

President Obama

"My job to the Muslim world is to communicate that the Americans are not your enemy. We sometimes make mistakes. We have not been perfect."

Karl Rove

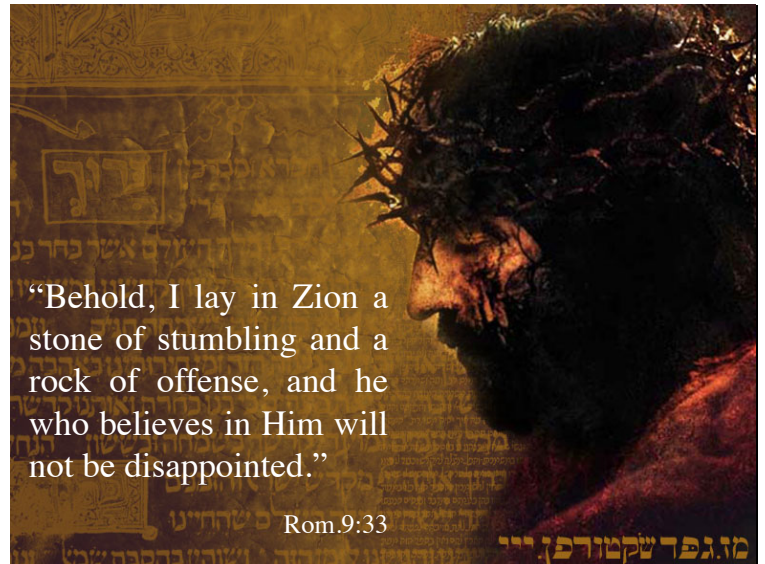
"Our president apologized for America, making us look weak before our enemies."

Benjamin Franklin

"Make yourself sheep and the wolves will eat you."

Jesus

"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;"

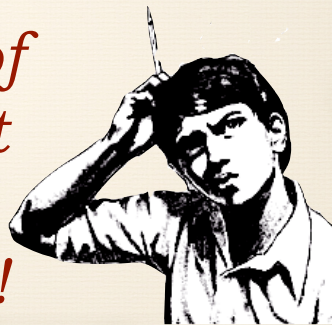


"Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed."

Rom.9:33

Excuse me Jesus, but some of your teachings just don't seem to work or make sense!

Your rules of engagement with evil is an example!



Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1-12

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the gentle, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted,"

It seems to be the WORD and the WAY of the Cross

Acts 8:32 (Isaiah 53:7)

"He was led as a sheep to slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearers is silent, so He does not open His mouth."

The Way of the Cross

Acts
9:2, 19:9,23, 24:14,22

SHOW



The Word of the Cross

1 Corinthians
1:18-31

TELL

Luke 14:27

"Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

It is the message of the Apostles

1 Corinthians 4:12

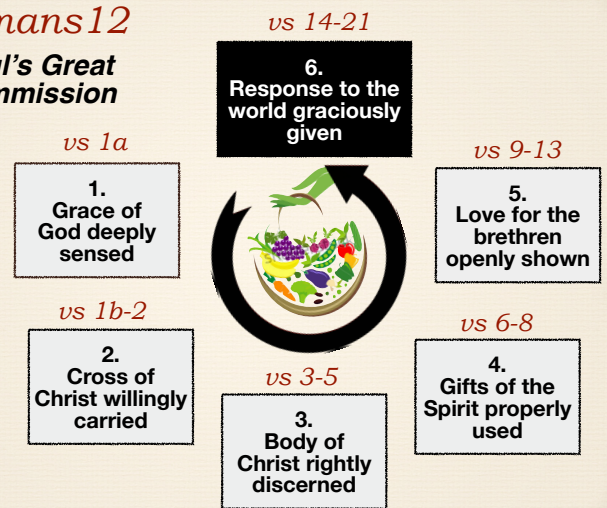
“when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted we endure;”

1 Peter 3:8-9

“To sum up. all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but give a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.”

Romans 12

Paul's Great Commission



Romans 12

“14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.”

“18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. 20 “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

General observations

1. In these verses Paul moves from our relationship with one another as Christians to our relationship with the outside world.
2. Note some of the implications of these verses:
 - They assume that the world is going to meet us with - **rejection, misunderstanding, arrogance, and hostility.**
 - It seems that God expects us to not return the favor but rather to respond with **grace, empathy, humility, and peace.**
 - We are to realize that the world, is not the source of our **comfort, security, and support.**

3. Note what Paul says and does not say.

Last week

He does not suggest that to proceed in the Christian life one must receive from God something they do not already have.

He does suggest that we need to know and apply what God has already done and fully supplied to us.

This week

He does not suggest that we are here primarily to reform this evil world.

He does suggest that we will bear witness to it as salt and light by where we expect to find hope and power.

“14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.”

Social Blessing

1. This is the **summary sentence** of the whole text.
2. “persecute” is the same Greek word as “pursue” (hospitality) in vs.13. Persecution is the **opposite of hospitality**.
3. This teaching is uncommon in both Greek and Hebrew culture. It is a **unique emphasis** in Christianity.

“14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.”

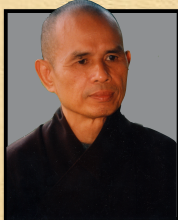
Social Blessing

“15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Social Empathy

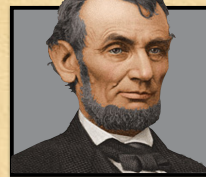
The enemy that we are to bless is still our enemy but empathetic blessing can melt his frozen heart.

Thich Nhat Hanh
Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk



“When you begin to see that your enemy is suffering, that is the beginning of insight.”

Abraham Lincoln



“Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends.”

“14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.”

Social Blessing

“15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.”

Social Empathy

“16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

Social Humility

“17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.”

Social Peace

“20 “But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Social Overcoming

Burning coals can create the heat that leads a lost soul to the light.

Jesus and Paul in context

1. It's about US - "bless those who curse YOU personally"

- This is not about our response to those who abuse OTHERS where social justice may be our calling.

1 Corinthians 5:3

"For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present."

- This is not addressing NATIONAL foreign policy.

Jesus and Paul in context

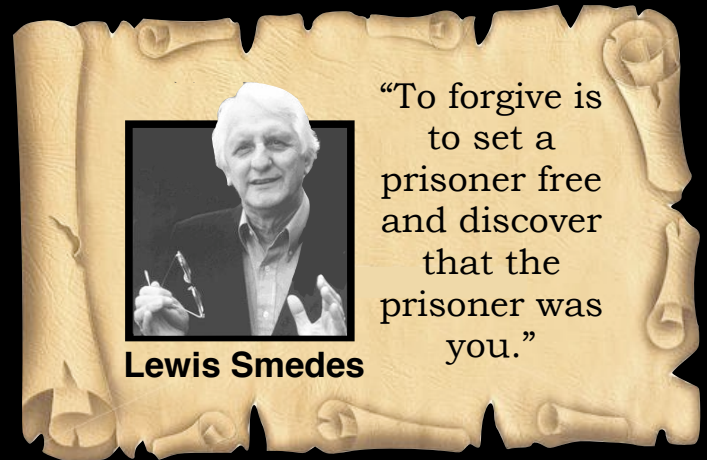
2. It's about FAITH & HOPE - "never take YOUR OWN revenge"

- Are we to bring in the Kingdom or does it await **Christ's return**?
- There is no place for a "**vigilante culture**" in the kingdom of God.
- The temptation is to define reality and make decisions **as though God is not there or does not matter.**

Jesus and Paul in context

3. It's about DEFILEMENT - "do not be OVERCOME by evil"

- When we are treated poorly, the temptation is to **retaliate in kind.**
- One of the ways we can avoid this trap is by making a bold move in the **opposite direction.**
- This is not about changing the world or eradicating evil but about overcoming the temptation to "**return fire.**"



A good strategy to overcome bitterness is to bless the one who has hurt you.

Jesus and Paul in context

4. It's about LOVE - We are not to call evil good but we are to work for the welfare of the offender as well as the offended.

- Hate the sin but love the sinner.
- Animosity toward others disqualifies us from corrective discipline of them.
- We each will have our moments of needing a blessing or at least forbearance.

Don't judge someone
just because they sin
differently than you.

An important assumption

Paul is not suggesting that we
avoid promoting justice, protecting
the weak, confronting the abuser,
converting the lost, etc.

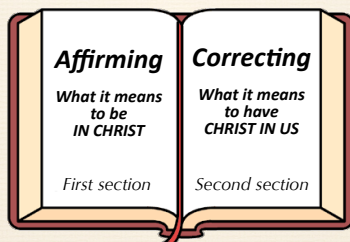
But rather, before we do anything
else we must displace any motive
of vengeance with love & peace.

Rules of engagement with evil

1. **Purify your heart** - make peace with
the Way and the Word of the Cross.
 - Be a living sacrifice - **depersonalize**
offenses.
 - Be as **passionate** about love for the
sinner as hate for the sin.
 - Use the power of the **Way of the Cross**.
2. **Hold your fire** - don't let evil seduce
you into retaliation.

Don't promise when
you're happy.
**Don't reply when
you're angry.**
Don't decide when
you're sad.

3. **Lead with Love** - your motives give
you authority to correct others.
 - **First** show faith, hope, & love and **then**
speak of peace and justice.
 - The **pattern** of the Epistles is an example.



The order is consistent and significant



If you don't know how to do this
then watch someone who does.