

The Bible (Unmuted) Transcript
Episode 43
Romans, Part 20 (Rom 12:9-21)
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Episode Summary:

In this episode, we take a look at Romans 12:9-21, where Paul encourages Christians to live out genuine, unhyprocritical love toward others. The apostle gives readers a strategy for facing the trials and tribulations of life -- namely, exhorting them to a life of hope, endurance, and prayer. As Matt comments, prayer entails communication with God, but it is also, at the same time, deeper than that. It is, most fundamentally, communion with God. Matt also connects the discussion back to Genesis 1, outlining the way Paul conceives the Christian life as one that embodies God's original creation plan by conquering darkness with light.

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Pre-order Matt's newest book, *The End of the World As You Know It*. You can purchase through (1) Amazon or (2) Lexham Press (as well as other outlets).

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Transcript:

0:00 Hey friends, welcome back to another episode of The Bible Unmuted. I'm excited to be with you once again this week as we continue our exploration through the book of Romans. Last week we were in Romans 12:1-8 and this week we find ourselves looking at verse 9-21. So I'm excited to continue the discussion. There are a lot of good things to talk about and talk through in this chapter of Romans 12. The way I liken this chapter is say, to a field that's full of gold nuggets, all scattered across the surface; and the surface of the text of Romans chapter 12 is similar. There are lots of good things to notice on the

surface of the text. Lots of good things to consider and meditate upon and apply to our lives. We see Paul talk a lot about love in this chapter. We'll see that especially in verses 9 and following, and we'll also see that in Romans 13. This idea of christological love, a love that is such that it mirrors the love that Christ has shown us. Anyway, lots of good things to discuss and we will jump into that shortly.

Before we do though, I want to talk about my book, *The End of the World as You Know It: What the Bible Really Says About the End Times and Why it's Good News*. This is my newest book. It's officially released on February 7th and I'm excited that it's just around the corner. Thanks to all those who have preordered the book. It's still available for pre-order and I think I've said this several times, but I want to say it again because it's super cool. Lexham press, that's my publisher, they are offering the book at a discounted rate of 32% off. You can't beat a deal like that. Super cool; 32% off if you preorder the book through their website. There's a link in the show notes below in this episode, so be sure to check that out. You can click that link and it'll take you to that page where the discount can be applied - 32% off of the book. I hope this book is a good response for folks. I pray that it gives people a lot of things to consider and talk about.

The focus of the book really is to take the big questions that many Christians are asking today and put them through the lens of scripture. I want to go back to Scripture and ask ourselves about certain topics that get brought up a lot in these end times discussions; these contemporary end times discussions. And I'm sure you've heard some of these in the past few years; especially y the mark of the beast, are we living in the end times. You know, the end times question, that's a pretty important question because I don't know if you've noticed this or if you've watched the local news lately, but we are in challenging times. The world seems to be on fire every other day and so a lot of people are asking apocalyptic type questions. They want to know what's really going on behind the scenes and they want to know is there some sort of spiritual, eschatological significance to what we are seeing in the real world. And so I do have a chapter on the end times; are we living in the end times? And it's an important question as I said, and it's one that I think you'll find... well let me just back up a little bit... The chapters are structured such as to be questions. So, are we living in the end times?, is a question. Will there be a rapture?, is another question. Will there be a future antichrist? These questions are explored in this book. And the idea is to go on a journey together. I want to go on a journey with you, the reader, and let's just go back to the text and scripture and take what we've been taught and put questions to it. You know, it's always healthy to do that. It's always healthy to question the things that we've been taught. If you stop asking questions that's when you stop growing. That's when you stop learning. Learning presupposes the question. And so I want to ask the questions of the text. I want to ask the questions of our traditions that we've been given, and I want to see if they hold up to Scripture. And so that's what the journey is about in this book; is let's go on a journey together. Nobody walking ahead of each other; let's just look at the same text, look at the same evidence, look at the same data, and see what we can come out with in the end.

So yeah I'm excited for everyone to get a hand get their hands on the book. I hope you enjoy it. If you haven't preordered already, like I said, visit the link at Lexhampress.com. It's in the show notes here. It'll take you to a page so that you can get a 32% discount by pre ordering the book, and once the book is officially released it'll be sent out to all of those who have preordered. You can also preorder the book on Amazon. And if you

would, after you read the book; leave a rating on Amazon, leave maybe a comment or a review; that really helps with the algorithm. So, I'm super grateful for those who can do that. Let me know what you think of the book once you've read it, let me know, email me and let me know what you think. I'm always eager to hear from listeners.

On that note by the way, I do have some emails in the inbox. And so if you emailed me, it's becoming harder to respond just given the time and the busyness of life. But I do want you to know if you've emailed me, I do get them and I so appreciate them, and I'll do my best to respond. So thank you so much for taking the time to email me and never be afraid to email me twice. So if you've emailed me once and I haven't gotten back to you, shoot me another email and that'll jog my memory and I'll do my best to get back to you.

Well what do you say let's get to our discussion today let's revisit Romans 12. This time we'll be looking at Romans 12:9-21(NRSV)

6:10 Let's begin by looking at vv 9-12. Paul says,

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.

So he begins by saying, *let love be genuine*. You could translate this as let love be unhyprocritical. That's the word there that's translated genuine, unhyprocritical. So what does Paul mean by that? Well, he means let love be true love. In other words, don't let your love be tainted by ulterior motives. Don't let your love be tainted by a mask that you're wearing. Show your true colors by showing your true love. You know, be transparent in your heart. Let love be genuine. I think the New Revised Standard Version, which is what I'm reading from, I think it gets it right. Let love be genuine. I like that translation because that's the point. But I'm also a decent literalist on some of these things, especially on some translations. So I think I would prefer let love be unhyprocritical, Unhyprocritical, that's the word if you look it up in in the Greek. Let love be unhyprocritical.

It's interesting that what follows is a series of axioms. It seems like just pointed saying that seem disjointed. Like let love be genuine, hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Those three seem to be just axiomatic; three different distinct sayings that are disjointed from one another, and if we see them as disjointed, I think we would be making mistake. I don't think Paul is just giving out random principles for life, or random axioms or whatever. I think he's giving phrases of consideration that tie into one another. So for example, when he says *let love be genuine hate what is evil*; he means those two things go together. Because conceptually, you cannot envision love without also hate. What do I mean by that? Because I thought love is the opposite of hate. Well, it is. But in this sense, that I'm talking about, I think it's important to go back to that old trite, sort of a cliché, it's a common cliché, but it's the idea that love must hate. Have you ever heard that before? That love must hate. What do I mean by that? Well, if you love somebody by definition, that means you hate all the things that harm them. If you love the good, you must by definition hate that which is evil.

So when Paul says *let love be unhyprocritical, let it be genuine*; the other side of the coin is just that they should also hate that which is evil. Because in order for love to be genuine; it must also on the other side of the coin, hate that which is ungenueine, hate that which is evil. Again true love must hate. If I love my neighbor, I will hate all the things that bring harm to my neighbor. *Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good.*

This idea of holding fast to what is good is best. I think, translated as be glued to that which is good, or attach yourself to that which is good. And again this makes sense of the whole idea of loving and hating. If you love that which is genuine, and you hate that which is evil; then the way to do those things, and the other side of the coin of doing those things, is holding fast or being glued to that which is good.

9:55 So one thing that we need to do is encourage ourselves to see this as sort of a triad. Love, genuine love, is one part of the triad; hating that which is evil is the second part; and the third part of the of the triangle, of the triad, is hold fast that which is good. Now, all of this I think follows from everything that Paul has said previously. At the beginning of chapter 12:1 he says *I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, wholly and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.* When he says *I appeal to you by the mercies of God*, he's essentially saying, look in light of everything that I've said before, in light of everything about God's goodness, and his gospel, and his love and mercy; do good. And so this idea of letting our love be genuine, and hating that which is evil, and hold fast to that which is good; those ideas are commands and we should do them. We have no option otherwise; we must do them. But they flow directly out of that which God has already done for us in view of God's mercies. How can we not let our love be unhyprocritical? How can we not hate that which is evil, and how could we not be glued to that which is good.

And the other thing to think about is that Paul is not speaking abstractly here. He's not just giving a philosophical discussion about truth, beauty, and goodness and love. No, he wants to ground it all in love of neighbor. That's why in the very next verse he says in verse 10, *love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.* So this idea of loving, and letting love be genuine must be directed to our neighbors. See a mistake that Christians make, a mistake that we all tend to make and fall into; is this idea that we can love God and shun our neighbors. How can we invite Christ into our hearts if we're unwilling to invite our neighbor into our homes? How can we be so enthused about our religion, our faith in Jesus, the cross, the resurrection, resurrection life, and so forth; how could we be so enthusiastic about all of those things, all of those things which are good, and yet at the same time, close our eyes to our neighbor. In order for our love to be genuine, unhyprocritical, it needs to be directed toward others. We need to love God and love other people. The two greatest commandments, right? And in many ways it's true that we love God by loving our neighbor. And I think this is something that Paul is driving home here. We've been given so much grace. He spent 11 chapters talking about Grace and now it's time to direct that toward one another.

He says, *do not lag in zeal, but be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.* That's verse 11. This idea of not lagging in zeal I think is it is a call, a summons to live out that which God has given us to do and reminds us again of something we said last week about spiritual gifts. We've been given spiritual gifts because God wants us to use them for the benefit of building up our church, the church, building up the Kingdom, advancing the Kingdom. And

so I think verse 11 here when he says *don't lag in your zeal, and be ardent in your spirit, serve the Lord*, I think he's just building upon that previous thought. How do you serve the Lord? By using your gifts to build up the church. How do you need to be zealous for the Lord and ardent in spirit? Well, by using those things, those tools, those instruments that God has given you. You do those things with joy. You do those things with a fervent heart. You use your spiritual gifts. Again, go back and reread vv 3-8 or so, and you can be reminded about the need, the requirement, to serve God through your spiritual gifts.

Paul also goes on in verse 12. He says, *rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer*. That word suffering is arguably not the best word to use here. When I think of the word suffering, I think of the lack of physical health, perhaps. I don't know, maybe you think of something else. Suffering can be all sorts of suffering here, but I think what Paul's getting at is this idea of tribulation. In fact the word that he uses here in verse 12 is the word ***thlipsis*** [θλίψις]. It's a common word in the New Testament. It's a word that is often translated as tribulation. Now, tribulation. When I say that word I bet I know what you're thinking; the end times, eschatology. Well I think that's okay to think that of course, but we shouldn't think of tribulation as that thing, that era, that event that happens only in the final era of humanity, in the final events of human history.

15:10 In my tradition, that I grew up in at least, and the one that that exerted a lot of influence over my Christianity, my young Christian faith at the time; it taught me that tribulation was something that happens at the end of time, it's something that will be raptured away from, it's something that will be spared from, in fact. I cut my theological teeth on a tradition that taught that Christians would be rescued from the coming tribulation. And what was interesting though, is that this idea of being rescued from tribulation; once I got into the Bible to read about what it said, it really had a different flare to it, it had a different sort of emphasis. Because in Scripture, the promise that we are given is not that we will be rescued from tribulation, but that we will be rescued through tribulation; and tribulation moreover is not something according to New Testament at least, that is only going to happen at the end of time, but it's a reality for Christians in every era. And again, I go into more detail in my book. (So let me plug my book again - if you haven't preordered the book, you should go preorder the book. Click the link below Lexhampress.com and it'll take you to a 32% discount for the book). But seriously, I talk about this in the book. I've got several sections, a few relevant chapters on the idea of tribulation. And I just want to say, hey where did we get this idea the tribulation is at the end of time? We also need to thicken up our view of tribulation and say look, this idea of tribulation; it's something that happens in every era, and so we need to come to grips with this. And so Paul says *be patient in suffering*. Now the idea of patience is probably, again, not the best translation here. I think a better translation is endurance. I just think it captures better the Greek word here; endurance. So Paul is not saying be patient in suffering, he's saying endure suffering. Endurance. I think I think that captures ***hupomenó*** [ὑπομένω], that's the word that's used here.

Again, so you know, God gives us the grace to push through any tribulation that we're going through. And of course Jesus says in John 16:33, one of the very first Bible verses I ever memorized in fact, he says, *In the world you will have tribulation. But be a good cheer, I've overcome the world*. In the world you will have tribulation. He's speaking there about a contemporary situation, and situations that are contemporary with every Christian

era. And so Paul's picking that same idea up. He's saying have hope, endure, and persevere in prayer. And I think this is a very important thing to say, that we need to highlight from this text, is that we do these sorts of things through prayer. We rejoice in hope, be patient (or endure), in tribulation, persevere in prayer. I think Paul intends for these things to all be tied in together. Our hope comes from God. Our endurance comes from God. And all the graces that we get from God, are accessed through prayer. That's how we persevere. How do you persevere? How do you endure? Through prayer.

Let me let me say a couple words about prayer we often. We often think of prayer as communication with God. You know we give him the list. And I think it's a great idea. I think that captures many aspects of prayer. It captures the reality of prayer; communication with God, giving God the list. I hope you have a list that you give to God. I have a list that I give to God, and I think that's something that's good. We should do that. God wants to hear the list. He wants to hear our problems. He wants to hear our requests. He wants to hear it all. Cast your cares upon the Lord because he cares for you. You know, that's scriptural. We need to do that. Call upon him in the day of trouble and he will hear us. Man, that's a great promise, right? These are scriptural ideas about prayers. So yes, prayer is communication with God. But I don't want us to miss that prayer is also *communion* with God. It's communion with God. Prayer is in fact giving God the list. But it's that plus something else. That's only a part of the bigger picture. And if you think about the word communication it looks a whole lot like the word communion. And I think that's purposeful. You know, if we're truly communicating with somebody, we're communing with them in a real sense. But not all communication is communion, right? I mean, sometimes we can communicate things to other people, and there's not genuine fellowship there, right? It could be an argument, a heated argument, say. So, communion if you look at as like a circle graph, it's like the big graph; and part of that, perhaps you can see it as a Venn diagram or something. Part of that is communication. So communion with God, though, it's deeper than just giving God the list. Prayer can even be silent.

20:22 I've been reading Psalm 1 and 2 in the past few days. I've been plowing through the Septuagint in the Psalms. And I was reading through Psalm 1, 2, and 3. And anyway, Psalm 1 talks about meditating on the Law day and night, and this idea of meditation. Do we practice that? Sitting before the Lord, chewing on his truth in quiet and silence? You know, sometimes I think we forget; especially as Westerners, we are a bunch of doers. We want things done. We are task oriented. I'm very task oriented. I can't rest until the task is finished, which makes which makes a tackling task that are bigger than a day's work, very, very difficult for me because on some tasks I know it's going to take me a week to finish, or months; and then that's difficult, as I don't often rest that well. But yeah, we're doers and I think we need to be more contemplative. We need to engage the contemplative tradition, I think, a little bit more. And so yeah, go back and read Psalm 1; it's a beautiful Psalm; meditation.

Communion with God; I think that's how we persevere through this crazy, loud, messy world is by making appointments with silence; or better yet, making appointments with God in silence, just resting in his presence. And how do you do that? Well there's many ways to do that. Christian meditation involves asking God for say an image that he could put in your in your mind; and maybe it's an image of you and Jesus, maybe it's an image of a biblical passage. You know, that's always a safe place to dwell. Maybe you can dwell on the image of the prodigal son returning home, and maybe that can speak to you. Just

put an image in your mind there. Well that's communion with God. Just sit there with that image, with God for five minutes in complete silence, and pray that God would give you images. I hate to make it formulaic because that kind of goes against the idea of meditation in some sense, but I think the best place to be when it comes to meditation is in scripture. Soak your life up in scripture so much so, that those are the images that naturally come to mind. This is this is a good Christian word here, be baptized in scripture, be baptized into the logos. Maybe we should go back and read Roman 6, being united, baptized into Christ. So anyway, prayer in a sense is participation in the life of heaven. I like science fiction and so perhaps we can say prayer is sort of this, like, portal. I don't maybe that's a weird example; but it's this link that we have with the divine, and I think it's so important. And I think that's why Paul can talk about the language of perseverance in prayer. It's how we get through our *thlipsis*, that's how we get through the tribulation, that's how we get through all these events that come our way in life.

So anyway, lots to think about there about prayer. But maybe after this, maybe this evening, go home and just meditate on Romans 12:12; ***Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.***

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Hey friends. I hope this episode is a blessing and encouragement to you. I hope that every episode of the Bible Unmuted gives you something fresh to consider and something deep to Ponder. My goal is to offer food for thought to give listeners the tools they need to be faithful interpreters of scripture. I cherish your continued prayers for this ministry and thanks so much to everyone who lifts me up in prayer each week.

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25:00 Let's turn to vv 13 -16.

13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.

There's a lot of cool stuff here. Let's focus our attention first on verse 13. *Contribute to the needs of the saints*. So that word contribute; it's a fun word: ***koinóneó [κοινωνέω]***. And sounds a lot like that word *koinonia*, right? That's because they're related. This is the verbal form of *koinonia*, and as you know, *koinónia* means fellowship, it means the communion. It has this idea of a communal participation, in a sense. And so this idea of *koinónia* is definitely here. It's again the verbal form of *koinóneó*. And so when he says *contribute to the need of the saints*, what he's saying here is we should participate in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ to the point that when there is a need, there is no longer a need because we've met it. What Paul is saying is that we should involve ourselves in each other's lives. I think that's a very, very important point; participation.

As I said last time there is no there's no such thing as a Lone Ranger Christian. I mean that's a a cliché of course; we hear that a lot, but it's actually true. There is no Lone Ranger Christian. You cannot do this alone, your friends can't do it alone; and when you when you miss church, when you don't participate in the communion, there's something that's missing: you and your spiritual gifts, what you contribute. That's missing there. And so we need to be active. I think this is what Paul's idea is; we need to be in corporate solidarity with one another. I'll say more about corporate solidarity in a moment, but I think that's definitely the idea here; contribute to the needs of the Saints. We have to also think about the context of Romans here, as well. We'll see more of this in Romans 13 and 14, but suffice it to say presently, the big question for Paul in Romans is how are Jews and Gentiles relate to one another. We get this in chapters 13 and following, but we kind of see it already. Paul's been talking a lot about Jews and Gentiles and we might presume, rightly I think, that at the churches of Rome there probably was some discord. There were questions; how do Jews and Gentiles eat together, live together, worship together. Do we require the same things of everybody? Does everybody need to abstain from pork, say? And so there are lots of questions here. And I think Paul is really trying to build some groundwork here; to say contribute to the needs of the Saints, and that at the end of the day we are all human and we all have needs, and we all need each other, so use your spiritual gifts, get to work, be zealous and work hard to contribute to the needs of Saints. Participate. *Koinónia*. Again, this is another verse to meditate upon, dwell on this; how can you contribute, how can you participate in the lives of others?

He goes on he says, *contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers*. So this this word *extend* is interesting for a number of reasons. ***Dióko [διώκω]***, and actually has the idea of pursuing or chasing down; and the idea here is be active. Be active in how do I put this, I like this translation extend; but you know, be active in extending your love toward others. The other, the stranger, even. So, I think what Paul means there is he's just trying to give it a picture of *the other*. So think of the Good Samaritan. In many circles in Jesus' era, it was the Samaritan that was holy-other, right? And treated as the other. And yet, Jesus props him up as the exemplar of what it means to show love. And so what Paul's doing here is, let's live in harmony with one another. And in a church, or churches of Rome, that perhaps struggled with unity among Jews and Gentiles, he's calling them back and saying, let's extend hospitality. Let's chase each other down with love.

29:40 Why I bring this up is it's pretty interesting because in the next verse where he says, *bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them*. That word persecute is *dióko*. So

where Paul says *diókó* hospitality to the stranger; extended hospitality to the stranger. And he says bless those who persecute or *diókó* you, in this idea of persecution. In the context here, it's extending hatred toward towards you. So what's interesting here is that Paul is acknowledging that there will be persecution, hatred toward Christians, but the posture of the Christian is to take that same intensity, and extend it with respect to love for your neighbor. And as Christians, we extend hospitality to everyone. We might be singled out; this is especially true in Paul's era, in the first century; that Christians might be singled out and marked for persecution purposes, but what we do is we single out people too. Except we single them out for love's sake. So what Paul is doing here in vv 13 and 14 is juxtaposing these two ways of life. He's contrasting two different world views. On the one hand the world and evil will persecute Christians, extend hate toward a Christian, but we as Christians extended love toward all people. So I think this is just a beautiful thing. Again, another thing that the meditate upon. Go read Romans 12, 13 and 14. Meditate on that.

Paul says *bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them*. This is the posture that Christians are supposed to have. It's a cruciform way of living, a cruciform posture just as Christ hung on the cross for his enemies, for strangers; We too are called to be that sort of witness to others in our world today. Again we can think of a million ways this could be applied in the churches of Rome, and if we have wisdom we perhaps could think of a million ways we can apply this in our church at home. Something to think about there.

Paul goes on verse 15: *rejoice with those who rejoice, we with those who weep*. Early Christian practice was such that it embodied corporate solidarity with one another. I'm here thinking of Acts chapter two, around verse 42 where the early church dedicated themselves to the apostles teaching, the breaking of bread, and into the fellowship. That idea, they dedicate themselves to one another and they did it in such a way that there was no need among them. Even the people who showed up who had a need, no longer had a need because they showed up and everybody was participating in the lives of each other. And here we notice a similar thing; when we are when we are with our church family, our spiritual family and they are rejoicing, we rejoice with them because there is a corporate solidarity between us and them. Between all of us. We go through life together. I think this is what this verse is saying. We live life with each other, together. Such that when my brother or sister hurts, I hurt. When they are rejoicing, I am to rejoice. And really what this does, is break down all sorts of animosity that we have between one another. So when something good happens to my brother or sister and they are blessed, I don't need to get jealous of them. I can rejoice with them because I am baptized in the same name as they are. We are part of the same family. We are living members of the same body. There's no room for jealousy! I mean why? Because their joy can be my joy and my joy can be their joy. And I think this again is a way that Paul can undercut the sin that could be lurking in the churches of Rome. It is saying, practice corporate solidarity with one other. When your brother rejoices, rejoice with them. Don't nitpick at them, don't be jealous of them when something good happens to them. Enjoy the joy that God has given them because what God has given them, he's given to you, too. Why? Because you're part of the same body. And moreover, every person in the body has a spiritual gift and so anything that good happens to one part of the body, should be shared to all the parts of the body. This is the logic of rejoicing with those who rejoice, and weeping with those who weep. It's this corporate solidary. It's christological in many ways because we're all part

of the body of Christ. Not only is there no room for jealousy, there's no reason for jealousy because again, everything good that's given to me can be shared with my neighbor and my brother and sister. And everything good given to my brother and sister can be shared with me and so within the body of Christ, there should be no jealousy and there should always be corporate solidarity. So when my brother and sister suffer I want to suffer with them because I feel for them. It's not merely like an act of sympathy or empathy, it's such solidarity that we experience what the other experiences because we are one in Christ. And this really captures that communal idea of the early church. And it needs to be captured in practiced in today's modern church as well.

34:50 This also speaks of being action-oriented. Weeping with those weep takes a will. You have to be willing to be in that sort of corporate solidarity with your brother and sister. It's literally taking the position of the other. It's assuming the burdens and the joys of our brothers and sisters. So this is the vision I think that Jesus has from his church. It's certainly the vision that the early church had for the early church. And so as the good historians that we want to be, we want to think along those lines. And in the first century Christians really struggled They didn't have a lot. They weren't influential people. They had no political power so they needed to rely upon each other. And often times when we do gain political power we find ourselves tempted not to rely on each other. Why? Because we already have power. And so there's something beautiful about living life simply. And even in our weaknesses, there is something beautiful about that we can rely upon each other in a very real way.

Verse 16 says, *Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are.* This really just revisits what I've just said. There's no room for jealousy, there's no room for haughtiness, or pride because there's no reason for it. The logic of it is that we should have the same mindset. This is the idea here, in the Greek at least, that living in harmony is literally to have the same mindset. Don't have a haughty mindset, be sober minded in your mindset. This harkens back to what we said last week about Philippians 2:5-11. How we should have the mindset of Christ, who even though being in the form of God did not consider it equality with God or something to be grasped. But what did he do? He emptied himself, gave himself up. He became a servant to us. And so likewise as living members of that body, of that person, being united with that God; we too should take do what that God has done, namely become a servant. He's the one true God and he's therefore the God that we should emulate, and as it turns out the one true God became a servant. So if the one true God in whom we are united became a servant how much more should we become servants as well.

37:10 Let's look at the very last section of Romans 12, namely vv 17- 21.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by

doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

So let's look at verse 17 again, where he says, *do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for the what is noble in the sight of all.* So we talked briefly about tribulation. We talked about the reality of *thlipsis*; tribulation. We said that that probably is best to be translated as *thlipsis*. And we've talked about persecution. Persecution could be involved. In verse 14 he says, *bless those who persecute you.* That assumes that we might be persecuted. So how do Christians respond to that? How should Christians respond to being given evil? He says, *don't repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble.* And the short answer to this; how do Christians respond, is to just think deeply. It all starts with the mind. Do you remember verse 2 of this chapter? We looked at it last week. He says, *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* He's saying the same thing here, take thought for what is noble. You're going to have to train your mind to think differently about your situations. In other words, you need to have a different hermeneutic.

Hermeneutic is more than just about interpreting the Bible. It's about interpreting life. Hermeneutics is not what you do when you open your Bible. Hermeneutics is what you are as a human being. If you're alive, you are interpreting. Interpreting what? Everything; the Bible, this podcast, the news, this world, the circumstances you're in, the situation that you're going through, everything is interpreted. The question is, how will you interpret the everything? I contend that we should interpret everything christologically. We should interpret everything in light of the reality that Jesus Christ is Lord. When bad things happen, Jesus Christ is Lord. When good things happen, Jesus Christ is Lord. When I'm healthy, Jesus Christ is Lord. When I'm sick, Jesus Christ is Lord. Everything is interpreted through that lens.

39:55 So when we're persecuted, Paul is saying take thought for what is noble in that situation. What does he mean by take thought for what is noble? The word noble there is fun. It's ***kalos [καλός]***. *Kalos*. It's a cool word. It means good. Take thought for what is good or what is noble. It also has the connotation of beauty, take thought for what is beautiful. Take thought for what is good and beautiful. I think that's a cool idea. Now, if you're familiar with the Septuagint, specifically Genesis 1 you'll know that that word *kalos* is used there in Genesis chapter one. So for example, in Genesis 1:4... let me pull that up real quick. Genesis 1:4 says, and *God saw the light that it was kalos, that it was good.* God saw the light and it was good. And this is a word that is used later on. God saw, in verse 8, God named the firmament heaven and God saw that it was *kalos*. So *good* is a constant refrain, *kalos* is a constant refrain. You see this in verse 12, God saw that it was good, that it was *kalos*. It's just all the way down and even all the way down at the very end of Genesis 1:31, and God saw everything that he made and behold it was very good. It was very *kalos*; it was good, it was beautiful you might say.

Now so when Paul says take thought for what is noble take thought for what is *kalos* in the sight of every person. What does he mean? Well, he means a lot. I suppose that he means something along new creation lines as well. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, for example, Paul says that *if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation.* Sometimes Paul can use that creation language and early Christians do this not infrequently. They use this creation

language to refer to the Christian. So if you are in Christ, you are a new creation says Paul.

I'm thinking of John chapter one where John takes the creation story and christologizes it. The light that comes from heaven, the word that is spoken in Genesis 1, that that word is the very God of God. It is the logos, it is Jesus. And so it's just really beautiful picture of how creation concepts, and language, and terminology is applied christologically in the New Testament. Well here, I wonder if we might detect an echo back to that. As Christians, we are new creation people, and we need to renew our mind, we need to be recreated. We need to be refreshed and renewed, and we need to be resurrected.

Romans chapter 8, we looked at that; one day creation will be resurrected, made new, recreated. Well even now in our lives especially when we're persecuted, we have an opportunity to show everyone even our persecutor that we are new creation people, that we are going to fix our minds upon that which is beautiful. We're going to, in other words, be a people that God originally intended people to be. God's original design for the creation, which included all humans in Genesis 1, is *kalos* beauty. We were called to beauty. We were called to mirror beauty. We were called to embody the good and as such we can show everybody even when we're persecuted the life of heaven. And that's why he says don't repay evil for evil, take thought for what is *kalos* in the sight of everybody, in the sight of every person. I think it's a very important point to make. So how are we doing that? Are we showing the life of heaven to everyone that we're around? Are we showing Genesis 1 creation to everyone that we're around? We are a nuclear people after all. We are people of *kalos*. We are we are people of truth goodness and beauty.

He goes on. He says, *if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*. Oh that phrase, *if it is possible*. This this supposes of course that it is not always possible. I think this is liberating because it's not up to us to make unity happen. Because let's face it, some people don't want to be in unity. Some people are just not interested in a meaningful, healthy relationship. Some people are toxic and that's why Paul says *if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all*. He assumes that it's just not possible for that to happen in every situation And so we should give ourselves freedom to walk away. We should give ourselves freedom to say no to those relationships that are just completely toxic. We can love people from a distance. We can pray for them from a distance and we can leave the rest up to God.

44:55 He goes on in verse 19, *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* That vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord, that's a quotation, somewhat, from Deuteronomy 32:35. The quotation itself is different from the Hebrew Bible, from the Masoretic text, and as well it's different than the Septuagint. And you know, scholars have mused on this and talked a lot about it and I'm convinced that perhaps Paul was using a text description that we just aren't aware of today. So there are scholars, Christopher Stanley, I was looking at Longenecker's Romans Commentary as well. I mean you can go and read up on this. I just want to point that out for further study, sometimes when Paul quotes from scripture, as in this case. We're not quite sure where he's getting his verbiage. And so there's a lot of things to be said about that. Just as a point side note; I don't want to lose our train of thought here. In the original context God is saying he's going to avenge Israel's enemies. And I think in my book I say something like the church embodies the story of Israel in this

way. That as the church, we too know that God will fight for us and it's not our place to persecute back. It's not our place to throw fire back because when you throw fire back all you're doing is contributing to the fire. And so we trust God. We leave all of that up to God. God knows how to judge better than we know how to judge. It's just not for us to do in that respect.

Now that's not to say of course that we cannot make moral judgments. I mean it's sort of self-defeating to say you cannot make a moral judgment because that itself is a moral judgment. So I'm not suggesting you can't make a moral judgment. I mean there's a time and place for punishment, but it's not our role to play God. We show kindness to others and we defer the situations that we can't handle, we defer them to the Lord and we trust that he will handle that.

Again, there's a lot more that needs to be said about this because as I said earlier it's just not possible to live in harmony with everybody because some people are toxic. And I don't think God calls us to toxic relationships. I think God calls us to meaningful, honest, transparent, truthful relationships. So we have the freedom to walk away from relationships that are wrong, that are unhealthy. And so we need to keep that in mind here as well. By saying that we trust God to handle the situation, we are not saying that passively as if we're going to allow ourselves to be in an unhealthy relationships because that's what God wants. No, no, no, God does not want you to be in an unhealthy relationship. You need to get out of that relationship if it's unhealthy. God allows that. He allows you to flee from those unhealthy relationships because he just knows that some people are not willing to be in a truthful relationship. It's just that once we leave those unhealthy relationships we can be free to give them over to God and trust that God will handle them in the way that he sees fit. And in those situations we don't have to plot revenge. We don't have to dwell in bitterness. We can literally hand it over to God, and as Exodus 14:14 says, the Lord will fight for us. He'll take care of that. So what Paul is admonishing people to do is to just give those things to God, give it to God and go with it, and live a life of peace. Again, I can't emphasize this enough, he's not saying we have to be in unhealthy relationships. In fact, we need to say no to toxic relationships because like verse 18 says, *if it is possible*. Well, it's not always possible to live a peace with people because some I think Christians need to learn to say *no*. Put that in your vocabulary. No to unhealthy relationships. Lots more to be said about that but I'll leave it at that.

49:27 Verse 20 Paul goes on to say, *No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads."* So, this is a quotation from Proverbs 25:21-22. Go look that up. In fact, we'll read a few sections from that chapter in a minute. But what does Paul mean by *heap burning coals on their heads*? Well, this is the subject of much debate among scholars. Scholars go back and forth. Does Paul mean to say that by heaping burning coals on their heads you are heaping judgment upon them? That you are heaping some sort of vengeance upon them? Like, go ahead and do good to your enemy because by doing good you are going to make them even more angry at you and that's the goal. Well no, Paul is definitely not saying that. So what is he saying? Is it to produce more judgment? I was reading a few scholars on this earlier and it's a phrase that's just hard to understand. We're not quite sure. There is no consensus among scholars about what this means. One growing consensus, and one that's more recent, I think the past 78 years or so, many scholars point out that this could be a reference to shame, like it's signifying shame, perhaps even

repentance. So the idea of heaping burning coals on the enemy's head is to just appoint to their repentance and the shame that they're experiencing; because you've done good to them, and therefore they are recognizing the bad that they have done to you. And since you haven't fought fire with fire, you fought fire with good things, they just come to the realization that they have acted shamefully and that they therefore repent. So in other words is this a sign of repentance? Is it saying for by doing these things you will help them repent, you will heap burning coals on their heads. Something like that might be the case. It could be that by showing them goodness, by showing them kindness when they have shown you evil; it stings a little bit to them, it publicly shames them. There is a public shameful aspect to that. So there are situations; you might be able to think of these in your own life, or something you've experienced like when one person is just acting terrible to another person, let's say they're cussing them out or being just verbally mean to them and the other person doesn't respond with other verbal unkindly words. They just respond nicely, and patiently, and softly. When that happens, it publicly exposes the evil that's committed there, and it exonerates the one who's acted kindly. There's sort of this powerful social aspect to this that as a public witness, you have shined a light on a very dark situation. And the person in the dark situation is all alone in their dark situation, and you have not chosen to participate with them in increasing the darkness. So there's a public shaming there. And so is that what's going on here? You know, it's actually possible.

I was going back and I was looking at Proverbs 25 in the context. And I think there are some things that we can say about that context. If we go back and read Proverbs 25 it might shed some light on the situation. I'm going to read from the Lexham English Septuagint, Proverbs 25:6-10, So it says, 6 *Do not make false pretensions before a king, or offer resistance in places belonging to rulers, 7 for it is better for you to be told come up to me, then to humble you before a ruler.*

So the idea is here is don't think too highly of yourself. And don't equate yourself to someone better than you; that you perceive to be better than you, don't be haughty in that respect because it's better for them to say "come up to me" than to humble you and say, "don't act like, you're not in my league." So the point here is just be humble. Don't put yourself in a situation where you're going to be publicly humiliated. vv 8-10 says, *do not fall into a fight quickly lest you feel regret in the end when your friend reproaches you.* So the idea is don't jump into a fight. Don't be quick witted in that sense, because when your friend approaches you you're going to be ashamed, you're going to feel shame. And verse 10 says, *lest the friend reproach you, and your fight and enmity not depart.* So again this idea of a reproach, perhaps a public reproach, is something that's shameful, and you don't want to experience that, so act prudently don't do something stupid that'll earn you a reproach, a public reproach even. And that might be part of it.

54:58 Verse 15 says, *in patience there is prosperity for kings, and a gentle tongue crushes bones.* I like that a gentle tongue crushes bones. Yeah, I'm not sure what to do with that in this verse per se, but perhaps it conveys the idea that we're seeing here in Proverbs (25) vv 21 and 22; *if your enemy is hungry feed him, if he is thirsty, give him a drink, for one who does this will heap coals of fire on his head and the Lord will repay good things to you.* So yeah, it could be this idea of this heaping coals up on the head, it could be an act of reproach; you are reproaching the person who's doing evil, and thereby publicly exposing them as evil. And perhaps maybe the context allows for some sort of repentance

here. Again, scholars are all over the issue. There's been some work done on this as well drawing from Egyptian literature. It's an ambiguous phrase, but that's my best take at it. And I think something like that is what's going on here.

56:05 Paul ends the chapter with verse 21 he says, *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* That's how he sums everything up. And the point is, I think, don't contribute to the fire when there's a fire going, don't throw out more fire because all you're doing in the end is making things worse. There's a sense in which we need to be a people who have such loyalty to Jesus that we start acting like him. And so we need to take thought for that, which is beautiful. We need to be a people of new creation, as I said earlier, and we need to recognize the truth of the matter, that evil is not overcome by evil. Evil is overcome by the good.

And again, I can't help but think of Genesis 1. In Genesis 1, we have the creation story not starting off with nothing. No, it's starting off with this watery abyss and this darkness. And the way that God conquers the watery abyss, and the way that he subdues the darkness is not by throwing out more watery abyss or by throwing out more darkness. No, the way he conquers it is with light. Light conquers the darkness. And the way he conquers the abyss is by hovering over it. And in some of the language there in the Hebrew Bible is the language of brooding, like a mother hen or a bird over her nest. I think it conveys the idea of God's love over his creation. And so God begins to organize the creation, the water. He divides the waters from the waters, and he sets boundaries for them. God is a God of boundaries. Again, that goes back to the toxic situation, toxic relationships. It is quite permissible; indeed, it is righteous to set boundaries. God calls us to live at peace, and to live in love. And all of those things require boundaries. And so think of Genesis 1; meditate on this. Perhaps this week in prayer, meditate on the God who conquered the watery abyss with his loving organizational skills, with the power of his word. That's how he conquered it. God speaks and there was light. God speaks and there was organization. God takes the chaos and turns it into cosmos, into order. He turns it into something that makes sense. And all throughout Genesis 1, God's constant refrain is, and God saw that it was beautiful. *God saw that it was good.* And so I think that's what Paul wants us to do here is we don't need to overcome evil with evil. A.) because it doesn't work and, B.) because we are sons and daughters of God. As sons and daughters are God, we go about life in the chaotic world a bit differently, a lot differently in fact than many which used to do. We face the chaos with the light of God's word. We face the chaos with the Logos, with Jesus. John 1; Jesus is the word, Jesus is the light, Jesus is the light that penetrates the darkness. And as Christians we were to emulate that and we were to be a people of the new creation.

And so I think this is all relevant to Paul's situation in Rome. He wants the Jews and Gentiles to get along. He wants everybody to understand the depth of the gospel. He wants everybody to know the depths of the love, and the mercy and the grace of Jesus Christ. And he wants everybody to be united with Christ in his death, and in his resurrection. And that was the vision of the first century church. And it is still the vision of the 21st-century church.

1:00:03 Well, friends, that is it for this week. It's been a delight to walk with you through Romans, chapter 12. I hope it's been encouraging and beneficial to you. I hope that what we've talked about proves to be a great resource for your study of Scripture, your study of

Romans and just you're your hermeneutical life as you as you come face to face with this world. I pray that you put on those Jesus lenses and interpret everything christologically because in the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world.

1:00:35 That's the end of today's episode. And thanks again for listening to The Bible Unmuted. If you like this podcast, consider rating it on your podcast platform, subscribing to it, and sharing with your friends. You can also support the podcast by becoming a Patreon member. Go to: <https://www.patreon.com/TheBibleUnmuted> - or simply find the link in the description of this episode. Thanks for listening. Until next time, friends.