



Supernatural Practical Christian Living Part 8

August 31, 2025 Romans 12:14-16

(Video 1:00:35)

If you want to turn in your Bibles to Romans chapter 12, Romans chapter 12, as we take one last look at this portion of God's Word. You know that in Romans 12:9:21, you have the attitude that you're supposed to have, ***Let love be without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, cling to what is good.*** And then he goes on with 26 more specific commands of what it looks like to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, how you're to relate to those within the family of God, how you relate to those within, and without, the family of God who might do you wrong. And lastly, in verses 17-21, how we are to respond to actual enemies, those who would persecute you because of your relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, I wanted to jump in and cover a few concluding thoughts with regards to Romans 12:17-21.

Picking up where we left off last time, he said never, in verse 17 of Romans 12, ***Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.*** He's not talking again, you know, about self-defense. He's not talking about the government in waging war, if you will, and things like that, national defense. He's talking about your interpersonal relationships. He's talking about what our attitude is supposed to be, that we go at everything with an attitude of peace, and never to return evil for evil. I ended last time by reading to you 1 Peter 2:21-23, and I won't repeat those again, but I wanted to share a couple other passages of scripture that relate to this point. 1 Thessalonians 5:15, Paul says, quote, ***See that none render evil for evil unto any man*** (KJV); Don't ever give back evil for any man, he says, ***but [ever] follow what is good,*** almost a verbatim statement of the exact same thing. And then in 1 Peter 3:9, he says a very similar thing as well.



Let me give you a scenario. Somebody does you wrong. Somebody attacks you. Somebody criticizes you. Somebody does some social indignity to you or your rights. Or maybe they verbally or otherwise attack you or criticize you specifically because of your position in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have not thought through how you're going to respond to those slights, those indignities, those attacks, you're making a huge mistake. You and I are setting ourselves up for failure because if you're not prayerfully and thoughtfully prepared you're going to respond in the flesh. You're going to pay back evil for evil. You're going to trade insult for insult. You're going to be defensive. You're going to say the wrong thing. You're going to do the wrong thing. You're going to give the wrong look. You're going to have the wrong heart attitude before the Lord. And so he says to us, never pay back evil for evil. That's the negative. What's the positive? ***Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*** And I wanted to underscore that.

Respect what is right in the sight of all men. The word *right* there means good, beautiful, useful, or suitable. But the key word to me was *respect* because it means this: It means to provide or to think through beforehand. What he's saying is the way you can guard against the sin of revenge or retaliation and paying back evil for evil is to what? Think through beforehand what is good, what is right, what is respectable, what is right in the sight of all men. In other words, as one commentator said, you and I need to premeditate our goodness. I love what one pastor said. He said, I get a lot of mail. And a lot of times the mail is not flattering. He said, I have already thought through how I want to respond to those things. I have a standard response. I trust of kindness, he says, but it basically reaches out. And I usually say something like this: *Thank you. Thank you for your concern. Pray for me. If I've done anything to offend you, forgive me. I want to be all that God would have me to be. And I want you to keep praying for me that I might be the man that He wants me to be.* And then he goes



on and says, and if it's possible to even do something tangibly good, like give them a book or something such as that that might encourage them in their own spiritual walk or spiritual life, I try to do that. He calls that a practical way of premeditating goodness. It's just like that example I gave you weeks ago about the guy that screamed at me when I was boarding the plane in Seattle. And then I thought through as I was in the long waiting line, if I get on this plane and the guy sees me, I'm going to say this, and then maybe he'll say this, and maybe I'll say that. Now, I wished I had thought through my response to that guy long before the issue ever came up, but at least I was trying to do it at that point in time. It's a way of having a powerful witness for Christ.

Now, there's a caveat to all that. Look at Romans 12:18. ***If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.*** What's he saying there? That tells me right off the bat, sometimes it is impossible to be at peace with all men. But as much as is possible with you. And basically the point is this, I'm going to live at peace and I'm going to strive to, like that pastor said, to have a premeditated good response, premeditate my goodness, but never to the extent that it would cause me to compromise the truth. We never compromise or back off from the truth. If retreating from the truth of the word of God and not doing what the word of God says is right and appropriate, et cetera, is what I have to do to make peace, then we're not going to have peace, because that would not be possible if you will. That is exactly why I wanted Aidan to read Acts 26 as our corporate reading. Paul was being persecuted. He was being persecuted for his stand for Christ. He turned the other cheek in this regard. Remember, we talked about what that meant rhetorically, it doesn't mean physically. He was expecting to be further abused, but it did not keep him from continuing to love his persecutors by standing for the truth. And to the extent that offended them, to the extent that that causes the king to pop off and say, hey, Paul, if you keep up, your libel convinced me to become a



Christian. He didn't care. He was going to stand for the truth, no matter what mocking or what rebuke or what he received in return. And so to that extent, now somebody will say, wait a minute, what about Matthew 5:9? What about the Sermon on the Mount? Blessed are the peacemakers. Peace makers, again, not peace lovers. It's not peace at all cost. It's not peace at compromising the truth. And by the way, Jesus says in Matthew 10:34-36, and I want to read it for you, Matthew 10:34-36, ***Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth;*** Wait a minute, stop right there. What about Luke chapter 2? Did the angels declare that at Jesus' advent, peace on earth, goodwill towards men with whom He is pleased? Yes, Jesus came, friends, get this, to bring spiritual peace, to bring reconciliation between sinful man and a holy God, to make peace with Almighty God on man's behalf, if you will, to make a way, an avenue for such peace. You say, well, I didn't know I was at war with God. God's at war with you. God's at war with me. God's at war with sin. And to the extent the wrath of God is going to be visited about upon men, Jesus came to reconcile, to make that peace. What's he say? ***Don't think I came to bring peace on the earth;*** meaning all peace and relationship with men, although that's a goal, that's a desire, and if you're showing the love of Christ, hopefully in most cases it will be "peaceful", but it's not peace at all costs. What's He say? ***I did not come to bring peace, but a sword, for I came to SET A MAN AGAINST HIS FATHER AND A DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER AND A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER-IN-LAW, AND A MAN'S ENEMIES WILL BE THE ENEMIES OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.*** Cross identifying, persecution, even possibly persecution to death. What's the point? All of those passages about peace, peace, peace are talking about interpersonal peace to the extent you can have it, but never compromising the truth, and to the extent the cross of Jesus Christ, to



the extent your stand for Christ, your boldness for Christ in a winsome, godly, loving, humble way causes a problem, so be it. Be at peace with all men.

We have an interesting example, I never compromise the truth. Interesting example of this, Alistair Begg, many of you may know that name. Alistair Begg got into public “hot water”, with the evangelical community, because of some advice that he shared publicly that he gave to a grandmother, advising her to attend the wedding of her son or grandson to a transgender individual. It caused problems. Alistair Begg got knocked off of some radio stations and was not allowed to speak at certain things, and I love what happened. He was confronted by the late Dr. John MacArthur, and they had a long conversation about it, and MacArthur disagreed with Begg's position, and such the men mutually agreed that Begg would remove himself from being a speaker at a *Shepherds Conference* so that there wouldn't be any unnecessary distraction, but the evangelical community just dumped on Begg. And MacArthur even came out and said, you know, you don't throw a man's 30 or 40 faithful years of ministry and walking with the Lord and preaching God's word away over one mistake, and MacArthur definitely agreed it was a mistake, and I and many others think Begg was wrong, and Begg later publicly said that he might not give the same advice again today, but he wouldn't back away. Why do I share that? Because the late Dr. MacArthur planned out his funeral service before he died, and who do you think he asked to perform the graveside service? Alistair Begg. And who do you think he had lead in the public prayer during the actual public service at Grace Community Church? Alistair Begg, and I might add he did about six minutes of a beautiful, beautiful prayer that drew our hearts to God. John Piper. John MacArthur's a “cessationist”; he believes that the signed gifts of tongues and healing and prophecy ended with the apostles. Piper, who I also disagree with on this point, he's a “continuationist”; he thinks that certain of those gifts continue on to this day. MacArthur took him to task at a



Strange Fire Conference years before. Who do you think was on the dais giving reflections on the life of John MacArthur during MacArthur's funeral service? John Piper. And the reason why I love it is that my pastor, John MacArthur Jr., was still preaching a sermon to me and the rest of us, even from his grave, showing what? Love without hypocrisy. Stand for the truth. But you know what? Unless it's the essentials, unless it's something essential, if we have a disagreement such that we can't be arm and arm theologically in certain things, it is never, ever, ever going to breach our friendship. It's never going to breach our trust with one another. It's never going to violate our love for one another. If it's an essential, sure, we can't stand, we must break off fellowship. But on non-essentials, we are to have love and to have charity. And I thought what a fabulous example of exactly this verse. Respect what is right. Premeditate your goodness. ***If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.***

He goes on here. Verse 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.*** And we've talked about this before. Vengeance is not yours or mine. The Word of God is against vigilantism big time. It does. I remember we talked about self-defense is okay. Paul stood up in terms of a theological defense of himself and spoke out. That's not only okay. That's right. That's just. That's appropriate. But revenge... never take revenge. Almighty God handles and deals with all of that. We're going to get into Romans 13 starting next week, Lord willing. and we're going to talk about the role of government. And we're going to see where government does not bear the sword in vain, meaning carry out punishment, execute judgment on people, and it's right and appropriate and just to do so. But in interpersonal relationships, we never pay back evil for evil, and certainly never seek revenge.



By the way, we won't do it, sometime (this is your prayerful reading for this week.), you go to the Old Testament and you turn to Judges chapter 14 and 15, and you read the account of Samson and how he gets eyes for a Philistine woman and how he begs his mom and dad to get that woman for him and so forth. And watch and see what happens, how he gets wronged and he takes revenge. And then the Philistines take revenge back against Samson, and then Samson does something and destroys all their crops and takes revenge against them, and then they come back and take revenge against him. And then ultimately, they show up and the Jewish people, the Israelites, give him over to the Philistines, and you know the end of the story. He is blinded and he's standing there and he pushes the pillars down and he kills 20,000. The bottom line is this, revenge and then revenge, revenge and then revenge. The only reason why, or the main reason why I should say, I think that account of Samson is put in the Old Testament scriptures in Judges 14 and 15 is to give us an example of the idiocy of revenge. And everybody dies as a result of it. And you'll die spiritually as well.

Closing off this passage of scripture, as the men come forward now to lead us in our time of communion, and while they do so, let's finish these last two verses. He says, ***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. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*** What does that mean, heap burning coals upon his head? By the way, feed your enemy, give him something to drink, that's got nothing to do with Israel and Hamas and the Palestinians and the war zone and government, it's got nothing to do with it. This is interpersonal relationships of slights and wrongs. They're saying, and remember our balancing scriptures, being a good steward of the things entrusted to your care, making sure you provide for your own household well, and all of those things bring a balance to this, but to the extent you can take the hit, to the extent you can show Christ-like love even to your enemies, do so. That's the



supernatural life that shows them that the gospel of Christ is real and operative and working in your life. But what's this phrase, *IN SO DOING YOU HEAP BURNING COALS UPON THEIR HEAD?* I've heard all sorts of theories about this. Well, you know, one of the things to do in olden times to encourage people was to, they needed a fire, and you could start a fire for them, and it was a good thing if you brought coals over and they would carry it on their head. I've heard other people say that, well, you know, what you're really saying is that it's going to bring down God's wrath of judgment on them ultimately by doing them good. So if you do them good, it just builds up more punishment they're going to get. Well, that's a wrong heart attitude. So what does it mean? *Heap burning coals upon their head.* Well, I had to do a little research, and you find out that it's an Egyptian custom primarily, but the people in Christ Day were familiar with it. And what he's basically saying is this: if a person was repentant over their sin and was sorry and sad, much like on Ash Wednesday, you put ashes on your forehead, or the Old Testament, they would say they were just wearing sackcloth and ashes. It's a sign of repentance. It's a sign of guilt and sadness. So if you carried, they would carry, literally publicly, a pan of burning coals over their head, showing the searing pain of their shame and their guilt over the wrong that they had done, either to God or their neighbor or whomever.

As the men are about to serve us the elements, let me sum up everything we've studied on verses 9 -21 with this. Just listen. These are all of those verses tied together. Watch the flow. What is a Christian and how distinctively are we to live? Here it comes. *We begin with pure love, verse 9, hating evil, holding fast to what is good, humbly, affectionately being concerned with others, enthusiastically, fervently, with maximum effort serving the Lord, and when the inevitable resistance to that service comes, we face it with hope and joy and believing prayer, verse 12. And when we see others who are in the same kinds of trials, verse 13, we reach out to them and share our possessions and our homes with all who have need, and when we're opposed*



in our service to Christ, we bless those who oppose us and who persecute us, and we reach out to enjoy the joy of others and to endure the pain of others. We have no desire for personal prestige. We seek neither position nor office. We do not regard only those who are high people, but we love to fellowship equally with those on the lowest level and are marked by a humility that knows no intellectual or social aristocracy. Even those who personally harm us, we do not return evil against them, but we desire to overpower them with good, no matter what they have done, and we assign any vengeance and any judgment and any punishment to God. And in the end, we are the overcomers or the winners. That is how Paul says, justification in Christ touches your life and mine. Men, serve us the elements.

Love without hypocrisy, abhor what is evil, cling to what is good. Show fervent brotherly love and kindness towards one another. Serve fervently, enthusiastically, don't be lazy, be diligent in the Christian life. Do it with joy, persevering under tribulation, devoted to prayer when it comes. When you see others striving to do it and they're persecuted as well, open your heart and your home to them. Seek out strangers, show hospitality, don't return evil for evil. Never take your own vengeance. Always seek to give what is right and good to all men, overcome evil, all of those commands. If you're striving to do those in your flesh, you are on a fool's errand. It can't be done. It can only be done through the power of God the Holy Spirit resident in a life. And that's what this and this remembrance is all about.

The night before He was crucified, scriptures say our Lord took bread and He broke it and He kept on giving it out to His disciples. He says, this is My body which is given for you. That's a part of the exchange. That's His righteous life, 33 years of perfect living by a perfect person accredited to your account the moment you repented of your sins and gave your life to Christ. He said, as often as you do this, you remember Me. Let's remember the life, death, burial, and the righteous life of Christ given on our behalf, the body of Christ. The other half of the



equation, of course, is not just His righteousness given to us, but it's our sin laid on Him. The scriptures say He also took the cup and He said, this is a cup of a new and an everlasting covenant that I'm making with you. I won't drink of this fruit of the vine ever again until I drink it with you anew in My Father's kingdom. But often as you do this, again you do it in remembrance of Me. What? A greater love than this hath no man that he would lay down his life for his friend. And Jesus says, you're no more slaves. I now call you friend. Let's remember the blood of Christ.

Father, as surely as the sweetness of the juice underscores the sweetness of our communion that we're allowed to have with You now through the person and work of Christ, we know that that juice was produced by grapes that were crushed. And Father, we thank You for crushing Your own Son, Jesus the Christ, so that we could know the sweetness of eternal fellowship with you. Father, may we as a result of the weeks we have spent looking at the principles in Romans chapter 12, be enriched and encouraged and edified anew to apply that truth through the power of You and the person of the Spirit to every aspect, every day of the rest of our lives. For we ask it again in the matchless name of Yourself, in the person of Jesus our Christ. And all God's redeemed people said, amen and amen.