

How to Love in Jesus' Name: Part Three

Romans 12:17–21

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Today is the my third message on How to Love in Jesus' Name. I'm continuing in Romans from the passage we looked at last week. It's important in every generation to know how to love our enemies, but I feel that in today's climate than ever. There is hostility everywhere. Troubles and problems are encountered Christians and sinners everyday, we are the ones who need to demonstrate the peace and love of Jesus.

Romans 12:14–21 (NLT) Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord. Instead, "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

We're confronted with it all day long: evil is everywhere, but Jesus is good. Christians are standing below a volcano that is spewing ash, smoke, and lava. We are threatened by the sin and evil that is around us. We talk about the threat all the time: news sources, tv shows, YouTube videos, chat rooms, podcasts, video games.

We appear to be powerless over this ever growing influence in our world. Children today are growing up to become adults and everything they have seen is normal to them. Their normal is filled with temptations, sins, and evil.

We are surrounded by people who don't have a Christian ethic. That is a grounding in biblical truth, an understanding of right and wrong, and a relationship with Jesus. They are without a guide through their daily lives. They may be missing the reality of good and bad. That's just an example of our world today.

Spewing from this volcano are lies being presented as the truth. Sin is being sanctioned as free will. Violence is being justified as retribution. We have a defense against sin and evil, His name is Jesus.

Christians, you and me, appear to be standing against a tsunami of sin and evil. In our daily lives we're standing against sin. We know what is good because we know who is good – Jesus. As I put my faith in Jesus each moment of everyday, I'm standing against sin. The same is true for you. The sins and temptations we face are different. We have to hold true to what is good, to who is good.

Some of us are living sheltered lives. That means we aren't getting out in the world as much as we once did. We're not living or working at a place where there is swearing, lying, manipulation. That's just to name a few things.

Some of you are working and living in those places. Going to work, getting up in the morning is a challenge. Talking with people, living your life is a burden. Each day you face the test: do I give in or do I stand firm. We're tempted to join the forces of evil.

Evil, as I think about today, is when someone seeks to get another person to sin. Those who are evil have a desire for others to join them in sin. They are unconcerned about anyone other than themselves, but are manipulative in creating an environment for sin.

Evil is always associated with its source, Satan. There are various degrees of evil. Evil may look different at different times. Evil is always sin.

There is only one who is good and He is God. God has created good out of His good. God has defined what is good. God has given us Jesus to make us good, so that we can do what is good.

Romans 12:18 ***If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.***

We like revenge, anger gets us excited, but its not peace and love. We can either let revenge and anger take control or we can choose Jesus. I like to keep things simple. Life is already complicated and confusing. So it's choose this thing or it's choose Jesus. It's choose that thing or it's choose Jesus.

I know and you know Jesus, so when we are faced with the choice, we know that it's choosing Jesus. So when my buttons get pushed, I can choose Jesus. When I'm surrounded by unlovable people, I can choose Jesus. When I'm faced with unrelenting pressure, I can choose Jesus.

If you and I are honest that's not what we always do. I've been guilty of letting my anger get the best of me. There has been more than one moment when revenge felt like a good option. I didn't choose Jesus at first. I've let my emotions get the best of me. I've confessed this to Jesus, apologized to those around me, and turned to Jesus.

But, how many people around us don't have a relationship with Jesus? Their first reaction can be anger, then revenge. These two things are the only colors they can see. No matter what anyone tells them, or what happens they see anger and revenge.

So, as much as possible it falls on Christians to make peace and share love. Don't take those two words as just words, but as actions. The action of making peace. The actions of sharing love. We're not talking about being passive. We're not talking about being soft and cuddly.

The peace Jesus shared came when He met people. The love of Jesus drove Him to the cross. We have the peace of Jesus because He forgave our sins. That peace permeates our lives. His peace goes out of our lives. We radiate His peace in our relationships and our actions.

We not only have the love of Jesus, but we are the love of Jesus. When Jesus loves us we love others. When Jesus loves us we want others to have His love. The burden, no the privilege, of peace and love in our relationships is upon us. Sinners want that peace, and they want to be loved.

It's not choosing peace and love, but Jesus that overcomes evil. You and I have to live in His love. You and I have to be His peace. The unlovable, the button pushers, and especially those who are evil don't know that Jesus is peace and love. They don't know that they can call upon Him to be forgiven,

experience His love, know His peace, and follow Him. We have to be the peace of Jesus, the love of Jesus, in a world filled with anger, revenge, and evil.

Romans 12:20 ***On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”***

We are empowered by Jesus when we choose to overcome evil by doing what is good. Every time we choose Jesus we are empowered. This isn't a mental trick. There is power spiritually and physically when we choose Jesus. There is power mentally and emotionally when we choose Jesus.

How many times have we seen two people go through terrible things. One chose to do it on their own. They didn't ask for help. They push people away. They blame people. They get mad. They want payback. Their energy rides their anger to create more anger.

The other chooses Jesus. The troubles and problems still persist. The difficulties mount up one upon another. The pain appears from the outside to be too much. But this Christian is at peace. This Christian is concerned about others. This Christian is energized to be kind.

It is our responsibility, regardless of the actions of others, to live at peace with them. We can't control what others think, say, or do, but we can be under the control of Jesus. God will ultimately judge evil for what it is, and provide punishment.

When we choose Jesus, we do what is good. He gives us the thoughts about what actions to take, what words to say. Not just actions and words for our friends, but for our enemies. Jesus calls us do everything to meet the needs of our enemies. This is done instead of seeking revenge.

Meeting the needs of our enemies or people who don't know Jesus is not human, it is from heaven. Jesus demonstrated this while He was on the cross praying for those who put Him there. Being kind, showing mercy and grace and love will do something to our enemies. It may make them more angry. It may create guilt for their sins. Guilt will have the opportunity to create repentance.

It's not killing them with kindness, a great expression, but overwhelming them with kindness. Doing good covers so much ground; kindness starts to focus on specific actions. It becomes essential for us as we face the unlovable, the button-pushers, and those who are evil that we ask Jesus for ways that we can be kind.

That is one of the most challenging prayer requests. Some people don't deserve kindness, but Jesus will be their judge. We need to share the kindness of not answering. We need to share the kindness of praying for that person. We need to share the kindness of offering to help. We need to share the kindness of listening and not speaking. We need to share the kindness of saying thank you.

Romans 12:21 ***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

Make it personal, overcome evil by doing what is good. I'm asking a lot of myself and you. But actually, it's God who inspired scripture, that is asking a lot of us. We are His children. We have been adopted into His family. Jesus, His Son, by His blood has made us His brothers and sisters.

As the family of God we are to love one another as Jesus loved us. We are called to serve as Jesus served. We can pray for the unlovable and share the love of Jesus. There are unlovable people in our lives. There are those we would like to tear out their eyes, hang them by their toes from a tree in the

middle of forest. That's over the top, but you know what I mean. God will take of them in His perfect timing.

People that arouse that type of passion in us need Jesus. I say this because they are being manipulated by the forces of evil. I have seen with my own eyes how the devil controls people. If we are to minister to them in the name of Jesus, we will have to choose Jesus again and again and again. We will need to choose Jesus over our anger and desire for revenge, right?

As we choose Jesus over and over we can begin to do what is good and kind for these people in our lives. We need to be committed in Jesus' name to be kind, doing what is good, and overcoming evil.

My human nature, Joe Sanders on his own, can't be kind, do what is good, and overcome evil. Through faith in Jesus again and again and again good will become our pattern of life. We will be recognized as the people who are doing what is good. We will be living for Jesus.

It's always about choosing Jesus. We can choose anything we want: evil or good. It begins by making Jesus first in our lives. Don't think that Jesus' name is a magic formula. Jesus is the God of creation, the Lord of all, and the Savior of the world. Choosing Him is empowering. It is choosing to walk with Him. It is choosing to listen for His voice and to hear His truth. It is choosing to follow Him and be faithful to Him.

Choosing to put Jesus in the midst of our relationships provides us with motivation. It's no longer about us, but about the kindness Jesus wants us to demonstrate. We're not focused on the difficulties of the relationship, but instead we're thinking about how to do and be good. We're honing in on how we can be useful in our relationships.

Choosing to put Jesus in our relationships with our enemies opens our body, mind, and spirit to God's inspiration. Don't deny it, there are moments when you spoke and it wasn't your words. That's God's inspiration.

We can trust Jesus. He is worthy of our devotion. He will provide for us. Jesus has overcome evil and defeated it. Jesus will empower us to overcome evil and do what is good.

Trust Jesus.