

(12:14) - BLESS THEM WHICH PERSECUTE YOU: BLESS, AND CURSE NOT - Christ commanded His people to **“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;” (Matt. 5:44)**. Our first reaction to those who curse or persecute us is to seek revenge, harbor malice and resentment. These are the works of the flesh, but the Spirit of God guides and motivates us to follow Christ and love and pray for our enemies. To **“bless”** those **“which persecute”** us does not mean we are to speak peace to them. We are to pray that God will save them by His grace as He has done for us even when we were His enemies. Remember, God did not seek vengeance upon us personally for our sins. His vengeance fell on Christ in our place. If God had taken vengeance upon us personally, we would all have perished. We must remember that those who persecute us are deceived by Satan and their own hearts. We must say again, **“But for the grace of God, there go I.” “Bless, and curse not”** - We are to follow our Lord and Savior who said of His enemies, **“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34)**. Knowing that they hate the Gospel truth **(John 3:19-20)**, in love, we still tell them the truth and pray for their salvation.

(12:15) - REJOICE WITH THEM THAT DO REJOICE, AND WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP - We are to empathize with brethren in the faith in joy and in sorrow. When the Lord blesses our brethren with good things spiritually and/or physically, we are not to be jealous or envious. We are to rejoice with them as if it were given to us. When a brother or sister in Christ has times of sorrow, we are to sorrow with them as if it had happened to us. God is rich in mercy, and He has saved us eternally by His grace in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. We who are saved are the recipients of eternal goodness and riches we did not earn and do not deserve. Our only worthiness, right, and title to blessings and eternal glory is the shed blood, the imputed righteousness of Christ.

(12:16) - BE OF THE SAME MIND ONE TOWARD ANOTHER - This means to set our minds, our hearts, upon loving and helping each other, brethren in the faith, so that it guides and motivates our attitudes, actions, and affections. We are like-minded in Christ and the Gospel - how God saves sinners by His sovereign grace based on the righteousness of Christ and all essentials of the faith. We must not agree on every non-essential issue. This is mainly speaking of harmony in our relationships, showing equal regard for others. Someone said, **“Believers are to be like spokes in a wheel that converge at the hub - the closer we are to Christ the closer we come to one another.”**

MIND NOT HIGH THINGS - This is the same thing as in **Romans 12:3** - **“not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.”** Our lives as believers are to be marked with humility, not pride and self-promotion, not seeking honor for ourselves and promoting our own agendas **(Php. 2:1-4)**. Let us not set our minds on and be consumed with ourselves but with others. Let us not try to live above our brethren or set ourselves above them as if we are better than they.

BUT CONDESCEND TO MEN OF LOW ESTATE - As true believers, we ought to see ourselves as unworthy sinners who have been so blessed of God in Christ. None of us deserve or have earned the great salvation we have in Him. This puts us all on the same level as sinners saved by grace, equally justified and blessed by God's grace in Christ. Therefore, we ought not be conceited, snobbish, or exclusive as if brothers and sisters who are not in our socio-economic class do not deserve our friendship, fellowship, respect, and help **(Prov. 28:21; James 2:1-8)**.

BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS - Do not be self-absorbed in considering yourself wise in your own estimation and look upon others as if you always know better. Some people look down on others because they think they have it all together in their lives. This would include a person who thinks himself to be something when he is nothing (*Gal. 6:3*). All wisdom is in Christ Who gives wisdom to His people, and this wisdom humbles us so that we cherish the fellowship of all our brethren in Christ.

(12:17) - RECOMPENSE TO NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL - As believers, we are forbidden to seek personal vengeance even when we are treated unjustly. Personal vengeance is contrary to the grace of God shown towards us in Christ. **PROVIDE THINGS HONEST** to tell the truth about God, about ourselves, and about salvation. It means to do and say the right things which glorify God in Christ **IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN** even those who are evil and would treat us with evil. We are to avoid even the appearance of evil. Haldane wrote, "We are not to do our work to be seen of men, but we are to be careful that all our works are done so as to avoid anything that would bring reproach upon the Gospel" (*cf. Matt. 5:16*).

(12:18) - IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS LIETH IN YOU, LIVE PEACEABLY WITH ALL MEN - This does not mean that we are to seek peace at the expense of truth and honor (*cf. Heb. 12:14*). When it is impossible to live peaceably with men? When men, because of their hatred of the Gospel, will not live at peace with us (*John 15:18–16:3*). We cannot speak peace to sinners where they live and believe a lie. It is neither love nor humility to do so. It is self-love and pride. Where the Gospel is rejected or challenged, we cannot speak peace or even keep peace. In these cases, it is not possible. However, when and where it is possible to "**live peaceably**" with men, even unbelievers, without compromising God's glory in Christ, His truth, and our honor, then we are to strive to do so (*Matt. 5:9*).

(12:19) - DEARLY BELOVED, AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES, - God forbids His children to act in personal vengeance because this belongs to Him alone. This does not forbid the state from justly punishing criminals who have been proven guilty. Civil authority is the tool of God. But when we take it upon ourselves to act in personal vengeance, we usurp authority that only God has. God is always just and right when He acts in His wrath, so we are to **GIVE PLACE UNTO WRATH**, i.e. yield to God and His wrath - **FOR IT IS WRITTEN, VENGEANCE IS MINE; I WILL REPAY, SAITH THE LORD** (*rf. Deut. 32:35,42; Psa. 94:1-3*). We are to submit to God's judgments and ways in these matters of vengeance and justice. God alone has the wisdom and holiness to do what is right and just in these matters. We are assured that God will "**repay**" all that is wickedly done against us, but His vengeance will be right and just.

(12:20-21) - THEREFORE IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM DRINK - This is in line with the "golden rule" - Do unto others as you would have the do unto you (*cf. Matt. 7:12*) and the commandment love our neighbor (even enemies) as ourselves (*Mark 12:31*). **FOR IN SO DOING THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD** - This means to "kill him with kindness." The idea is that by our doing him good, he will be so convicted in his conscience that he would cease to do us evil. It may be that the Lord would use the light of His grace shown through us to melt the hearts of our enemies and bring them to faith in Christ and love for His people. **BE NOT OVERCOME OF EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD** - This is the bottom line in dealing with the enemies of Christ and His church. This shows us how evil it is for believers to take up arms against the enemies of Christ (*2 Cor. 10:1-6*). We are not to be controlled by what our enemies do to us. We are to be controlled by the Holy Spirit in doing what our Lord and Savior commands us to do.