deeply grieved by this tragic loss, my brother-in-law has refused to become bitter or hateful. Instead, his continued desire and prayer has been for the salvation of the man who took his son's life. He even visited him in prison to give him the greatest blessing, the gospel. Such is the kind of distinctive Christian love that seeks to bless those who do us terrible harm.

As we would expect, the supreme example of blessing one's persecutors was given by our Lord Himself. As the sinless Son of God hung in great sin-bearing on the cross, He prayed with unimaginable mercy, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (**Luke 23:34**). As he lay beneath the bloody stones

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that were crushing the life out of him, Stephen echoed those words of his Savior, saying, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” (**Acts 7:60**). “For you have been called for this purpose,” Peter wrote many years later, “since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously” (**1 Pet. 2:21–23**).

BLESS AND DO NOT CURSE THEM (12:14b)

Although it should go without saying, Paul makes certain to explain that true blessing of those who persecute us is understood and permanent. Not only are we to **bless them**, we are **not** at all or ever to **curse** them.

Because of the general tone of religious freedom in modern western society, physical or political persecution for one’s Christian faith is rare. Our temptations to curse are more likely to be in reaction to hostility that does us no life-threatening harm but causes us inconvenience or embarrassment. Some studies have indicated that much high blood pressure and other anxiety-related disease is caused not by serious, long-term problems and life-threatening pressures but by persistent attitudes of resentment and hostility that eat at people who habitually react negatively to unpleasant situations and people. It is often a host of “little foxes” that do the most damage in our spiritual and emotional “vineyards” (cf. Song of Sol. 2:15).

Discussion Questions

- 1. How does God want you to respond to persecution? Explain**

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2. What stood out to you in this portion of the lesson?

REJOICE WITH THOSE WHO REJOICE (12:15a)

In a much more positive vein, Paul next counsels us to **rejoice with those who rejoice**. At first thought, that principle would seem easy to follow. But when another person's blessing and happiness is at our expense, or when their favored circumstances or notable accomplishments make ours seem barren and dull, the flesh does not lead us to rejoice but tempts us to resent.

The person "who rejoices at calamity" displeases God and "will not go unpunished" (**Prov. 17:5**). But it is distinctively Christian to rejoice in the blessings, honor, and welfare of others—especially fellow believers—no matter what may be our personal circumstances. As always, Paul followed his own counsel. Just as he had formerly told the Corinthian believers that "if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it" (**1 Cor. 12:26**), he later assured them, "My joy would be the joy of you all" (**2 Cor. 2:3**).

WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP (12:15b)

It is also the character of Christians to be sensitive to the disappointments, hardships, and sorrows of others, to **weep with those who weep**. That is the duty of sympathy, empathy, entering into the suffering of others. Compassion has in the very word the idea of suffering with someone. God is called a compassionate God (Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). He is so compassionate, so tender

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toward His people, that “His compassions never fail” (**Lam. 3:22**). James speaks of Him as being “full of compassion” (**James 5:11**). We see this compassion, sympathy, and tenderheartedness of God in the tears of Jesus over the grave of Lazarus. He mingled His tears with those of Mary and Martha (John 11:35). Reminding us that we should reflect our Lord’s character, Paul said, “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (**Col. 3:12**).

Surely one of the most touchingly profound testimonies to God’s heart of tender sympathy toward His children who weep is found in Psalm 56, where the writer implores the Lord, “Put my tears in Thy bottle” (**v. 8**). The Lord stores up our tears as treasures. If we are to be like our Father and His Son, we, too, must enter into the sorrow of others.

In addition to weeping for those who *do weep*, we should, like Jeremiah grieving for sinful Israel (Jer. 9:1–3) and Jesus looking out over unbelieving Jerusalem (Luke 19:41–44), also **weep for those who should weep** but do not.

DO NOT BE PARTIAL (12:16a)

The virtue expressed in the words **be of the same mind toward one another** is that of impartiality. Later in this epistle Paul repeats the warning, saying, “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus” (**Rom. 15:5**).

The clearest New Testament teaching on fairness is given by James. “My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism,” he warns. “For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and

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dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,’ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors” (**James 2:1–4, 9**).

Speaking about honoring and correcting elders, Paul told Timothy, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality” (**1 Tim. 5:21**). If “there is no partiality with God” (**Rom. 2:11**; cf. Acts 10:34; 1 Pet. 1:17), shouldn’t the same be true for us?

AVOID HAUGHTINESS AND ASSOCIATE WITH THE HUMBLE (12:16b)

Closely related to not being partial is not being **haughty in mind**, as James makes clear in the passage cited above.

Haughty in mind to which Paul refers here is in the sense of self-seeking pride. As James also makes clear in the passage mentioned above, partiality is closely related to a reluctance to show respect for, or even to **associate with the lowly**, such as “a poor man in dirty clothes” (**James 2:2**). The idea is not that we should avoid associating with those in high positions of wealth or influence. But as far as our service to them is concerned, we typically have more obligation to **associate with the lowly**, not because they are more important but because they are more needy.

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The point is that there is no place for an elite upper class in the church. As mentioned in the previous commentary chapter in relation to hospitality (v. 13), the Lord beautifully and clearly illustrated that truth. “When you give a luncheon or a dinner,” He said, “do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you. But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (**Luke 14:12–14**).

Jesus, of course, was not speaking about the act itself but the motive behind it. It is not sinful or unspiritual to invite family, friends, or the wealthy and influential to a meal at our house. The wrong comes in inviting them for a self-serving purpose, to be invited back, a wrong that is magnified by ignoring those who have no means for repaying us.

DO NOT BE WISE IN YOUR OWN EYES (12:16c)

A conceited, self-promoting Christian is a serious contradiction. Every believer should be humbly submissive to the will of God found in the Word of God, having no confidence in himself or in his own wisdom and talent. We must **not be wise in our own estimation** in *any* regard, thinking we are in any way superior to fellow Christians.

A church that is seeking to faithfully serve Christ will pursue and eagerly accept all genuine believers into its fellowship and consider them all alike, regardless of human distinctions. The only required common ground should be a saving relationship to Jesus Christ and unqualified submission to the Word of God.

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Discussion Questions

- 1. What attitudes does God want us to have toward ourselves and others?**
- 2. What stood out to you in this portion of the lesson?**
- 3. What was most meaningful to you in this lesson? How can you apply it to your life?**

Closing Prayer