

Romans Chapter Twelve

Romans 12:1-8 – Christian Duties

Because God stands ready to provide salvation from sin, redemption from eternal destruction:

v1. "I BESEECH YOU THEREFORE, BRETHREN, BY THE MERCIES OF GOD, TO PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE, HOLY, ACCEPTABLE TO GOD, WHICH IS YOUR SPIRITUAL SERVICE." (ASV)

Romans 11:36 "FOR OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND UNTO HIM, ARE ALL THINGS. TO HIM BE THE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN." (ASV)

"THEREFORE" we should take special heed to "PRESENT YOUR BODIES A LIVING SACRIFICE"

In our response to God's wonderful grace and the gift of His only begotten Son as the perfect sacrifice for man's sin, man must offer himself to God in terms of sacrifice and service. Not as the cults require, not as the group demands that started out in the Crossroads church of Christ in Gainesville, Florida that today calls itself the International Church of Christ. Good friends who became entangled with them left this cult because their demands were forcing them to neglect many of the things that God has commanded. For them the final straw was the welfare of their new baby son.

Nothing is more characteristic of Christianity than this demand. Our bodies belong to God just as much as the soul does. Our service to God is far more than just an activity of the mind, intellect or heart. Paul taught the Corinthians

"OR KNOW YE NOT THAT YOUR BODY IS A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHICH IS IN YOU, WHICH YE HAVE FROM GOD? AND YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN;" **I Corinthians 6:19** (ASV)

"IF ANY MAN DESTROYETH THE TEMPLE OF GOD, HIM SHALL GOD DESTROY; FOR THE TEMPLE OF GOD IS HOLY, AND SUCH ARE YE." **I Corinthians 3:17** (ASV)

"FOR YE WERE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: GLORIFY GOD THEREFORE IN YOUR BODY." **I Corinthians 6:20** (ASV)

This body must be sacrificed, or dedicated to God. Not a sacrifice to offered or burned on an altar but the activities and energies of body, soul, and spirit are to be dedicated to His service. It is a sacrifice of the eyes, as the lust of the eye is replaced with a diligent study of God's word:

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II Timothy 2:15 "GIVE DILIGENCE TO PRESENT THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED, HANDLING ARIGHT THE WORD OF TRUTH." (ASV)

and a vision for His work

John 9:4 "WE MUST WORK THE WORKS OF HIM THAT SENT ME, WHILE IT IS DAY: THE NIGHT COMETH, WHEN NO MAN CAN WORK." (ASV)

It is a sacrifice of the ears, which must be "SWIFT TO HEAR" (**James 1:19**) the voice of instruction and turn away from the voice of temptation. It is a sacrifice of the hands:

I Thessalonians 4:11-12 "AND THAT YE STUDY TO BE QUIET, AND TO DO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, AND TO WORK WITH YOUR HANDS, EVEN AS WE CHARGED YOU; THAT YE MAY WALK BECOMINGLY TOWARD THEM THAT ARE WITHOUT, AND MAY HAVE NEED OF NOTHING." (ASV)

It is a sacrifice of the feet, not fleeing from responsibility as Jonah did (**Jonah 1:3**), but,

"AND HOW SHALL THEY PREACH, EXCEPT THEY BE SENT? EVEN AS IT IS WRITTEN, HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THEM THAT BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" **Romans 10:15** (ASV)

It is a sacrifice of the tongue, "LET NO CORRUPT SPEECH PROCEED OUT OF YOUR MOUTH, BUT SUCH AS IS GOOD FOR EDIFYING AS THE NEED MAY BE, THAT IT MAY GIVE GRACE TO THEM THAT HEAR." **Ephesians 4:29** (ASV)

It is a sacrifice of our emotions, our wants and desires as the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**) are replaced by the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). It is a sacrifice of our affections, as the love we possess for family and friends is to be secondary to the love we have for God the Father and Jesus the Son (**Matthew 10:37**).

God reveals that this sacrifice is living dead to sin: "EVEN SO RECKON YE ALSO YOURSELVES TO BE DEAD UNTO SIN, BUT ALIVE UNTO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS." **Romans 6:11** (ASV)

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This sacrifice is to be holy "BUT LIKE AS HE WHO CALLED YOU IS HOLY, BE YE YOURSELVES ALSO HOLY IN ALL MANNER OF LIVING; BECAUSE IT IS WRITTEN, YE SHALL BE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY." **I Peter 1:15-16** (ASV)

To be holy is to be called out, set apart for the Master's use, without blemish. A life of purity in both body and mind is required, through dedication, discipline and petition to God for forgiveness and strength when we do sin. This kind of sacrifice is acceptable to God. Our offering must be well-pleasing to Him.

This sacrifice is but what should be reasonably expected of us. True service is not just the offering of prayers, however beautiful, nor the giving of money, however generous, nor attendance at services, however faithful, but all of these supported by the offering of our everyday lives to God.

v2. "AND BE NOT FASHIONED ACCORDING TO THIS WORLD: BUT BE YE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND, AND YE MAY PROVE WHAT IS THE GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD." (ASV)

Oh, so easy to say and sometimes so hard to do! This change that men are expected to make in their lives is radical. The first step is to "BE NOT FASHIONED ACCORDING TO THIS WORLD". The temptation and desire of men is to conform to those around them, that is, to accept their values, their standards of living, their motives and their principles. We are tempted to be much more concerned about what man will think about us than what God thinks. This conformance to the standards, morals and religion of their neighbors was the downfall of Israel repeatedly throughout their history.

John tells us in **I John 2:15** "LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD. IF ANY MAN LOVE THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FATHER IS NOT IN HIM." (ASV) James added in **James 4:4** "YE ADULTERESSES, KNOW YE NOT THAT THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD IS ENMITY WITH GOD? WHOSOEVER THEREFORE WOULD BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD MAKETH HIMSELF AN ENEMY OF GOD." (ASV)

How is this presentation of our body in God's service to be made? After we have refused to be conformed to this world; we're told to transform our mind. Before there can be an outward change of our bodies (actions), there must first be the inward change of the mind (thoughts). "FOR AS A MAN THINKETH IN HIS HEART, SO *is* HE..." **Proverbs 23:7**

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In application this is one of the meanings of the word conversion, "change in character, form or function; change from one religion, political belief, viewpoint, course, etc. to another" (Webster's College Dictionary). First there must be a change of the mind about what one believes. We go from unbelief to belief in Christ as the Son of God; we change our minds and as a result have faith in God and Jesus Christ. Secondly, we change our behavior, which is repentance. Thirdly, we change our relationship with God by being buried in baptism with Christ to wash away our sins (**Acts 22:16**) and:

"WHO DELIVERED US OUT OF THE POWER OF DARKNESS, AND TRANSLATED US INTO THE KINGDOM OF THE SON OF HIS LOVE; IN WHOM WE HAVE OUR REDEMPTION, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS:"
Colossians 1:13-14 (ASV)

When we have been transformed, Paul says we then are able to "PROVE WHAT IS THE GOOD AND ACCEPTABLE AND PERFECT WILL OF GOD." We are to become living proof of the power of God. This refers to the ability to examine every situation and circumstance carefully and thoroughly, and determine what the will of the Lord is in whatever matter we're considering. Every aspect of our lives, every decision made must be examined in the light of God's word.

v3. "FOR I SAY, THROUGH THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN ME, TO EVERY MAN THAT IS AMONG YOU, NOT TO THINK OF HIMSELF MORE HIGHLY THAN HE OUGHT TO THINK; BUT TO THINK AS TO THINK SOBERLY, ACCORDING AS GOD HATH DEALT TO EACH MAN A MEASURE OF FAITH."
(ASV)

Here is a quality that will clearly distinguish us from the rest of the world: humility! One who has been transformed by the renewing of his mind and who is presenting his body a living sacrifice will reveal in his life a proper estimation of himself.

It is significant that following the discussion of our relationship to Him (**v.1**) and our relationship to the world (**v.2**), God turns now to our relationship with each other. (**v.3**)

It is easy for people to overestimate their importance. We are prone to exaggerate our abilities and accomplishments while overlooking our faults. At the same time, we seem to downplay the successes of others. Such a tendency is the evidence of pride and self-righteousness that was not learned from Christ as our example.

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A man will not think too highly of himself if he remembers the greatness of God compared to his own insignificance. God is the Creator and we are the created, and, as the Corinthian brethren were reminded:

I Corinthians 4:6-7 "NOW THESE THINGS, BRETHREN, I HAVE IN A FIGURE TRANSFERRED TO MYSELF AND APOLLOS FOR YOUR SAKES; THAT IN US YE MIGHT LEARN NOT TO GO BEYOND THE THINGS WHICH ARE WRITTEN; THAT NO ONE OF YOU BE PUFFED UP FOR THE ONE AGAINST THE OTHER. FOR WHO MAKETH THEE TO DIFFER? AND WHAT HAST THOU THAT THOU DIDST NOT RECEIVE? BUT IF THOU DIDST RECEIVE IT, WHY DOST THOU GLORY AS IF THOU HADST NOT RECEIVED IT?" (ASV)

Man takes pride in himself when he compares himself with other men, but the Christian's standard of comparison is not with other men, but with the Word of God. We need to ask how do I compare with what God expects of me? This was the problem with the self-righteous Pharisee (**Luke 18:10-14**). He compared himself with the sinful publican, not with God's standard, and thus was filled with pride, spiritual cancer, the deadliest form that sin can take.

To obtain humility, therefore, we must know ourselves. We cannot get very far in life until we know what we truly can do and what we cannot do. There must be an honest evaluation of our abilities without conceit and false modesty. We must also accept ourselves. Once we learn what we can do, where we fit into God's plan, we must humbly serve in that role to the best of our ability.

Romans 12:4-8 – We Are All of the Same Body

v4. "FOR EVEN AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL THE MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE:" (ASV)

None are so richly blessed as those who are members of the one body; the church or the kingdom of Jesus Christ. That spiritual institution was divinely born in the mind of God, bought by Heaven's most precious gift, and filled with the Spirit of Truth. It is the highest of any organization or institution that ever existed. It was created and we're made part of it by God himself (**Acts 2:47**). Calling the church the body clearly emphasizes the relationship of the Christian to Christ as the physical body is to the physical head. Paul was one who recorded:

"NOW I REJOICE IN MY SUFFERINGS FOR YOUR SAKE, AND FILL UP ON MY PART THAT WHICH IS LACKING OF THE AFFLICTIONS OF CHRIST IN MY FLESH FOR HIS BODY'S SAKE, WHICH IS THE CHURCH;" **Colossians 1:24** (ASV)

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The Bible affirms clearly that there is but one Spiritual Body through which mankind can be saved and through which God's blessings to lost mortals shall flow (**Acts 2:46-47; Ephesians 5:23, 1:3**). We come into that one body, the church, by obedience to the scheme or plan of righteousness revealed in the gospel **Romans 1:14-17**.

That "ALL MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE" simply means all members do not have the same work to do. There is not to be found, comparatively speaking, places of honor in the Lord's church but rather places of service. Whether elders, deacons, preachers, teachers or just members in the church "ALL YE ARE BRETHREN" (**Matthew 23:8**). We carry out the functions essential to the good of the church as a whole entity. Please don't misunderstand.

We are to honor our elders, give double honor to those who are worthy (**I Timothy 5:17**) but that doesn't mean we set them up on a platform in the "amen corner" of the church building to rule over the congregations as kings on a throne. God gave each of us the talents that we possess and intended that we should use them in accordance with the design and purpose for which we were made (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**) which is to serve God. In the dispensation of time in which we live that design and purpose is to be accomplished through the body of Christ.

Being numerous individuals in the one body causes us to realize how mutually dependent we are upon one another. As we work to carry the Gospel to the lost and dying world we only have to be somewhat observant to understand that we have different skills, talents, works and purposes. At the same time we must keep in mind that our mission is the same as the mission of our Lord, "...TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST." **Luke 19:10**

v5. "SO WE, WHO ARE MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND SEVERALLY MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER." (ASV)

Many of the same verses that tell us that there is but one body also tell us that there is only one head. God "...GAVE HIM (Christ) **to be** HEAD OVER ALL **things** TO THE CHURCH, WHICH IS HIS BODY..." (**Ephesians 1:22-23**). "AND HE IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH..." (**Colossians 1:18**). These declarations teach and illustrate that Christ has over the church the same dominion that the physical head has over the physical body; there is one head for one body. The human body acts only as it is directed by the head. A man may have various members of his body cut off and still live. But, if his head is cut off he dies. It is the same when those that are worldly try to be religious without Christ's authority, whether within or outside of His church. The inspiration of God through John says,

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“WHOSOEVER GOETH ONWARD AND ABIDETH NOT IN THE TEACHING OF CHRIST, HATH NOT GOD: HE THAT ABIDETH IN THE TEACHING, THE SAME HATH BOTH THE FATHER AND THE SON.” **II John 9** (ASV)

The wise man also tells us "TRUST IN JEHOVAH WITH ALL THY HEART, AND LEAN NOT UPON THINE OWN UNDERSTANDING: IN ALL THY WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM, AND HE WILL DIRECT THY PATHS." **Proverbs 3:5-6** (ASV)

Maturing in Christ demands that we are those that are "...SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE, MAY GROW UP INTO HIM IN ALL THINGS, WHICH IS THE HEAD **even** CHRIST:" (**Ephesians 4:15**). When we are in the one body under Christ as its head, we have peace with God (**Romans 5:1**). Our relationship to Christ must be one that is a result of obedience to God (**Romans 6:16-18**). We live with other members who are under the same head in the same body "GIVING DILIGENCE TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE." (**Ephesians 4:3**) (ASV). The first of the seven one's in unity of the Spirit is, "THERE IS ONE BODY" and the fourth is "ONE LORD" (**Ephesians 4:4-5**). For those who have come into a covenant relationship with the one Head by submitting to His divine will, unity and harmony are the result.

As is true with the physical body, each part of the body of Christ is important and must carry its part. No matter how small or insignificant we may feel; we all have an important part to serve and bear the responsibility to make the body strong, healthy, and united. This prevents divisions, disharmony and discord. It brings good to all parts of the body and hopefully causes the world to believe that Jesus Christ is the One sent from God for the salvation of the world as our Savior prayed to God would be the case (**John 17:20-21**).

v6. "AND HAVING GIFTS DIFFERING ACCORDING TO THE GRACE THAT WAS GIVEN TO US, WHETHER PROPHECY, LET US PROPHECY ACCORDING TO THE PROPORTION OF OUR FAITH;" (ASV)

The having of gifts points to the manner in which, by our good works, we may glorify our Father in Heaven (**Matthew 5:16**). God has given these gifts to His children, whether it be the supernatural gifts they possessed then (as Paul seems to be referring to here) or our natural gifts and talents that we possess today. When they are used in our work as God's stewards they bring God glory. These different gifts, abilities or talents are distinguishing factors in individuals who have these abilities. It doesn't matter whether these gifts are the supernatural that Paul refers to here (prophecy) or the natural talents that we possess today the same principle applies.

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The word prophecy carries, in the minds of most men, the idea of predicting the future, but this was not the main work of prophets. Rather, the prophet's primary function was to declare the divine will (a divinely directed teacher) and make known to man the mind of God. In the New Testament church they were under the influence of inspiration to speak what the apostles revealed. The order of the listing given in **Ephesians 4:11** mentions prophets as being distinct from the apostles and next to the apostles in authority. Those Christians who possessed the gifts of the spirit could control them, and some abused them in Corinth (**I Corinthians 14:2-11**). But their work, like that of the apostles, was temporary, and when their purpose was accomplished, their function ceased (**I Corinthians 13:8**). Peter writes:

I Peter 4:10-11 "ACCORDING AS EACH HATH RECEIVED A GIFT, MINISTERING IT AMONG YOURSELVES, AS GOOD STEWARDS OF THE MANIFOLD GRACE OF GOD; IF ANY MAN SPEAKETH, SPEAKING AS IT WERE ORACLES OF GOD; IS ANY MAN MINISTERETH, MINISTERING AS OF THE STRENGTH WHICH GOD SUPPLIETH: THAT IN ALL THINGS GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, WHOSE IS THE GLORY AND THE DOMINION FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN." (ASV)

v7. "OR MINISTRY, LET US GIVE OURSELVES TO OUR MINISTRY; OR HE THAT TEACHETH, TO HIS TEACHING;" (ASV)

The word ministry is probably one of the most overused words today among our brethren. It comes from a word in the original Greek that means service of any kind. In that sense it includes the evangelist (**Ephesians 6:21**, **Colossians 1:7**, **I Timothy 4:6**) or any faithful servant of Christ (**John 12:26**). But, there is also a special sense in which it expresses association with the work of the bishops or elders in the Lord's church. These special servants are called deacons (**Philippians 1:1**). They are distinguished from the saints in general and, hence, are seen to be in a special capacity. The Greek word for deacon (diakonos) means waiter, attendant, or servant, implying one who is a helper or assistant. In every instance "ministry" is but a variation of the same Greek word that is translated deacon and indicates one who willingly executes the command of another.

The talent of teaching is the ability to instruct and communicate knowledge to others, a definition that many of you understand better than I do.

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These persons in the early church were inspired and classed next to the prophets (**Acts 13:1; Ephesians 4:11**). Teaching certainly has always been necessary in the church and a major part of carrying out of its mission (**Matthew 28:20**). In regards to new converts it is also one that is too often neglected. Paul instructed Timothy both to teach and preach (**I Timothy 4:16; II Timothy 4:1-4**). Teaching is a work that no one should undertake until qualified by study (**II Timothy 2:15**).

But certainly when one has had time to develop in this field and has become experienced "IN THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS" (**Hebrews 5:12-14**), he or she must give their best efforts to this work in the body. In the words of Paul, "...SEEK THAT YE MAY ABOUND UNTO THE EDIFYING OF THE CHURCH." **I Corinthians 14:12**

v8. "OR HE THAT EXHORTETH, TO HIS EXHORTING: HE THAT GIVETH, LET HIM DO IT WITH LIBERALITY; HE THAT RULETH, WITH DILIGENCE; HE THAT SHOWETH MERCY, WITH CHEERFULNESS." (ASV)

Exhortation is a wonderful ability. The exhorter, or encourager, is that one who not only can teach the truths of God's word but who also encourages and urges us to carry out the work in obedience to that teaching. Barnabas was called a "GOOD MAN" in the New Testament and this name also has the distinction of meaning, "THE SON OF CONSOLATION" or "EXHORTATION" (**Acts 4:36**) no doubt because of his work. This expression of his character through the interpretation of his name shows Barnabas as one who was willing to extend himself into self-denying labors for the gospel's sake. Exhortation is still greatly needed in the church, whether it is given on behalf of the lost, those whose faith is weak, those who are sick or those who are in sorrow.

The special work of giving is to be done with simplicity, with liberality and with the motive of love for the brethren. The connection in this portion of the passage to its other teaching does not just refer to ones own giving (though that is very important) but also to those who are given the responsibility of distributing that which has been given by Christians to those who are in need. Each work of the church, as is each member of the body, is important, as is the attitude of the ones who help or provide for the poor and needy.

Simplicity includes cheerfully, liberally and without fanfare, managing that which has been given so it is distributed in the proper manner. When one is chosen to take care of this type of work, he should be one of honesty in aim and purpose, pure in integrity. Judas stands before us from the gospel accounts as one just the **opposite** of the way we should be.

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"HE THAT RULETH" The reference here is to the position of service given to some in the church who are set over others and gives their time and attention "WITH DILIGENCE" to the needs of others. Paul refers to these rulers, our elders, many times.

"BUT WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, TO KNOW THEM THAT LABOR AMONG YOU, AND ARE OVER YOU IN THE LORD, AND ADMONISH YOU; AND TO ESTEEM THEM EXCEEDING HIGHLY IN LOVE FOR THEIR WORK'S SAKE. BE AT PEACE AMONG YOURSELVES." **I Thessalonians 5:12-13** (ASV)

In the qualifications of elders (**I Timothy 3; Titus 1**) the idea of ruling in the home is stated, "ONE THAT RULETH WELL HIS OWN HOUSE, HAVING HIS CHILDREN IN SUBJECTION WITH ALL GRAVITY; (BUT IF A MAN KNOWETH NOT HOW TO RULE HIS OWN HOUSE, HOW SHALL HE TAKE CARE OF THE CHURCH OF GOD?" (**I Timothy 3:4-5**) (ASV) The man who doesn't show diligence in ruling his own house, according to the pen of inspiration, does not have the proper ability to rule the church under the authority of Christ. Again, in writing to Timothy about "HOW TO BEHAVE" in the church, Paul writes, "LET THE ELDERS THAT RULE WELL BE COUNTED WORTHY OF DOUBLE HONOR, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO LABOR IN THE WORD AND IN TEACHING." (**I Timothy 5:17**) (ASV)

Some today among our brethren are disputing these plain scriptures and, as it were, pushing the Lord off of his throne of authority by denying that elders are to rule or preside over the affairs of the church. Some in "high places" in "our schools" or in the editorship of certain brotherhood papers have, on this point, taken a position that is wrong. Paul told Titus

"FOR THERE ARE MANY UNRULY MEN, VAIN TALKERS AND DECEIVERS, SPECIALLY THEY OF THE CIRCUMCISION, WHOSE MOUTHS MUST BE STOPPED; MEN WHO OVERTHROW WHOLE HOUSES, TEACHING THINGS WHICH THEY OUGHT NOT, FOR FILTHY LUCRE'S SAKE." (**Titus 1:10-11**) (ASV)

When one of our apostate brethren claims that elders of the church have no right to stop various practices or teachings in the congregation over which they preside that are contrary to the Word of God then that brother has overstepped his bounds and seeks to interfere with "HE THAT RULETH". On the other hand preachers and elders have to be careful lest the preacher becomes a "pastor" in the denominational sense and their roles become reversed.

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"HE THAT SHEWETH MERCY" This action is to be done "WITH CHEERFULNESS." Mercy is kindness, love and compassion in action, determined by the state or condition of those in need. Members of the early church had special needs and they, in obedience to the principles of truth, gave personal attention to the sick and infirm about them before there were hospitals or other places of care. Their disposition to aid their fellowman who were in need and suffering did not ask in that instance whether one being aided was worthy or deserving. "HE THAT SHEWETH MERCY" on the man pictured by our Lord in **Luke 10** was the "CERTAIN SAMARITAN" who saw a man in need that he didn't even know and "HAD COMPASSION ON HIM" (**Luke 10:33**). It is evident that the Lord is saying there that mercy is to be rendered without asking whether the man in need is a Jew, Gentile, black, white, brown, friend, or foe.

It is also apparent from **Romans 12** that this rendering of mercy is not to be done with a sour disposition or impatience and scorn in our actions or in our words, but "WITH CHEERFULNESS." The happy temperament of the true Christian really shows through by kindness, pleasantness, and joy in being of service to the aged, feeble, and needy. Our Lord is again our example when He is seen with the multitudes of afflicted and hurting hovering around about Him.

Romans 12:9-21 – Love and How We Should Live

v9. "LET LOVE BE WITHOUT HYPOCRISY. ABHOR THAT WHICH IS EVIL; CLEAVE TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD." (ASV)

"HYPOCRISY" is playacting, pretending, putting on a show. True Christian love must be sincere, not hypocritical (**I Peter 1:22**). Paul called to remembrance and spoke of the unfeigned, or genuine, faith of the brethren (**II Corinthians 6:6**). Our love for each other should be the same way. Christians are to love with a pure heart (**Matthew 5:8**). Love (charity) is a fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**). Love worketh no ill to his neighbor (**Romans 13:10**). Love is the bond of perfectness (**Colossians 3:14**). Love desires to forgive (**II Corinthians 2:7-8**). It is our love of the brethren that proves our discipleship (**John 13:34-35**). True, genuine love will be shown in our actions, not just in our words (**I John 3:18, John 14:15**)

"YE THAT LOVE THE LORD, HATE EVIL..." (**Psalms 97:10**) A faithful follower of God hates evil (sin). Wickedness and evil God hates (**Proverbs 6:16-17**). A wicked person is loathsome to God (**Proverbs 13:5**).

"ABHOR" means to hate, turn away from, to avoid something. Here we find Paul saying we are to abhor evil. In **I Thessalonians 5:22** his inspired words further instructs us to even "ABSTAIN FROM EVERY FORM OF EVIL." **Romans 12:21** further gives reason for "ABHORRING" evil, for one can be overcome of evil.

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If we but have obeyed the first two verses of this chapter (**Romans 12:1-2**), if we have surrendered ourselves to God, it is a natural Christian instinct for us to hate sin.

But God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit does not leave us with the negative admonition all by itself but adds the positive as well. Not only are we to abhor evil; but the hold fast (cleave) to that which is good. "CLEAVE" indicates the kind of firm welding together of two objects as is done with glue, super glue, if you will; uniting firmly by glue, a firm adherence to an object. Thus in this application of being attached, firmly fixed to that which is good.

The word of God will direct us to know right from wrong, good from evil, that which we should hate versus that to which we should cleave.

v10. "IN LOVE OF THE BRETHREN BE TENDERLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER; IN HONOR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER;" (ASV)

Paul did not just say for them to be kind to one another or to just love one other -- but with emphasis he wrote of being "KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER" emphasizing, underscoring and reinforcing his meaning. We are to love one another as we do kindred -- the tender affectionate relationship of a parent and child. One of the proofs that we have passed from death unto life, is shown by our love of the brethren (**I John 3:1**).

In fulfilling the exhortation of Paul we will strive to show or manifest honor (respect) toward others, not in seeking honor for ourselves. We "PREFER" others (going, before, leading, setting an example) (**Ephesians 5:21**) "IN HONOR PREFERRING ONE ANOTHER" is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the world (**III John 9, Matthew 23:6**). The world desires to be first, #1, at the top, only thinking of itself. In business or politics that frequently means that someone climbs the ladder of success over the backs and bodies of others whom they destroy along the way. This kind of worldly attitude has no place in the Lord's church or in a Christian.

v11. "IN DILIGENCE NOT SLOTHFUL; FERVENT IN SPIRIT; SERVING THE LORD;" (ASV)

There's an old adage among those of us who live or have lived in the Missouri Ozarks about backing up to our employer to get our paycheck. It indicates that sometimes, some folks just might not be able to take their pay and look the boss in the eye at the same time because they didn't earn it. Perhaps this is the reason that good help is getting almost impossible to find these days. In all business the Christian should be diligent in performing it well and timely. Indolence, slothfulness (laziness), and idleness are condemned both in the Old and the New Testament.

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This admonition doesn't apply just to business matters but to spiritual matters as well. We must be diligent in the accomplishment of our common duties as Christian as well. God tells us through the wise man that "WHATSOEVER THY HAND FINDETH TO DO, DO IT WITH THY MIGHT ..." (**Ecclesiastes 9:10**). We must watch against Satan slowing us down; settling us down into spiritual slothfulness. We are further encouraged not to grow weary in well doing (**Galatians 6:9**). The Father's business demands intense and dedicated laborers for the tasks that need to be accomplished. We must continually work as if it all depended upon us, and pray as if it all depended upon God.

"FERVENT" means ardent or burning. It is the opposite of cold, unemotional. As a child of the King continues in his living for the Master, he must be fervent in Spirit in the Lord's service. Paul gives us an example in that "...WOE IS UNTO ME, IF I PREACH NOT THE GOSPEL!" (**I Corinthians 9:16**) it was like a fire burning in his bones. His only relief from this deep desire was to preach and teach the word of God. He also wrote to the Corinthian brethren, speaking of "ABOUNDING" in the work of the Lord, knowing "...THAT YOUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD." **I Corinthians 15:58** We should apply that same kind of fervent spirit to our daily living, whatever we do, and to our work for the Lord and His cause.

Having submitted ourselves to the King of Kings -- we must realize and serve in our role as a "SERVANT" to the "RULER" of the world. As a servant, we are to be diligent and fervent, not as the Lord spoke about in **Luke 6:46** who called Him "LORD, LORD" did not do what He said.

In whatever employment in this life we find ourselves – we must be industrious and fervently strive to fulfill our duties properly to the glory of God, whether these duties are secular or spiritual.

v12. "REJOICING IN HOPE; PATIENT IN TRIBULATION; CONTINUING STEDFASTLY IN PRAYER." (ASV)

When looking to the precious promises of God the faithful child of God has the grandest hope ever known to mankind. These promises are not vague, nor hazy -- but definite and sure. The Lord is not slack concerning his promises (**II Peter 3:9**). The Christian's hope is in the Lord's coming again to receive the righteous and then present them to His Father. With the reality of that time to come (**John 14:1-6; Revelation 21:1-4**) one must walk day by day in the light (**I John 1:7-9**) knowing that if death takes us or the Lord comes again, we will be forever with the Lord.

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Paul looked to the rest awaiting him with confidence (**II Timothy 4:6-8**); knowing he would leave behind the toils and trials of his earthly journey (**II Corinthians 11:23-28**). It is this hope that has the ability to destroy gloom, darkness, despair in our lives and replace it with joy, peace and serenity.

Be "PATIENT IN TRIBULATION," or as someone rephrased it, "IN TRIBULATION REMAINING PATIENT." Patience is required for the Christian to wait for the relief which, in due time, God's providence will send. We're reminded by Paul "AND LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL-DOING: FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT." (**Galatians 6:9**). We must patiently endure all that may be ours to bear; striving to be as Paul; content in whatsoever state we find ourselves (**Philippians 4:11**). We can endure whatever is required if we keep our minds focused on that prepared place that is to be our ultimate home where there will be no more death and no more tears.

Christ is our example in this endeavor because of his great patience. He patiently continued with His own disciples and their misunderstanding of His spiritual purpose. He patiently bore the insults and injuries of His enemies and murderers. He bore the agony -- willingly giving His life, shedding His innocent blood to pay the ransom for our souls.

Patience is not something we learn in one simple lesson however. Most of us in this room realize that. We must not be as the one who prays for patience, and demands it right now! It doesn't happen that way.

"CONTINUING STEDFASTLY IN PRAYER" The one who has been washed clean of all past sins -- and is presently walking in the light (**I John 1:7-9**). -- WILL steadfastly continue in prayer to his Father. It is one of the most natural of reactions to desire to talk with a Father; especially as help is needed, or perhaps just in order to share the joys of life. So it is likewise a natural course to follow spiritually -- to communicate with our heavenly Father with joy and thanksgiving or when we need his help.

In order to be a Christian carrying out the duties and responsibilities we have as Christians it is imperative that we cherish and maintain a close relationship with God through the avenue of prayer.

Notice the following about the first Christians, they:

"...CONTINUED STEDFASTLY IN...PRAYERS..." **Acts 2:42** (ASV)

"...WE WILL CONTINUE STEDFASTLY IN PRAYER..." **Acts 6:4**

"... PRAYER WAS MADE EARNESTLY OF THE CHURCH UNTO GOD FOR HIM.." **Acts 12:5** (ASV) while Peter was in prison

"... WHERE MANY WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AND WERE PRAYING." **Acts 12:12** (ASV)

"CONTINUE STEDFASTLY IN PRAYER, WATCHING THEREIN WITH THANKSGIVING;" **Colossians 4:2**

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Daniel prayed three times a day (**Daniel 6:10**) even when it caused him to be put into the lion's den as punishment. David hungered for communion in prayer with the Father (**Psalms 42:1-2; 43:1**)

v13. "COMMUNICATING TO THE NECESSITIES OF THE SAINTS; GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY." (ASV)

True love is to be exhibited to those in need by meeting their needs (necessities). Having things in common -- to regard their property as "COMMON" so as to supply the wants of others (**Acts 2:44**). This is not suggesting a communistic form of government -- but rather that we are to be liberal in assisting others in their true needs.

Paul, under the direction of the Holy Spirit sent from God, did not command the rich in this world's goods to "SELL ALL THAT YOU HAVE" as Jesus did the rich, young man (**Matthew 19:16-22**). Jesus' direction to him was to a specific man for a specific reason. But Paul writes

"CHARGE THEM THAT ARE RICH IN THIS PRESENT WORLD, THAT THEY BE NOT HIGHMINDED, NOR HAVE THEIR HOPE SET ON THE UNCERTAINTY OF RICHES, BUT ON GOD, WHO GIVETH US RICHLY ALL THINGS TO ENJOY; THAT THEY DO GOOD, THAT THEY BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, THAT THEY BE READY TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLING TO COMMUNICATE;" **I Timothy 6:17-18** (ASV)

The Philippian brethren "COMMUNICATED" with Paul in that they provided support for his work in Thessalonica. At little later Paul states that since Macedonia and Achaia had benefited spiritually by receiving the gospel from the Jews at Jerusalem "THEY OWE IT TO THEM ALSO TO MINISTER UNTO THEM IN CARNAL THINGS." (**Romans 15:27**).

"GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY" or "PURSUING HOSPITALITY" The words "GIVEN TO" are not nearly as strong as is needed to convey the true meaning. In 40 to 50 other occurrences of this Greek word in the New Testament the translation is "PURSUING." Thus the application is that we are to pursue hospitality. We are to seek to meet the needs of others, even strangers, with kindness and openhandedness. We are to go after this business! As we have opportunity (**Galatians 6:10**) we are to use our homes and possessions as a tool for good works.

Examples in the Old Testament of hospitality expressed to others are found in Abraham entertaining three angels (**Genesis 18:1-8**); Lot, entertaining two angels (**Genesis 19:1-2**); and Job feeding the homeless and orphans (**Job 31:16-17**).

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We do not have the opportunity to serve angels today but Jesus tells us that if we provide even unto the least of his brethren it is the same as ministering to him (**Matthew 25:40**). We are to readily and cheerfully provide for others...

"FORGET NOT TO SHOW LOVE UNTO STRANGERS: FOR THEREBY SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED ANGELS UNAWARES." **Hebrews 13:2** (ASV)
Elders lead by example: "THE BISHOP THEREFORE MUST BE..., GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY,..." **I Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:8** (ASV)

I Peter 4:9 " USING HOSPITALITY ONE TO ANOTHER WITHOUT MURMURING:" (ASV)

v.14 "BLESS THEM THAT PERSECUTE YOU; BLESS, AND CURSE NOT." (ASV)

The spirit of Christ is to return good for evil.

"BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, AND PRAY FOR THEM THAT PERSECUTE YOU; THAT YE MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN: FOR HE MAKETH HIS SUN TO RISE ON THE EVIL AND THE GOOD, AND SENDETH RAIN ON THE JUST AND THE UNJUST." **Matthew 5:44-45** (ASV)

What do the words underlined imply? The Christian must also do good for evil -- render blessing for cursing in order to be sons of God. To do what will benefit that person -- help them become a better person. It is not always what will please or gratify them, but what will help them. If they won't be helped, forgive and move on.

We have the example of Stephen as he died under the stones of the Jews "AND HE KNEELED DOWN, AND CRIED WITH A LOUD VOICE, LORD, LAY NOT THIS SIN TO THEIR CHARGE. AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP." (**Acts 7:60**)

God through the Holy Spirit tells us and Peter records that we must be "NOT RENDERING EVIL FOR EVIL, OR REVILING FOR REVILING; BUT CONTRARIWISE BLESSING; FOR HEREUNTO WERE YE CALLED, THAT YE SHOULD INHERIT A BLESSING." **I Peter 3:9** (ASV) This is not easy to do, sometimes you just want to see someone get what they justly deserve but that is not the way of Christ or the way of the Christian.

v15. "REJOICE WITH THEM THAT REJOICE; WEEP WITH THEM THAT WEEP." (ASV)

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This requires a kindly, brotherly love for others, both in their joys and sorrows; a desire for their good, a desire to deliver them from sin and evil should rule in our hearts. If we do so, we will rejoice in the well-being and happiness of others.

Sometimes people envy those who succeed and prosper, and people despise those who fail and are in want; sometimes people sympathize with the needy, but envy the prosperous. This is not God's way, this is not being righteous. A spirit of brotherly kindness to all is the spirit of Christ that will make us rejoice with the successful and sorrow with the unfortunate. This is part of what Paul meant by becoming all things to all men. He would place himself in such full and complete sympathy with them that he felt their difficulties and rejoiced when they had occasions for joy.

He could feel a brother's sigh and with him bear a part. Christ felt for and pitied man in his lost, helpless, sinful state, whether that man was friend or foe; so should we.

v16. "BE OF THE SAME MIND ONE TOWARD ANOTHER. SET NOT YOUR MIND ON HIGH THINGS, BUT CONDESCEND TO THINGS THAT ARE LOWLY. BE NOT WISE IN YOUR OWN CONCEITS." (ASV)

Be of the same kind, sympathizing spirit toward all, rich and poor, as the true spirit of Christ. {This also encourages us to be united in feeling, interests, and purpose; that there be no discord or disagreements.} David wrote a psalm of humility:

"JEHOVAH, MY HEART IS NOT HAUGHTY, NOR MINE EYES LOFTY;
NEITHER DO I EXERCISE MYSELF IN GREAT MATTERS, OR IN THINGS
TOO WONDERFUL FOR ME. SURELY I HAVE STILLED AND QUIETED MY
SOUL; LIKE A WEANED CHILD WITH HIS MOTHER, LIKE A WEANED CHILD
IS MY SOUL WITHIN ME." **Psalm 131:1-2** (ASV)

"AND SEEKEST THOU GREAT THINGS FOR THYSELF? SEEK THEM NOT;
FOR, BEHOLD, I WILL BRING EVIL UPON ALL FLESH, SAITH JEHOVAH;
BUT THY LIFE WILL I GIVE UNTO THEE FOR A PREY IN ALL PLACES
WHITHER THOU GOEST." **Jeremiah 45:5** (ASV)

Do not seek after exalted stations in this life - after all where is it that we want to gain the greatest reward we can dream of? We want our greatest rewards to come in the life hereafter not here. We should be concerned about what we are much more than where we are.

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Condescend or be humble and regard with favor and associate with men of low estate. This means common folks, most of us present would probably admit that's us:

"WOE UNTO THEM THAT ARE WISE IN THEIR OWN EYES, AND PRUDENT IN THEIR OWN SIGHT!" **Isaiah 5:21** (ASV)

Do not be puffed up with a sense of your own wisdom. Let every man think soberly of his own abilities. It is good to not trust ourselves too far but to keep watch lest we be tempted. While we should be confident, overconfidence will lead us to presumptions, which is offensive to God and to other men around us. When men conceive the idea that they are wise, then they are unwilling to look to God for wisdom. They will follow their own conceits.

The Spirit tells us through the pen of Paul:

"FOR BEHOLD YOUR CALLING, BRETHREN, THAT NOT MANY WISE AFTER THE FLESH, NOT MANY MIGHTY, NOT MANY NOBLE, ARE CALLED." **I Corinthians 1:26** (ASV)

v17. "RENDER TO NO MAN EVIL FOR EVIL. TAKE THOUGHT FOR THINGS HONORABLE IN THE SIGHT OF ALL MEN." (ASV)

"SEE THAT NONE RENDER UNTO ANY ONE EVIL FOR EVIL; BUT ALWAYS FOLLOW AFTER THAT WHICH IS GOOD, ONE TOWARD ANOTHER, AND TOWARD ALL." **I Thessalonians 5:15** (ASV)

"BUT I SAY UNTO YOU, RESIST NOT HIM THAT IS EVIL: BUT WHOSOEVER SMITETH THEE ON THY RIGHT CHEEK, TURN TO HIM THE OTHER ALSO." **Matthew 5:39**

Christian love prevents, forbids, personal vengeance and retaliation. Christian love is to curse not, to do no hurt or harm, it will neither wish harm or ruin to come to those who would persecute or harm us (**v.14**). Peter recorded these words to encourage disciples who were facing persecution for well doings and speaking of Christ:

"WHO WAS FOREKNOWN INDEED BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, BUT WAS MANIFESTED AT THE END OF TIMES FOR YOUR SAKE, WHO THROUGH HIM ARE BELIEVERS IN GOD, THAT RAISED HIM FROM

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THE DEAD, AND GAVE HIM GLORY; SO THAT YOUR FAITH AND HOPE MIGHT BE IN GOD. SEEING YE HAVE PURIFIED YOUR SOULS IN YOUR OBEDIENCE TO THE TRUTH UNTO UNFEIGNED LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, LOVE ONE ANOTHER FROM THE HEART FERVENTLY" **I Peter 2:20-22**

To recompense no man evil for evil means one is not to pay back, or reimburse, evil for evil {no getting even}. Repayment is not in the like coin but in another currency. Paul demonstrated this by saying, "AND WE TOIL, WORKING WITH OUR OWN HANDS: BEING REVILED, WE BLESS; BEING PERSECUTED, WE ENDURE; BEING DEFAMED, WE ENTREAT: WE ARE MADE AS THE FILTH OF THE WORLD, THE OFFSCOURING OF ALL THINGS, EVEN UNTIL NOW." **I Corinthians 4:12-13** (ASV) Suffer is from the Greek anexometha and means to bear, to hold fast. Thus, Paul was saying in effect, "We tamely submit to reproach, persecution and evil repute - we return in exchange blessing, and patience and soft words." Here is the great contrast of Christianity with worldliness.

You can't put out a fire by adding more fire, you can't stop evil by responding with more evil; you only increase the problem and the damage that it will cause.

"FOR WE TAKE THOUGHT FOR THINGS HONORABLE, NOT ONLY IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, BUT ALSO IN THE SIGHT OF MEN." **II Corinthians 8:21** (ASV)

Do things in a way that shall be regarded honorable by all men. This is to not let your good be evil spoken of. The servant of the heavenly Master is to be indifferent to what the world thinks if the world and God differ or are at odds on something. But at the same time we are to be sensitive and attentive to how the world's sees us. If the world is conscious of our relationship with God and even somewhat familiar with His word they will be watching to see how we handle ourselves and if His word really governs our lives. Some may even be watching to see how long we can go without stumbling.

v18. "IF IT BE POSSIBLE, AS MUCH AS IN YOU LIETH, BE AT PEACE WITH ALL MEN." (ASV)

"SO THEN LET US FOLLOW AFTER THINGS WHICH MAKE FOR PEACE, AND THINGS WHEREBY WE MAY EDIFY ONE ANOTHER." **Romans 14:19** (ASV)

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Use everything within your power to live peaceable with all men; for the sake of peace, sacrifice everything except truth and right. But sometimes men don't want to live peaceable with us; Paul's life shows us this

"BUT WHEN THE JEWS SAW THE MULTITUDES, THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY, AND CONTRADICTED THE THINGS WHICH WERE SPOKEN BY PAUL, AND BLASPHEMED." **Acts 13:45**

We find other examples in **Acts 14:19; 16:19; 17:5**; etc. Because his whole life was in active and fervent contention against sin and error Paul encountered opposition and controversy everywhere he went and so will we. We should be like Paul in declaring "...ALL THE COUNSEL OF GOD" (**Acts 20:27**). But at the same time we have the responsibility to keep the peace to the extent that we can without compromising God's word.

"FOLLOW AFTER PEACE WITH ALL MEN, AND THE SANCTIFICATION WITHOUT WHICH NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD:" **Hebrews 12:14**

v19. "AVENGE NOT YOURSELVES, BELOVED, BUT GIVE PLACE UNTO THE WRATH OF GOD: FOR IT IS WRITTEN, VENGEANCE BELONGETH UNTO ME; I WILL RECOMPENSE, SAITH THE LORD." (ASV)

The Roman Christians were to endure much suffering from their enemies, and Paul very tenderly exhorts them to suffer with patience the wrath that would be visited upon them.

God, in his ruling over the earth, will use the wicked to avenge the wrongs heaped upon his children; but especially in the day of judgment will he even the score with evil doers for all the wrongs they have committed. Leave it to the hands of God to punish the evil doer.

This admonition does not apply to those who break civil law and are punished by God ordained government but rather to those who trouble or who mistreat us because of who we are or what we are trying to be - Christians. God even told the Israelites of old:

"VENGEANCE IS MINE, AND RECOMPENSE, AT THE TIME WHEN THEIR FOOT SHALL SLIDE: FOR THE DAY OF THEIR CALAMITY IS AT HAND, AND THE THINGS THAT ARE TO COME UPON THEM SHALL MAKE HASTE."
Deuteronomy 32:35 (ASV)

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v20. "BUT IF THINE ENEMY HUNGER, FEED HIM; IF HE THIRST, GIVE HIM TO DRINK: FOR IN SO DOING THOU SHALT HEAP COALS OF FIRE UPON HIS HEAD." (ASV)

Look at the wisdom of a God that does not change as it was given to Solomon:

Proverbs 25:21-22 "IF THINE ENEMY BE HUNGRY, GIVE HIM BREAD TO EAT; AND IF HE BE THIRSTY, GIVE HIM WATER TO DRINK: FOR THOU WILT HEAP COALS OF FIRE UPON HIS HEAD, AND JEHOVAH WILL REWARD THEE." (ASV)

Exodus 23:4-5 "IF YOU MEET YOUR ENEMY'S OX OR HIS DONKEY GOING ASTRAY, YOU SHALL SURELY BRING IT BACK TO HIM AGAIN. IF YOU SEE THE DONKEY OF ONE WHO HATES YOU LYING UNDER ITS BURDEN, AND YOU WOULD REFRAIN FROM HELPING IT, YOU SHALL SURELY HELP HIM WITH IT." (NKJV)

If one who has treated you as an enemy suffers or is in need, do him a kindness; relieve his needs in a kind and unpretentious manner. If he has a conscience at all you may just make him feel regret in his own heart about the wrong that he has done to you.

v21. "DO NOT BE OVERCOME BY EVIL, BUT OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD." (ASV)

Do not let evil done to you so overcome you as to lead you to do evil in return. If you allow yourself to be provoked to revenge, you will be yielding to the enemy – you will have been overcome by that which is evil. We had a saying heard often where I worked for several years; "trying to deal with some people is a little like trying to mud wrestle with a hog - you get just as filthy as the hog does and the hog loves it."

When you meet or return evil with good, you will have at least overcome evil in yourself, if not in your enemy as well.