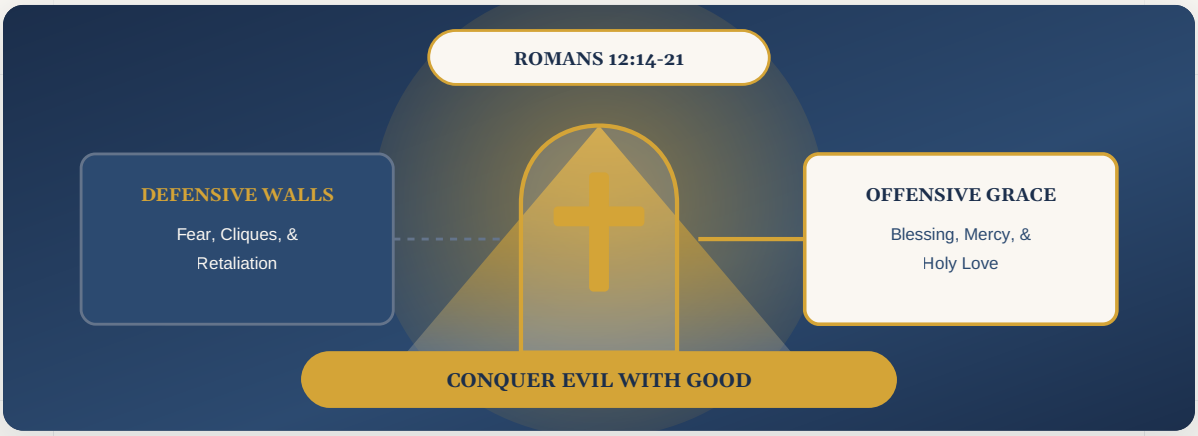
HAVEN OF REST BIBLE CHURCH • SERMON STUDY GUIDE

Overcoming Evil with Good

Sunday - November 8, 2026 • PM Service ▶ Watch on YouTube

Speaker: Pastor Anthony Paulus | **Primary Text:** Romans 12:14-21 | **Supporting Scriptures:** Romans 12:1-2; Romans 13:1-14; Matthew 5:43-48; Luke 22:27; Luke 23:34, 43; Acts 1:8; Acts 7:54-60; 2 Corinthians 10:12; Proverbs 25:21-22



An open archway of grace illustrates the call of Romans 12:14-21 to step beyond fearful separation into Spirit-empowered, Christlike love that overcomes evil with good.

Core Message: God calls His consecrated people out of a defensive, victim-minded posture into an offensive lifestyle of active, Spirit-filled love toward both neighbors and enemies. Through yielded hearts and renewed minds, believers refuse retaliation, practice radical honesty and humility, and become living demonstrations of Jesus Christ that melt hardened hearts and conquer evil with good.

1. Primary Scripture Reading

> **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.
>
> **— ROMANS 12:14-21 (KJV)**

2. Leaving the Barrel: From Defensive Walls to Offensive Christianity

When Pastor Anthony Paulus opened this evening study in Romans 12:14-21, he connected our duty in society directly to the morning call to abandon a victim mentality and embrace a victorious mentality. Too often, earnest believers treat holiness as if it were merely building taller walls to keep the world out. Yet Paul's closing instructions in Romans 12 flow straight out of verses 1 and 2, where consecrated believers present their bodies as living sacrifices and walk out renewed minds in everyday life. Living offensively does not mean being obnoxious, rude, or unnecessarily abrasive toward unsaved neighbors. Rather, it means leaning forward into society with the active, compassionate presence of Jesus Christ.

Bible commentator John Phillips warned that Christians sometimes assume airs and mannerisms that needlessly alienate their unsaved associates. True biblical separation is never mere negativity or cold aloofness; it requires seeking points

of contact and building genuine **redemptive friendships**. Pastor Paulus reinforced this truth with Paul Little's unforgettable picture of Simple Simon setting up a wooden barrel, dropping his fishing line inside, and weeping because no fish leaped into his bucket. Fish never jump into barrels. Jesus did not command His church merely to build comfortable buildings and invite sinners to wander inside; He commanded us to go into all the world (Mark 16:15). As Harold Wildish observed, the Holy Spirit cannot save saints or empty seats—we must carry the gospel out where lost people actually live, armed with the bait of Christlike love.

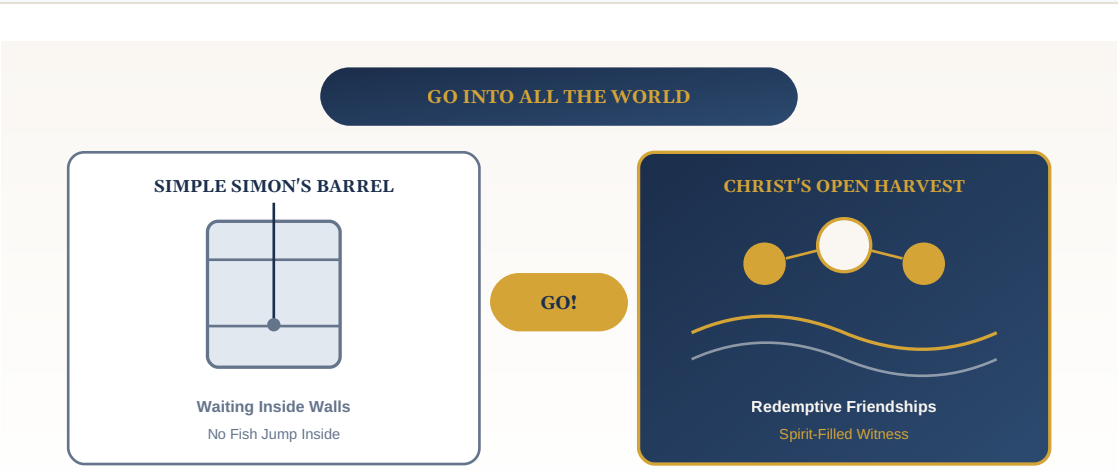
Gospel Heritage: D.L. Moody's Picture of the Resurrected Savior
In a classic sermon cited by John Phillips, evangelist D.L. Moody imagined the risen Lord commissioning Simon Peter to become a fisher of men with breathtaking words of offensive grace: *'Peter, go find the man who thrust his spear into my side and tell him there is a much quicker way to my heart. Find the man who crowned me with thorns and tell him I should like to give him a crown of life.'* That is the heartbeat of Calvary—not nursing grudges, but conquering enemies with mercy.

Jesus practiced every word He preached on the cross. When mocked and nailed to wood, He prayed for His executioners (Luke 23:34) and opened paradise to a dying thief who moments earlier had hurled curses at Him (Luke 23:43). Watching how Jesus endured cruelty, the hardened Roman centurion confessed, *'Truly this was the Son of God'* (Matthew 27:54). Lest we excuse ourselves by saying, 'Well, Jesus was divine,' our Lord promised in Acts 1:8 that when the Holy Ghost comes upon us, we receive power to be His living witnesses—literally becoming His hands, voice, and heart to a watching world.

Spiritual Posture	Guiding Mindset	Outcome in Society
Defensive Separation	Builds higher walls, waits inside the barrel, avoids sinners out of fear.	Church becomes isolated; neighbors view believers as cold and judgmental.
Carnal Retaliation	Fights insults with sharp words, nurses a victim mentality, keeps score of wrongs.	Grieves the Holy Spirit; proves to the world that Christians act just like everyone else.
Offensive Holiness	Consecrated and Spirit-filled; seeks redemptive friendships and answers hate with grace.	Displays the real Jesus; pierces consciences and draws sinners toward repentance.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Imagine sitting with only your Christian friend group at school or youth camp while treating unbelieving classmates like enemies to dodge. God calls you to stay pure from sin while actively caring for people who do not know Him yet. When your heart is overflowing with zeal to win the lost, you will not want to play with the world's sin—you will be too busy rescuing people from it!



Paul Little's Simple Simon barrel contrasts fearful isolation with the Spirit-empowered mission of building redemptive friendships in the world.

3. Blessing for Cursing: Surrendering the Right to Strike Back

Verse 14 sets the uncompromising pace for offensive Christian living: *'Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.'* Notice how Paul repeats the command to bless twice within a single short sentence. Many believers congratulate themselves for spiritual maturity simply because they bite their tongues and refuse to curse back when mistreated. Yet silence alone falls short of Romans 12:14. God does not ask us merely to withhold an angry comeback; He commands us to cross the line from passive restraint into active blessing.

> **Greek Word Study & Holiness Truth: Eulogeo (Bless)**
> The verb *eulogeo* literally means 'to speak well of' or 'to invoke God's favor upon.' From this root we get the English word *eulogy*. In Wesleyan-Arminian theology, genuine heart purity removes the inner root of vindictiveness so that through prevenient and sanctifying grace, our wills align with Christ's command in Matthew 5:44 to pray for those who spitefully use us.

To illustrate what blessing instead of cursing looks like in real flesh and blood, Pastor Paulus recalled the heartbreaking 2006 tragedy in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. An armed man entered a one-room Amish schoolhouse and murdered several young girls before taking his own life. The nation braced for outrage and demands for retaliation. Instead, Amish families stunned the watching world by walking directly into the shooter's home to comfort his grieving widow and parents. Several attended the killer's funeral, and the community even established charitable funds to care for his family.

Let us be crystal clear: choosing to bless never means pretending sin did not happen or excusing wicked deeds. Those parents wept bitterly and mourned the agonizing loss of their daughters. What they demonstrated was the biblical meaning of forgiveness—freely surrendering their personal right to retaliate and placing absolute justice into the hands of a righteous God. Left to fallen human nature, our fleshly instinct whenever someone criticizes, mocks, or mistreats us is to hit back harder. Only a heart yielded to the Holy Spirit can trade insults for intercession.

Three Marks of Active Blessing

- **Speaking Well Instead of Slandering:** Refusing to rehearse someone's sins in church hallways or group chats, choosing instead to guard your tongue with grace.

- **Praying Instead of Plotting:** Bringing the person who wounded you before the throne of mercy daily until God softens your heart toward their soul.
- **Doing Good Instead of Withdrawing:** Looking for practical ways to serve those who oppose you, proving that Christ's love cannot be defeated by human hostility.

1. Forgiveness Is Honest

Biblical mercy never minimizes trauma or calls evil good; it acknowledges the real wound while refusing to let bitterness take root.

2. Surrender Is Intentional

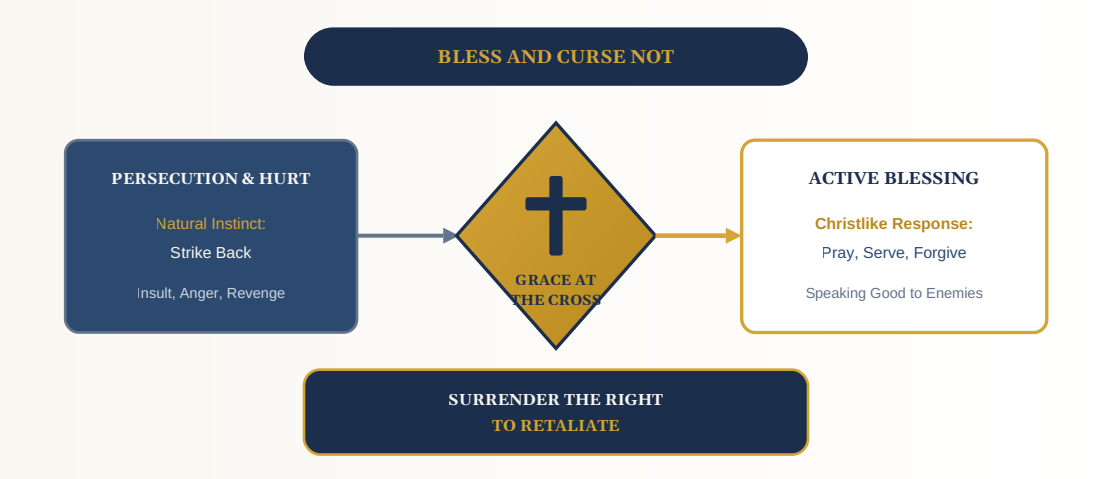
By free moral choice enabled by grace, we lay down our desire to pay people back and trust the Judge of all the earth.

3. Blessing Is Offensive

Moving past silent avoidance, we actively ask God to save, heal, and prosper the very souls who hurt us.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

When someone spreads a lie about you at school or leaves a cruel comment online, your natural instinct screams, 'Roast them back!' Staying quiet is only step one. Living offensively means praying by name for that classmate tonight and treating them with unexpected kindness tomorrow morning.



Through the transforming prism of the Cross, incoming hostility and persecution are refracted into active prayer and Christlike blessing.

4. Rejoicing and Weeping: Empathy Beyond Jealousy and Self-Interest

Verse 15 moves our offensive holiness into the emotional fabric of everyday relationships: *'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.'* On the surface, that verse sounds easy until you examine your own heart closely. Why is it often harder to rejoice with a triumphant neighbor than to weep with a grieving one? Because rejoicing with someone else requires crucifying jealousy, envy, and competitive pride! Conversely, weeping with someone who weeps requires laying aside our own busy schedule, convenience, and self-interest to step right inside another person's sorrow.

Historical Reflection: Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address (1865)
As the American Civil War drew to a bloody close, millions of families across both North and South mourned fallen sons, husbands, and fathers. Many expected President Abraham Lincoln's 1865 Second Inaugural Address to ring with triumphalist bragging over defeated foes. Instead, Lincoln spoke as a fellow sufferer yearning for national healing. Carved on the wall of the Lincoln Memorial are words brimming with gospel empathy: *'With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds.'*

Lincoln had plenty of bitter provocation around him, yet he chose reconciliation over vengeance. That same posture of grace is commanded for every Spirit-filled believer. We may not have the emotional capacity or time to meet every single need in every situation, yet God calls us to cultivate a leaning-in posture: 'Whatever my brother or neighbor is walking through, by God's help and grace I am going to walk beside them.'

In Wesleyan-Arminian teaching, entire sanctification does not erase human personality, nor does it turn us into robots. Rather, the infilling of the Holy Spirit purifies our motives so that love becomes the governing spring of our reactions. When a classmate earns the award you hoped for, sanctified love genuinely celebrates their blessing because envy has been cleansed from your spirit. When a fellow church member faces a terrifying medical diagnosis or family crisis, purified love refuses to offer shallow clichés from a distance; it sits beside them, shares their tears, and bears their burden (Galatians 6:2).

Cultivating Christlike Empathy Daily

- **Laying Aside Jealousy:** Thanking God out loud when someone else receives recognition, promotion, or spiritual blessing instead of whispering cynical excuses.

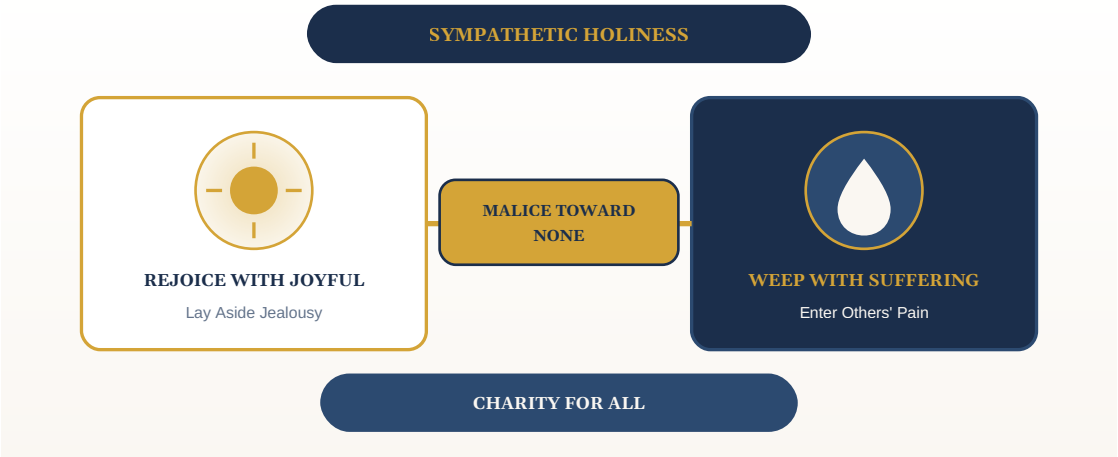
- **Entering Others' Pain:** Refusing to rush past hurting people with 'I'll pray for you' when God wants you to stay, listen, cook a meal, or sit quietly in the waiting room.
- **Remembering Jesus' Example:** Our Savior turned water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana (John 2:1-11) and stood weeping outside Lazarus's tomb (John 11:35)—fully present in both human joy and human grief.

Holiness Truth: Perfect Love Expels Envy

First Corinthians 13:4 reminds us that divine charity 'envieth not.' Jealousy is a symptom of self-centered carnality competing for spotlight. When believers surrender fully to the Lordship of Christ, the Holy Spirit satisfies the soul with God's approval, freeing us to celebrate God's goodness in everyone around us.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

If your friend makes varsity or gets asked to lead a ministry while you get overlooked, do you secretly hope they stumble, or do you cheer louder than anyone else? And when the quiet kid at youth group looks overwhelmed, do you ignore them because you have plans, or pause to ask how they are really doing?



Empathy bridges the extremes of joy and sorrow, replacing competitive jealousy and cold apathy with Christlike charity.

5. Breaking Cliques and Condescending in Love: No One Sits Alone

Verse 16 strikes directly at hidden pride inside the church: *'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.'* Pastor Paulus asked a searching question: how many of us have ever compared ourselves with someone else? Though 2 Corinthians 10:12 warns that measuring ourselves by ourselves is unwise, fallen human nature constantly plays the comparison game—and it always drives us into one of two unholy extremes.

The first extreme is self-pitying despair: 'I don't measure up; I can never be as sharp or spiritual as them.' The second extreme is smug superiority: 'If that family would just get their act together like our family, everything would be fine.' Both attitudes contradict the mind of Christ! True humility does not forbid speaking a straight, honest word of correction when someone needs guidance. Pastor Paulus shared his gratitude for godly friends like Brother Mitch who spoke direct truth into his life—not looking down their noses, but carrying a genuine burden of love. There is zero latitude in the Spirit-filled life for prideful comparison.

Historical Witness: William Wilberforce & John Newton

In late eighteenth-century England, William Wilberforce possessed elite wealth, brilliant education, and dazzling political prospects in Parliament. Yet rather than clinging to fashionable high society, Wilberforce obeyed Christ by fighting to abolish the transatlantic slave trade. Encouraged by his spiritual mentor John Newton—the former slave-ship captain who wrote *'Amazing Grace'*—Wilberforce endured fierce ridicule from noble peers so he could listen to bruised sailors, former slaves, and forgotten outcasts. He knew every person bears the image of God.

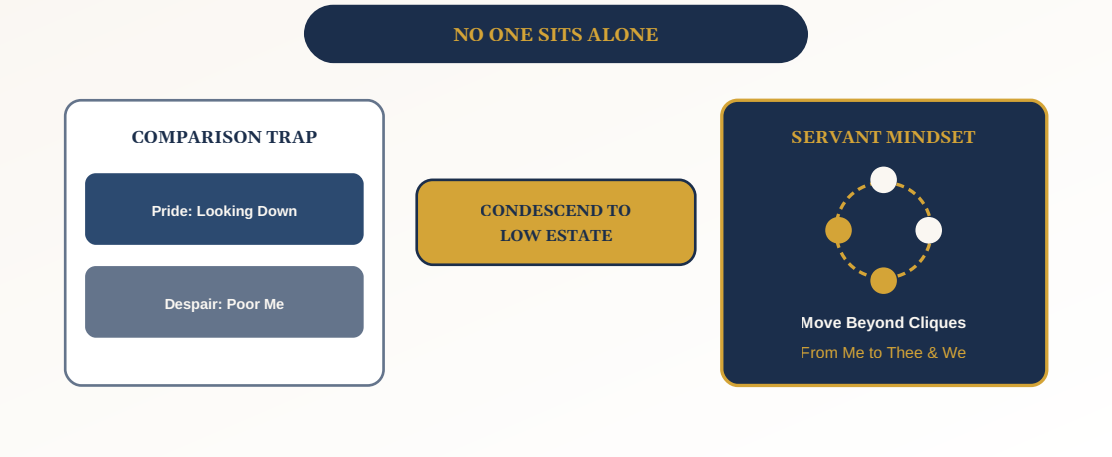
Bringing this home to our own pews, Pastor Paulus cited Pastor James Plank of Beavertown God's Missionary Church, whose congregation lives by an unforgettable rule: whenever anyone—new visitor or regular attender—is seen sitting alone at a church gathering, **that constitutes an emergency**. How easy it is for conservative Christians to gravitate toward the polished, successful people or huddle week after week at the exact same table with the exact same circle we see all week long! Offensive Christianity refuses to stay locked inside comfortable cliques. At the same time, Pastor Paulus offered a sharp word to anyone sitting alone merely as a test to see if others will notice them: stop waiting to be chased, get up, and go sit beside someone else! When the Holy Spirit rules us as living sacrifices, He moves our focus from 'me' to 'thee and we.'

Holiness Word Study: Tapeinos ('Low Estate') & A.B. Simpson's Servant Heart

The phrase 'condescend to men of low estate' translates *sunapagomenoi tois tapeinois*—literally 'being carried along together with the humble or lowly.' It never means looking down condescendingly in the modern slang sense! Rather, it echoes A.B. Simpson's prayer: *'Let this be a day of self-forgetting ministry for Christ and others. Let us not once think of being ministered unto, but rather say with Him, I am among you as one who serves'* (Luke 22:27). Ironically, in the very act of serving others, God faithfully makes sure our own hearts are ministered to as well.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Look around at church fellowship dinners or youth group next Sunday. If you always sit in your exact same seat with your closest friends while a shy visitor or lonely kid sits three rows away, God is asking you to cross the room. Getting down on someone's level means genuinely listening to their story without acting like you are doing them a favor.



Scripture dismantles both smug superiority and self-pitying isolation, inviting believers into a circular table of humble, self-forgetting service.

6. Right in Place of Wrong: Unshakeable Integrity Before All Men

Paul reinforces our offensive witness in verse 17 with a double-edged command: *'Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.'* Everyone knows the old proverb, 'Two wrongs do not make a right,' yet Satan relentlessly whispers that this time an exception applies. Our flesh craves the proud satisfaction of announcing, 'Well, I told them! I sure put them in their place!' God exposes that smug attitude as carnal and displeasing in His sight. Returning a cutting remark for a cutting remark proves only that evil has successfully dragged us down into its mud.

Greek Word Study: Pronoeo (Provide Things Honest)
The verb *pronoeo* means 'to think ahead carefully' or 'to take forethought for what is honorable.' Holiness is never accidental; it plans ahead so that our conduct in finances, schoolwork, business deals, and personal confessions leaves zero stain before watchful observers—both inside and outside the church.

To illustrate what providing honest things looks like even when it hurts, Pastor Paulus pointed to the infamous 1982 Chicago Tylenol crisis. Several people died after an unknown criminal secretly laced Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules with deadly cyanide after the bottles had left the factory. Johnson & Johnson had committed no crime and could have tried to minimize the story to protect profits. Instead, executives leaned into integrity at staggering financial cost: they issued a massive nationwide recall and pioneered tamper-evident packaging to safeguard the public.

Pastor Paulus also shared the testimony of Brother Mike Clyde, a man whom God was restoring and teaching to walk closely with Him. The Lord laid a crystal-clear mandate upon his heart: 'No more dishonesty in business.' At first, Brother Clyde wondered how on earth he could survive financially—surely he would go broke! Yet the very first time he obeyed God and laid money on the line rather than bending the truth, something remarkable happened. Other businessmen quickly realized he would never sugarcoat a quote or cut corners, and his reputation for unshakeable honesty actually built long-term trust and prospered his work.

1. Refuse Payback

Never match sharp words with sharper words; silence the urge to 'put someone in their place' out of bruised ego.

2. Choose Costly Truth

Honor God with clean business practices, accurate timecards, and honest schoolwork even when cutting corners looks profitable.

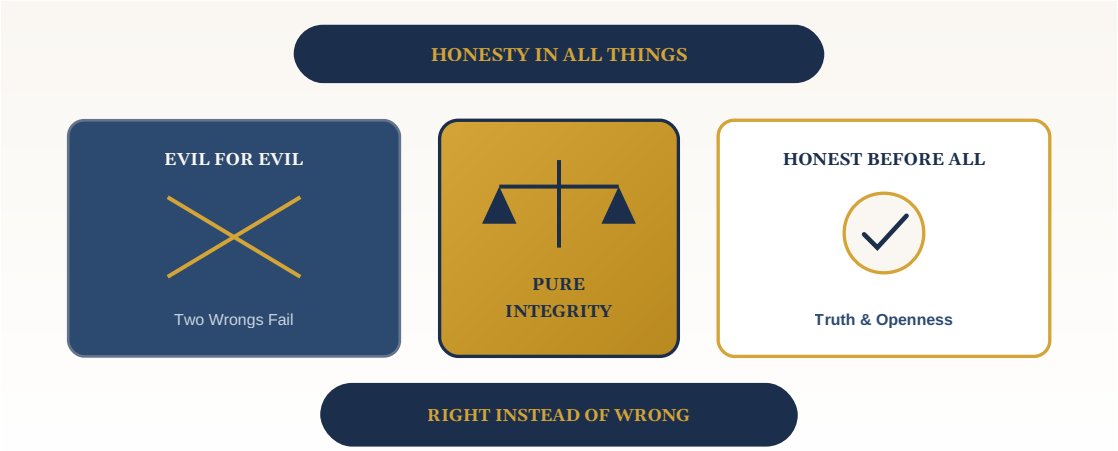
3. Practice Vulnerability

Drop the fake image of having it all together; humbly admitting struggles and asking for prayer actually elevates Christian credibility.

That third pillar deserves special attention for holiness believers. God is not asking us to polish an artificial facade so people think we never face battles. Often, honest confession—saying plainly, 'I need the Lord's help right here, and I covet your prayers'—lifts respect for the gospel rather than lowering it, while creating a safe atmosphere for others to step into the light and find healing too.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Cheating on a homework assignment, fudging hours on a part-time job, or pretending you have zero temptations at youth group destroys your witness faster than anything else. Real integrity means doing what is right when nobody is checking, and being honest enough to ask a pastor or mentor for prayer when you struggle.



Refusing retaliatory comebacks while planning ahead for transparent integrity establishes a trustworthy gospel witness before a skeptical world.

7. Lovers of Peace: Doing Everything Within Your Power

In verse 18, the Apostle Paul writes with pastoral realism under the inspiration of the Spirit: *'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.'* Pastor Paulus confessed his gratitude for that little qualifying phrase—*'if it be possible, as much as lieth in you.'* Why? Because peace takes two willing hearts, and you cannot control whether an angry neighbor, hostile coworker, or stubborn relative chooses peace. Some people refuse to be reconciled even when you humble yourself. Yet you are 100 percent responsible before God for your own side of the bridge!

Notice that living peaceably never means compromising doctrinal truth or calling sin righteousness. Hebrews 12:14 commands us to *'follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'* Peace and holiness always walk hand in hand. From a Wesleyan-Arminian standpoint, God respects human moral agency: He holds each individual accountable for their own freely chosen response to His grace. While you cannot force another person's will, you must

make sure that if conflict remains, it does not remain because of pride, stubbornness, or unrepented bitterness lingering in your own heart.

Modern Gospel Moment: Erika Kirk's Public Forgiveness
Pastor Paulus intentionally highlighted a poignant recent testimony spoken before the nation. Just days after her husband Charlie Kirk was fatally shot, Erika Kirk stood publicly with tears streaming down her face and declared regarding the young shooter: *'That man, that young man—I forgive him. I forgive him because it was what Christ did, and what Charlie would do. The answer to hate is not hate. The answer we know from the gospel is love, and always love—love for our enemies and love for those who persecute us.'* Regardless of political debates or human imperfections around any organization, those words pierced the darkness as an unmistakable gospel moment.

Examining Your Side of the Bridge

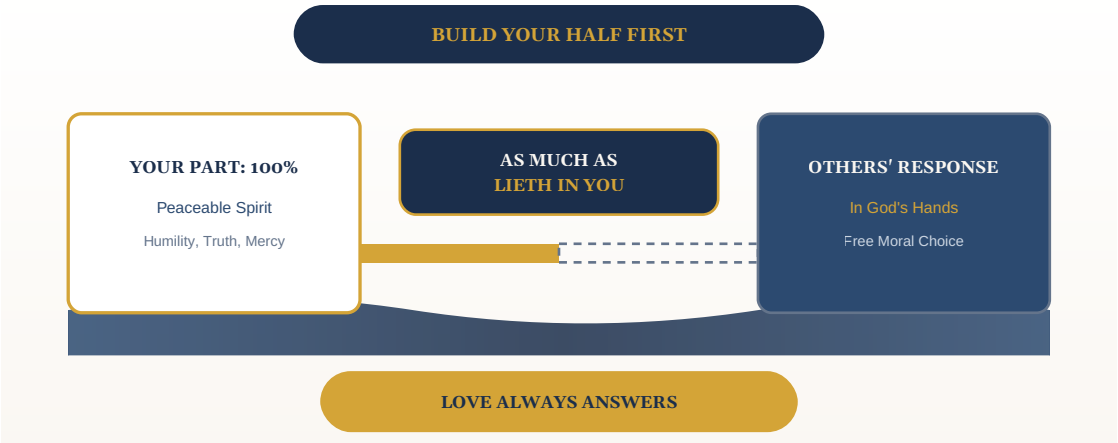
- **Have I Prayed Before Speaking?** Refusing to enter tense conversations in fleshly frustration, asking the Holy Spirit to govern your tone and facial expression first.
- **Have I Confessed My Own Faults?** Taking full ownership of even the five percent of a conflict you caused, rather than hiding behind the other person's ninety-five percent.
- **Have I Released Bitterness?** Even if the other person slams the door on reconciliation, keeping your own spirit clean, gentle, and ready to welcome peace whenever they soften.

Holiness Truth: Free Will and Personal Accountability

Because Scripture never teaches fatalistic determinism, Paul assumes believers possess genuine Spirit-enabled capacity to govern their tempers and choose peace. 'As much as lieth in you' means pouring every ounce of grace-empowered effort into harmony while leaving the other person's free moral response to God.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Think of someone who stays mad at you no matter how kindly you act. You cannot force them to become your best friend—and that is okay. Your job is to make sure zero gossip, eye-rolling, or mean texts come from your side. Build your half of the peace bridge completely, and trust God with theirs.



While we cannot force another person's will, God holds us 100 percent responsible for building our side of the bridge in peace and love.

8. Coals of Fire: Destroying Your Enemy by Making Him Your Friend

Verses 19 and 20 reach the emotional climax of Paul's practical ethic: *'Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 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.'* Notice the tender opening—*'Dearly beloved.'* Paul speaks like a loving father because he knows how fiercely our wounded hearts fight to play judge, jury, and executioner. Yet God reminds us that cosmic justice belongs exclusively to His throne. Stepping out of the way ('give place unto wrath') leaves room for Almighty God, who sees every hidden motive, to execute righteous judgment in His own perfect timing.

True Victory: Louis Zamperini at Sugamo Prison (1950)
Olympic runner and World War II bombardier Louis Zamperini survived a plane crash, drifted 47 days on a raft amidst sharks, and endured brutal torture in Japanese POW camps—especially under a cruel guard named Mutsuhiro Watanabe, nicknamed 'The Bird.' After liberation, Zamperini was consumed by hatred, nightmares, and violent fantasies of murdering Watanabe. Everything changed in 1949 at a Billy Graham crusade where Zamperini surrendered to Jesus Christ and became a new creature. Filled with divine love, he traveled to Tokyo's Sugamo Prison in 1950, met former captors face to face, and told them he forgave them. Though denied a meeting with Watanabe, Zamperini discovered his own heart completely cleansed into compassion. His greatest triumph was not surviving the ocean or prison camp—it was conquering vengeful rage with the forgiveness of Christ.

Now, what did Paul mean by quoting Proverbs 25:21-22 about heaping *'coals of fire'* on an enemy's head? Some misunderstand this verse as a sly, spiteful excuse: 'Sure, I'll bake them cookies so God burns them worse on Judgment Day!' Nothing could be farther from the Spirit of Jesus! As Pastor Paulus explained, those coals represent not the fire of petty vengeance, but the melting heat of holy conviction. In ancient times, people carried pans of glowing coals on their heads to share fire for cooking and warmth, or used intense heat over a crucible to melt stubborn ore into pure metal. When you meet hostility with bread and cold water, that unexpected goodness burns through your enemy's conscience until they melt in shame and long for the very grace operating inside you. Put simply: you destroy your enemy by making him your friend!

Holiness Doctrine: Entire Sanctification Removes the Vengeful Root
Louis Zamperini's testimony illustrates why Conservative Holiness theology emphasizes both pardon for past sins and heart cleansing from inward bitterness. Unforgiveness and vengeful anger cannot be conquered by sheer willpower; only when the Holy Spirit cleanses and fills the fully consecrated heart does Christ's supernatural compassion replace hatred toward our worst abusers.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults
When someone treats you poorly, doing something genuinely kind for them—sharing notes, helping carry books, defending their dignity—is not weak. It takes massive spiritual strength! Your kindness becomes a burning spotlight of God's love that can soften their stubborn heart faster than a thousand angry arguments.



Heaping coals of fire represents the melting warmth of unmerited kindness that pierces an enemy's conscience and turns foes into friends.

9. Overcoming Evil with Good: From Stephen's Stoning to Rome's Surrender

Verse 21 summarizes the entire chapter in one blazing sentence: *'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.'* The Christian life is never satisfied with mere survival—simply trying to stop the world from ruining your attitude. God calls you to be a spiritual agent of change in your environment! As Pastor Paulus reminded us, this single principle explains why the early New Testament church outlasted the mighty Roman Empire. For centuries, Rome threw Christians into arenas, burned them as torches, and confiscated their property. Yet Rome fell while Christ's church endured, because believers refused to be dragged into hatred and overcame evil with invincible good.

Look closely at Acts 7 to see how God's storyline turns apparent defeat into eternal victory. False witnesses dragged Stephen before the council and stoned him to death outside Jerusalem. Standing right there guarding the killers' coats was a fierce young Pharisee named Saul, consenting heartily to the murder (Acts 7:58; 8:1). To human eyes watching that dusty afternoon, evil had triumphed completely: a godly deacon lay crushed under rocks while the church scattered in

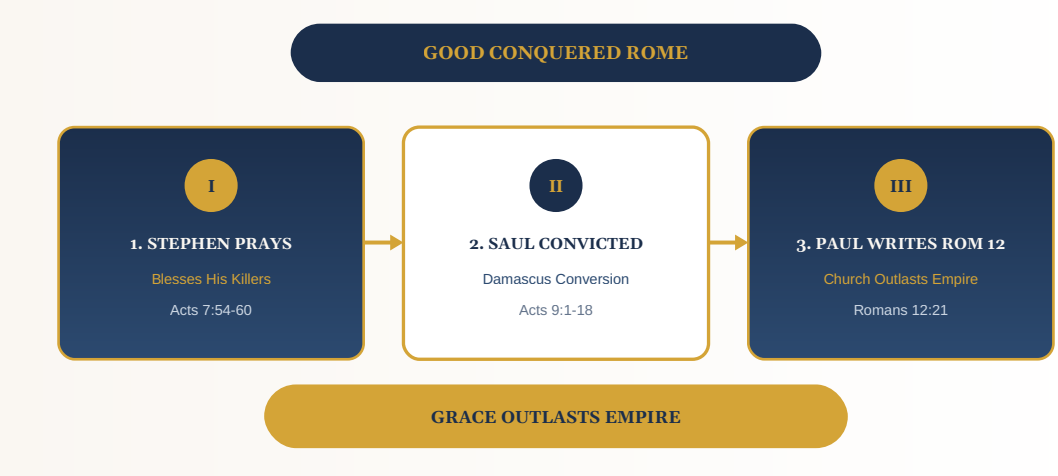
tears. Wait—keep reading the story! Earlier, the council saw Stephen's face shining like the face of an angel (Acts 6:15). And in his dying breaths, rather than cursing his murderers, Stephen knelt and prayed aloud: *'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge'* (Acts 7:60).

Saul of Tarsus never shook off what he saw and heard that afternoon. Years later on the Damascus road, Jesus confronted Saul, transformed him into the Apostle Paul, and sent him forth as the greatest missionary of the church. Filled with the same Holy Spirit who shone through Stephen, Paul sat down to pen Romans 12 and 13—commanding every believer to bless persecutors and overcome evil with good! You never know whose watching heart is being pierced by the calm, radiant grace you display under unfair pressure.

Biblical Character / Element	Historical Role	Spiritual Type / Picture	Holiness Truth & Application
Stephen (Acts 6-7)	First Christian martyr stoned by an angry religious mob while praying for them.	Picture of the Spirit-filled believer living offensively even unto death.	Demonstrates that radiant peace and praying for enemies leave an indelible mark on skeptics.
Saul / Paul (Acts 7-9; Rom 12)	Fierce persecutor consenting to Stephen's murder, later converted on Damascus road.	Picture of an enemy conquered by Christ's grace and made a lifelong friend.	Proves no persecutor is beyond prevenient grace; Stephen's seed bore the harvest of Romans 12.
Roman Centurion (Matt 27:54)	Execution officer overseeing Jesus' crucifixion on Calvary's hill.	Picture of hardened society watching how Christians suffer under injustice.	How we endure suffering reveals Christ far louder than our words ever could alone.
Simon Peter (John 21; Acts 2)	Restored apostle sent to preach first to Jerusalem —even Christ's crucifiers.	Picture of leaving the defensive barrel to fish where lost sinners actually live.	Spirit-baptized boldness transforms fearful failure into fearless gospel outreach.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Sometimes doing right feels pointless because the bully still laughs or the gossip still spreads. Remember Stephen! It looked like evil won the day he died, yet the angry young man holding the coats became the Apostle Paul. Never quit sowing goodness—God is watching, and someone watching you may meet Jesus because you refused to strike back.



Stephen's forgiving prayer pierced young Saul's conscience, birthing the missionary apostle whose gospel of overcoming love outlasted Rome.

10. Living as Spirit-Filled Agents of Change: Power for Everyday Obedience

As Pastor Paulus closed in prayer, he spoke an essential Wesleyan-Arminian truth that safeguards us from discouragement: *'God, we know that we can't do that in our own flesh. We need the Spirit of God ruling, reigning, filling us, guiding us, giving us that step-by-step wisdom from above.'* Anyone who attempts Romans 12:14-21 by stubborn human grit will quickly burn out in frustration. You cannot

manufacture blessing for persecutors, envy-free rejoicing, or patient honesty out of carnal willpower. God never gives a command without supplying the grace required to obey it!

Notice how Romans 12 begins and ends together as one seamless Wesleyan blueprint for holy living. Before Paul ever tells us to bless our enemies in verse 14, he pleads with justified believers in verses 1 and 2: *'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.'* In Conservative Holiness theology, that full consecration is not a vague ideal—it is a definite step of faith where the believer places their entire will, reputation, rights, and relationships upon God's altar. In response to complete surrender and faith, the Holy Spirit cleanses the heart from inward carnality (1 John 1:7, 9; Acts 15:8-9) and fills us with the very love of Jesus.

> **Wesleyan-Arminian Synthesis: Crisis, Process, and Steadfast Obedience**
> We reject both the error of sinning-religion ('we all stay bitter and snap back until death') and cold legalism ('just follow stricter outward rules'). Through **crisis entire sanctification**, the Holy Spirit purifies the heart of self-defense and pride; through **daily growth in grace**, we walk out renewed minds in school, church, and society with steady obedience and humility.

1. Consecrate Fully

Lay down your 'rights' to get even, hold grudges, or protect your comfort zone, yielding your body and tongue as a living sacrifice.

2. Be Filled & Cleansed

Ask the Holy Spirit in faith to purify your inner motives and rule your thoughts so Christ's love flows freely through you.

3. Step Into Society

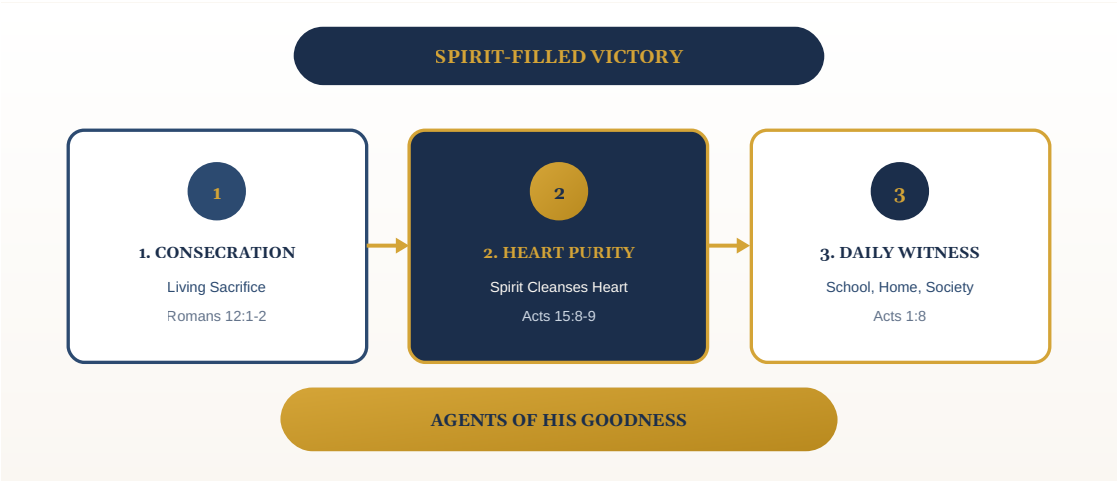
Walk out tomorrow morning armed with kindness instead of cutting remarks, demonstrating rather than merely debating the gospel.

Walking Out Romans 12 This Week

- **At Home:** Answer an irritable sibling or stressed parent with soft, patient respect instead of slamming doors or escalating arguments.
- **At Church:** Intentionally look for someone sitting alone, welcome new faces, and pray earnestly for those carrying heavy burdens.
- **In Your Community:** Go out where the fish are—work with integrity, listen with compassion, and offer the bait of genuine Christlike love to unbelievers around you.

In Plain English: For Teens & Young Adults

Do not read this Bible study and groan, 'I could never be that nice!' Of course you cannot do it alone—that is the whole point. Come honestly to Jesus, surrender your temper, pride, and need to win every argument, and ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit. When Jesus rules inside your heart, overcoming evil with good becomes your new normal.



Full consecration and Spirit-wrought heart purity equip ordinary believers to step out daily as living demonstrations of Christ's conquering love.

11. Small Group & Personal Reflection

1. **Leaving the Barrel:** Where have you been treating holiness like building higher defensive walls instead of forming redemptive friendships with lost neighbors, coworkers, or classmates?
2. **Blessing vs. Silence:** When someone mistreats or criticizes you, do you usually settle for merely holding your tongue, or do you actively pray for God's blessing upon them as Romans 12:14 commands?
3. **Empathy Without Envy:** Which is harder for your heart right now—rejoicing genuinely when someone else succeeds, or stepping out of your busy routine to weep with someone who is hurting? Why?
4. **Breaking Cliques at Church:** Looking honestly at your habits during church fellowship times, are there lonely individuals or visitors whom God is nudging you to approach and welcome next Sunday?
5. **Surrendering Revenge:** Is there a specific person who has wounded you deeply whom you need to forgive and release into God's

righteous hands today, trusting Him to melt their heart with unexpected kindness?

6. **Spirit-Filled Empowerment:** Why is full consecration (Romans 12:1-2) and the cleansing infilling of the Holy Spirit indispensable if we are to live out Romans 12:14-21 consistently?

Closing Prayer Focus: *Heavenly Father, we come before You in the strong name of Jesus, thanking You that You have called us out of fearful isolation and vengeful bitterness into an offensive life of conquering love. Forgive us for every time we have hidden inside comfortable cliques, answered sharp words with sharper words, or tried to live the Christian life in our own weak flesh. Fill and cleanse our hearts by Your Holy Spirit, as living sacrifices wholly yielded to Your will, that we may go into our homes, schools, and communities demonstrating what it truly looks like to overcome evil with good. Be glorified in us today and every day, in Jesus' precious name, Amen.*

Full Original Sermon Message Transcript + EXPAND FULL TEXT

Okay, thank you, Jesus. Praise God. Praise His Holy Name. Romans 12, fighting your attention to verses 14 through 21 Coming back to this evening. Romans 12, verses 14 through 21 Bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not, rejoice with them. Do rejoice, weep with them. Be of the same mind, one toward another, mind not high things, but condescend to men of lowest state. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

If it be possible as much as life in you live peaceably with all men dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place under wrath for it is written. Vengeance is mine. I will repay, say it the Lord. Therefore, find enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink for in so doing, that's what he calls a fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good living among society. Father, I ask for the direction and help of the Holy Spirit. I'm praying, God, that in all things you would be glorified in our lives.

Lead us along, Lord, as living sacrifices we pray. We will give you the glory and the honor in Jesus' name. Amen. Can you hear me okay? Okay, very good. Living offensively, living offensively. We touch this morning on various dynamics of how God wants to deliver us from a victim mentality and move us into victorious mentality, hallelujah. As we are reaching out to society in an offensive posture, and please understand when I say offensive, that doesn't mean we are unnecessarily an offense.

I'm talking about leaning into becoming Jesus to society by how we live. We would do well to hear and heed the shift of mindset that John Philip shares in his commentary. And I want to read some of that for you. John Phillips says this. Consciously or unconsciously, many Christians assume errors and graces which are highly objectionable to their unsaved neighbors. The believer must be careful that while maintaining absolute loyalty to the Lord Jesus, he does not unnecessarily antagonize his non-Christian associates.

This cannot be done merely by being negative. We must seek points of contact. Or in other words, this cannot merely be done by just drawing lines of separation. Okay, is the idea there, okay? We must seek points of contact with unbelievers and form redemptive friendships. I like that term. Redemptive friendships with them. Paul Little has some very excellent comments on this. We are all rather amused, he says, by simple Simon,

who sets up his barrel. Drops in his little fishing line and is very saddened because he doesn't catch any fish.

And we think, how stupid can you be? Fish don't come and jump in barrels. You have to go to where the fish are. By the way, you also have to find the bait that causes the fish to bite. You understand, I'm talking about an offensive posture, not merely a negative or separation posture, but an offensive posture, a going-to, a leaning-into posture. In church, the reality is there is not one place in Scripture that I am aware of that it calls us in a New Testament context to invite people to church.

I didn't say don't invite people to church, but you understand what the New Testament calls us to do is the people of God go into all the world. Now I very much believe that could include inviting them to church and some of you have been doing that and some are here because of that, hallelujah. I'll just tell you, most people who are unconverted are not just looking for someone to invite them to church, but they are looking for some people who show them what it means to have found Jesus and Him begin working and changing every area in aspect of their lives.

Now that, some of them are looking for Him. He says, He goes on to say, but what do we do in evangelism? We set up barrels and we invite the fish to come and jump in. And we are very sad when they bypass us in droves. As Harold Wilder said one time, the Holy Spirit cannot save saints or seats. There have to be some non-Christians for him to say, no, it could be worded differently, but I hope you catch the point. God is calling us church to an offensive posture. I share this from a sermon from D.L. Moody, also out of Philips' commentary.

Phil Moody, one of the sermons, pictures the Lord Jesus after his resurrection, giving directions to Peter. The Peter, who he says, I'm going to make you a fisher of men. I'm going to send you forth by my spirit, being a witness unto me, and I'm going to make you a fisher of men. And here's how D.L. Moody began to imagine it, I like the idea. Peter, go find

the man who thrust his spear into my side and tell him there's a much quicker way to my heart. Find the man who crowned me with thorns and tell him I should like to give him a crown of life.

Church, that's an offensive posture. That's a posture that begins to see others as Christ sees them, that begins to take ground as God has called us church to take ground, that moves beyond the offenses of others and moves beyond the negative posture and how are we going to keep the world out? By the way, one of the best ways to keep the world out church is to be so full of holy zeal to win the world, why in the world would you play around with it? Are you with me? Too many times conservative people get really good at, I'm talking to us, me, we get really good at building bigger walls.

And Jesus said, go, in the power of my spirit, go into the world. Hey man, I can't apologize for this truth, it's an offensive posture that God is calling us to. It's a dramatic way, Philip says, of depicting the true spirit of Christianity. Did not Jesus practice what he preached on the cross, what did he do? He prayed for them, that despitefully used him. He opened the gates of paradise for whom, the thief who moments before had been pouring curses on his head. It was this that one completely, the centurion in charge of the crucifixion because he looked on and said, this was the Son of God.

You understand a centurion who is having a part of crucifying Jesus looks on as he sees how Jesus handles the crucifixion and he says, this man is different. This must be the Son of God. And unless church, we give ourselves a pass and say, well Jesus can do that. Oh no, Jesus told his disciples that when the Holy Spirit is coming upon them, they would be witnesses unto him or just to boil it down. You will be me through the power of the Holy Spirit. I say, glory be to God. Well, let's work our way down through these verses.

Verse 14 says, bless them which persecute you, bless and curse not. Or in other words, as we live offensively in a godly, Christ-like posture, we are called to give blessing for cursing. Blessing for cursing. In 2006, gunmen entered an army schoolhouse in Pennsylvania. Some of you remember this and killed several young girls before taking his own life. The tragedy shocked the nation. But maybe what shocked the nation even more was the response of the army's community. I don't know how many of them personally know the Lord Jesus, but I'm going to tell you, they sure act like him.

Instead of responding with hatred or revenge, Amish families visited the shooter's widow and parents. They expressed compassion for their grief. Some attended the shooter's funeral. And even established charitable support for his family. Please know, their actions were not excusing the evil that he did. They still mourned deeply and felt the pain of the loss. Their own children. But they chose to bless rather than curse. They demonstrated that forgiveness is not pretending the hurt never happened.

But rather, it is surrendering the right to retaliate and entrust justice to God alone. The source says when someone criticizes mystery or opposes us, our natural or fleshly instinct is to strike back. Paul here is calling believers to a different path, a path to speak well instead of poorly, to pray instead of plotting revenge, to seek God's blessing here this church. This is not even a posture of, well, I'm just not going to curse them. You know, sometimes we think we're being really spiritual.

If we just refrain, okay, I'm not going to curse them, I'm just going to say nothing. That's not what it says. It says bless them. Can I just say it this way? Be on the offense with Christ towards them. Be on the offense of good towards them. Verse 15 says rejoice with them that do rejoice and weep with them that weep. Rejoicing and weeping. Rejoicing and weeping. Near the end of the American Civil War, the nation was deeply

divided. Millions had suffered loss. Families on both sides were grieving sons and husbands and fathers.

And as President Abraham Lincoln prepared to begin his second term in 1865, many expected a speech of victory and triumph for the North. Lincoln chose a different path. He chose the path of empathy, of reconciliation, of compassion. He spoke not as a conqueror, celebrating over defeated enemies, but as a fellow suffering, a sufferer seeking healing for the whole nation. He acknowledged the pain that both sides had experienced, and famously called for moving forward with malice toward none, with charity for all.

Did you guess that? With malice toward none, the Dome has understand. There was plenty of malice to go around. Malice toward none, charity for all. I believe as you go and link in monument, as you look to the right, is part of his speech from this second inaugural address. It's powerful. You can't read it without being moved upon. Historians widely regard the speech as one of reconciliation rather than revenge. See, church, this source says, when others rejoice, we are called to lay aside jealousy and celebrate with them.

When others weep, we lay aside self-interest and enter their pain. A Christian offensive posture is one of, if that's what they're going through, by God's help and grace, I'm going to walk with them. Sometimes we're enabled to do that more effectively than others. Understand, we can't all be all things to all men in every situation, but I'm talking about a posture of grace that God calls us to lean into. To rejoice with those, to weep with those who weep. That's what Jesus did.

That's what we're called to do. Verse 16 says, 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. Could I just take a quick poll? How many here have ever compared yourselves with someone else? How to go? Helpful, probably. There's a reason Scripture says that we are not to

compare ourselves among ourselves. And I wish I could just say, well, since Scripture says not to, we Christians, we just don't do that.

Because the Bible says not to you, right? We're about obeying the Bible. And so since the Bible says don't do it, we just don't do it. It usually leads to one extreme or the other. It leads to a posture of poor me. I don't compare, I don't measure up. I can't. That is not of God. Or it leads us to a posture of, well, if that family would just get it together, we don't finish it, but it goes something like this in our minds, then they could be kind of with it like our family. Before we laugh church, don't think we don't do this.

And it is anti a mind of Christ operating within us. And don't misunderstand, I don't mean that that family or that person doesn't have a lot of growing to do. But I am here to say that Scripture is very clear that we are to get as it were alongside of our friends, our neighbors, our brothers and sisters in the Lord. And we are not to come down to their level in that we then act immaturally or whatever that is we're kind of looking down our noses on. But it is in a sense that we are recognizing that we are indefinitely in need of the daily grace of God too, and if God has helped us, if God has helped us, then let's come alongside them and seek to be help and encouragement and an edifier.

Which means sometimes we will have to speak a straight word. Helping someone else does not mean that you never have to speak a straight and strong word to them. Amen. This means we're not doing it from a haughty, I really wish you'd get this figured out kind of attitude. Amen. I've had people on the journey have to speak very straight to me. I was always grateful brother Mitch when they did it in a way that told me they weren't just looking down their noses. They were carrying a burden for me and they loved me.

There's a profound difference church. And there is no latitude for comparing ourselves among ourselves in any way that leads to despair or to pride. There's no latitude in the life of the believer for it. Zero. The Holy

Spirit will nail that. I mean if we're being in tune, he will nail it. In the late 18th century England William Woodward Force was a member of parliament, a man of education, wealth and influence. It would have been very easy for Wilberforce to spend his life among the elite and ignore the struggles of ordinary people.

He was a gifted man, a talented man, polished politician. Instead William Woodward Force devoted most or much of his life to fighting this fight. Now hear this, that sounds glorious. But it wasn't glorious. It was difficult. It meant he went against the high in noble and elite, the ones that on average you'd be seeking the favor of. And it meant he listened to sailors, former slaves, and others whom society was often ignoring. He went against the tide. While many powerful people viewed these individuals as beneath their concern, William Wilberforce believed every person was created in the image of God and worthy of dignity.

Now he's a hero. But in the moment he was counter-cultural. He was flowing against the grain because he was adhering to godly principle. By the way, one of his encourages was a man you might have heard of John Newton, his uncle. Amazing grace. Church, if we're not careful, we can naturally gravitate. It's for any of us. We can naturally gravitate towards the successful, toward the gifted, toward the polished. And I don't mean there isn't rightness in pursuing relationships with any and all of them.

But not if it causes us to move into a posture where we feel like we're just a little better than the down and outer. And if you're wondering if the Holy Spirit's talking to us, he is. Even among the bottom of Christ. Maybe unintentionally, but we can have our clicks. We have our comfortable groups. One's we want to seek favor of. Friends, I don't mean there's not. If some of that is being is naturally human. I'm not saying it's all bad. I'm just saying that the Lord wants to make sure that we are condescending to men of mercy.

Do you understand that's imperative? I could rephrase it. Get down on their level. Don't act like you're doing them a great service because you are. Get to where they are and listen to them and love them and minister to them. Jesus. This is offensive Christian. This is not staying in spiritual comfort zones. This has been speaking to me recently. James Plank, senior pastor at Beaver Town, God's missionary church. They have a mantra that they have over the years cultivated at their church.

I may not get it exactly right, but it's this idea. That when they see a person alone, a church, I think it's whether it's a person who comes more often, or whether it's a brand new family, person, individual. Maybe it's one of their gatherings. If they see a person alone, here's their wording. That constitutes an emergency. Sometimes I am perplexed. Boy, oh God, give me grace here. Sometimes I am perplexed at some of our gatherings that we have. Time after time after time after time.

We can choose to sit with the people who we see all week long, who we are close to all the time, and rarely bridge a gap into someone with someone that just maybe God's asking us to move out of our comfort zone and minister Jesus to. I may be on thin ice, but it's going to drop me in good water. Because serving Jesus in an offensive posture will require that we move out of some comfort zones. Not maybe, it absolutely will. And it will move us out of mindsets where I get to be with the ones I'm safe with.

And I'm moving into those who are going to need Jesus to help me to live on. I'm really looking forward to our next gathering seeing all the different people who switch seats. I'm excited. Interesting how the Holy Spirit takes these truths and gets really practical with this, doesn't it? But you understand that this kind of offensive Christian living requires a distinct shift in focus. And it moves me to a mindset. By the way, on the flip side of that, some of you are spending all your time wishing someone would come and sit with you.

You need to step up and go sit with somebody else. If you're strategically, point, I am. It's not in the notes, Jeff. If you are sitting at a table just to see if anyone will come and sit with you, that is wrong, my friend. Amen. Both are wrong. Because when God the Holy Spirit begins to have His full ways, we are living sacrifice and we are walking out every nude mind. He moves us beyond me and it begins to become thee and we. Hallelujah. We got to plow a little further. A.B. Simpson said this.

Let this be a day of self-forgetting ministry for Christ and others. Let us not once think of being ministered unto. But rather say with Him, but Jesus, I am among you as one who serves. Jesus says, I did not come to be ministered to, I came to minister. I hate the term reverent, but I love the term minister. Minister means servant. Now, the reality is all of us need minister to some time. But it's so interesting that as God helps us to move into a posture of serving, it's so interesting that many times in the very path of serving others, that God makes sure that I'm ministered to.

It's not that we don't need ministering to. It's what posture is God calling us to in this offensive Christian living. And it's a posture of serving and moving beyond the me, the small world of me, myself, and I. Thank you, Joseph. For 17 says recompense to no man evil for evil. Or right in place of wrong. You could help me finish the adage. Two wrongs don't make a right. And yet somehow Satan really tempts us to think at my this time. This is recompense to no one, no man, evil for evil.

You see, generally our posture is a hurtful comment deserves a hurtful response. Well, I told them, there's my glasses. I told them. And we usually say that in just kind of a, you know, I told them. And as though we should be proud of that. Why really put them in their place? Straighten them out. And the Lord says, I'm not pleased with that. Now please that attitude, not please that posture, not please that response. Recompense to no man evil for evil. That once. Who will help me?

A lot of part of verse 17 says, provide things honest in the sight of all men. Honesty in all and honesty to all. In 1982, several people in the Chicago area died after taking extra strength. I don't know, maybe some remember that. There were capsules that had been secretly poisoned with cyanide by an unknown criminal. The tampering happened after the product had left a manufacturer. Johnson and Johnson was not responsible for the crime itself. But the company had a decision to make.

Were they going to lean into it? And just declare it at great financial loss. Recall all to be safe, to think in best interest of the consumer. Were they going to hide it, shelter it? And they leaned into the posture of we're going to do the right thing even at great financial cost. Recall, make sure the public remains safe from this point forward. Who's the right call? Some of you going to memorize, you're going to hear brother Mike Clyde. And he shares, I don't know if he'll share this message this time or not.

But he shares how, or came a point as God was working and dealing with him. The Lord told him, no more dishonesty in business. You might take that for granted. Do you understand? Here's a man who's learning to walk with God. God's doing restoring work in his life. And I'm going to admit, he thought, how in the world? How? Lord, how be broke? What was interesting is he submitted to that. He said, I remember the moment I first had to obey that. He had to lay something on the line.

But ironically, Jeff, what happened was people began, other businessmen began to understand that they could trust him. And it actually helped his business in the long run because he knew, or they knew that he wasn't going to sugarcoat it. He was going to be straight and honest. Interesting. And God helped me and help us to recognize that God's not looking for us to have an appearance. And we have everything together. We actually just sometimes speak a word of truth, confession and vulnerability that says, I need the Lord's help here, where this is the way it actually is.

And I covet your prayers. I have found over and over that as people have demonstrated vulnerability and honesty, you know what it's done? Rather than minimize their reputation, it has lifted them in the eyes of others. And I pray God help me because it also facilitates an atmosphere for others to do the same. And I say, God help me. Oh, lovers of peace, verse 18. Verse 18, give me just a few more minutes if you would. If it be possible as much as lieath in you. Anybody here glad that Paul inserted that phrase?

I am. If it be possible, live peacefully with all men. If it be possible as much as lieath in you. It's by being authorized version. Fully and wholly do your part before the Lord. How many of us just a little over a year ago remember Erika Kirk's words? Is she with tears straining down her cheeks? Days after her husband is killed. She says, that man, that young man, I forgive him. I forgive him because it was what Christ did and what Charlie would do. The answer to hate is not hate.

The answer we know from the gospel is love and always love. Love for our enemies and love for those who persecute us. And I use that illustration on purpose. It's tragic to me that reputation of that lady and organization has been marked and darkened in our day. But it was a gospel moment. I've not heard judge before the Lord. I'm saying it was a gospel moment spoken over our nation. It was a gospel moment. Almost done. Verses 19 and 20. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves.

But rather give place in the wrath for it is written. Vengeance is mine. I will repay. Don't miss the next phrase. Say it the Lord. Therefore, if that enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou so heap, cause of fire on his head. When we were to Louis Zamperini survived the plane crash. Grifted at sea for 47 days. It was eventually captured by the Japanese. As a prisoner of war, he suffered severe abuse. Particularly from a camp guard known as the bird.

Wand Tanabi was his last name. After the war, Zamperini was consumed with anger and horrible nightmares. And often, post-war, he would

fantasize about taking revenge. But in 1949, he attended a Billy Graham crusade and became a new creature in Christ Jesus. And he had such a dramatic change of heart like God put a compelling desire in him to return to Japan. But not to take revenge. So in 1950, he visited Sugamo Prison where a number of former Japanese prison guards and war times officials were being held.

According to multiple accounts, Zamperini met several of his former captors face to face and he told them that he had forgiven them. And years later, he would testify. The most important thing in my life, in my Christian life, was to know that I forgave them, not only verbally, but to see them face to face. The man he actually wanted to confront the most was Wand Tanabi, this man who had caused unfathomable harm to him. Sadly, he was unable to meet him, sources differ on the reason given at the time.

But he did not get the face-to-face meeting with the bird, as the man was nicknamed, that he desired. Christianity today recounted that when Zamperini learned that he would not see Wand Tanabi, he realized he felt in his heart compassion and complete forgiveness toward him. And the source says Zamperini's best victory was not surviving the wrath, the sharks, or the prison camp, though all of that is a marvelous story. His greatest victory was returning to the men who had tortured him and offering them Christ forgiveness.

Instead of revenge. Church, it makes for really good gospel stories. But in the moment, it has to be surrendered to and walked out. For in so doing, now that we've caused a fire on his head. Thank you, Lord. I get to get him something out. But interestingly, the term here calls a fire seemed to represent not a fire of revenge, but a heat of conviction. And one man, I probably won't get this exactly right. But one man said maybe it would mean that it would cause them to have the same desire to act the way you are about the whole thing.

That's an intriguing thought. Someone has expressed it this way. This is a call to destroy our enemy by making him our friends. I'm going to destroy my enemy by making him my friend because he's no longer your enemy. If you've made him your friend, good over evil. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. As you've been hearing throughout this message, the Christian life is not merely defensive, but it is profoundly offensive when lived out in obedience to the Lord.

The goal of the Christian life is not merely to keep evil from changing you. It is to allow the goodness and grace of God to help you become an agent of change in the environment around you. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. It's what would cause the New Testament church who was under unbelievable persecution from the Romans and others for a period of hundreds of years. It's what would cause Christianity to endure in Rome to fall because good was not overcome of evil, but it overcame evil with good.

At first glance, evil appeared to be winning. In Acts 7, Stephen was falsely accused, dragged before a mob, and stoned to death. Standing nearby was a young Pharisee named Saul or Paul, and he was approving of the execution. If you had been there that day, you might have looked on, observed it all and thought, wickedness is one. The church has suffered a severe blow, may even be lost. Good has been overcome by evil, but hang on, stick with the storyline. Stephen's final moments include him not cursing his murderers, but blessing them.

Lord lay not this sin to their charge. As they'll be holding him, they see earlier his face shining. Stephen responded to their hatred with grace. Truth, yes, but grace. And years later, or sometime later, the same Saul met Christ on the Damascus route. He became the Apostle Paul, the greatest, arguably the greatest missionary of the early church or maybe of all of time. But you understand, he was the man that had watched

Stephen die. He was the man who had consented to his death and had seen a man live out offensive Christianity.

Not returning evil for evil, but overcoming evil with good. And the Holy Spirit placed that kind of spirit in the Apostle Paul. And he would go on to later write Romans chapter 12, and Romans chapter 13 calling every New Testament believer to live in a spiritually offensive posture. And tonight, church, the Holy Spirit is saying, son or daughter, be not overcome of evil. But by my grace, by my spirit, by the life of Christ flowing in you and through you, overcome evil with good.

Good. Let's do it. Father, I come in the strong name of Jesus. I thank you, Lord, that you've called us to not only live among the saints with grace, patience, mercy, love. But God, you've called us to go into the world. And not waiting for the fish to jump in our bucket. But God, going out with the bait of the love of Christ, mercy, kindness and place of cutting remarks. God, we know that we can't do that in our own flesh. We need the Spirit of God, ruling, reigning, filling us, guiding us, giving us that step-by-step wisdom from above.

And God, I'm asking that you instruct us, teach us, lead us, fill us, cleanse us, that we might be a people, Lord, who are not just saying it, but demonstrating what it looks like to overcome evil with good. Be glorified in us, Jesus. It's in your name we ask it, and everyone said, Amen. You're dismissed.

STUDY GENERATION & ARCHIVE METADATA

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