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This third lesson of the “Forty Days of Purpose” emphasis (week 3) centers on being a part of God’s family, with Rom. 12:9-16 as the central text. Frankly, the theme emphasis needed a more appropriate scripture text that deals directly with the nature of the believing community. The disconnected verses listed in the lesson material miss the point of God’s Word here by following the superficial proof-testing approach to the Bible study. Consequently, we will focus in on one of the major texts and explore what God might say to us through it.

## I. **Context**

What was said last [Sunday in the 12:1-2](#) study applies generally to both the historical and literary context of verses nine through twenty-one. Thus I will copy that material here.

Paul’s letter to the Christian communities located at Rome in the late 50s of the first Christian century stands as his masterpiece of thought, as well as the longest document in the Pauline section of the New Testament.

### a. **Historical**

The compositional history of Romans is one of the easier ones in the New Testament. The letter was dictated to a Tertius, who did the actual writing of the letter as Rom. 16:17 indicates: “I Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord” (NRSV). The use of a writing secretary, an [amanuensis](#), for the composition of more formal documents was commonplace in the ancient world, and most likely, all of Paul’s letters were written this way. He is mentioned only here in the New Testament. Thus we know virtually nothing about him beyond this one point.

The document was written while Paul was in Corinth ([Acts 20:2b-3a](#)) toward the end of the third missionary journey (see [Acts 18:23-21:16](#)) and was planning to come to Rome after returning back to Jerusalem and Antioch, as he indicates in chapter fifteen of this letter (NRSV):

“22 This is the reason that I have so often been hindered from coming to you. 23 But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you 24 when I go to Spain. For I do hope to see you on my journey and to be sent on by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little while. 25 At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem in a ministry to the saints; 26 for Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to share their resources with the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do this, and indeed they owe it to them; for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material things. 28 So, when I have completed this, and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will set out by way of you to Spain; 29 and I know that when I come to you, I will come in the fullness of the blessing of Christ.

30 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in

earnest prayer to God on my behalf, 31 that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, 32 so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. 33 The God of peace be with all of you. Amen."



Paul had been collecting a massive offering from the Gentile Christians that he was taking back to Jerusalem to help relieve the Jewish Christians who were suffering from famine and persecution at that time. [2 Corinthians 8-9](#) has an extensive discussion of this relief offering, as well as [1 Cor. 16:1-4](#). His hope was that this would help build bridges of understanding and fellowship between Jew and Gentile inside the Christian communities of faith. This was still a period of tension, and all over the Mediterranean world Jewish fanatical nationalistic pride was exploding against non-Jews, especially in Palestine itself. The [Zealot revolt against Rome](#) was foaming in the northern Palestinian province of Galilee, and would engulf the entire eastern Mediterranean world by [the middle 60s](#). Christian communities, which had increasingly become mixtures of Jews and Gentiles, were feeling the brunt of this tension, especially those in Palestine.

In reality, this trip to Jerusalem was risky and would forever alter Paul's life and plans. His intent, while writing to the Roman Christians from Corinth, was to visit them and solicit their support as a base of operations for evangelizing the western Mediterranean world, much as Antioch had been in the efforts in the eastern Mediterranean world through the three missionary journeys described in Acts. So far as we know, Paul was never able to realize this plan. Once in Jerusalem he was arrested and would spend the next several years as a prisoner of the Roman government, first in Caesarea ([Acts 24:1-26:32](#)) and then in Rome itself ([Acts 28:16-31](#)). Whether or not Paul ever traveled in the western Mediterranean is uncertain. Some ancient church traditions suggest that he did, but this cannot be confirmed by solid information. Very likely he managed to gain his freedom after an appearance before the Roman emperor in the early 60s, then resume ministry largely confined to the central Mediterranean Sea area when 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus were written. By the middle 60s he was arrested again and suffered martyrdom at the hands of Nero in Rome.

Because Rom. 12:9-21 is didactic (teaching) in nature, rather than narrative (event description), it contains few space and time markers, making an internal history insignificant to the interpretation of the passage. Thus we will not devote attention to this aspect.

### b. Literary

The literary context of 12:9-21 is an important aspect of correct interpretation. As the study of 12:1-2 demonstrated, the first two verses of chapter twelve play a foundational role in the moral admonition segments found from 12:3 through 15:13. In the [body](#) (1:16-15:13) of the Letter to the Romans, we find a clearly defined shift of thought in 12:1-2. Through the end of chapter eleven, the material focuses on the central theme of the righteousness of God (ἡ δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ; see [1:16-17](#) for the initial expression) and its various implications for Christian belief. At the beginning of chapter twelve the subject shifts from the emphasis on the theological concept of God's righteousness to how that impacts the believer's daily living. From 12:1 through 15:13, Paul set forth a series of admonitions (paraenesis, see "Lorin's Musings" in [News From The Blue Ridge](#), vol. 7, no. 2 for more details). Rom. 12:1-2 forms the foundational basis for all that follows: (1) Spiritual Gifts, 12:3-8; (2) Guidelines for Christian Living, 12:9-21; (3) Obeying Rulers, 13:1-7; (4) Brotherly Love, 13:8-10; (5) Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming, 13:11-14; (6) Not Judging your Brother, 14:1-12; (7) Not Causing your Brother to Stumble, 14:13-23; (8) Pleasing Others rather than Self, 15:1-13. Thus our passage is the second set of admonitions developed off this foundational concept in 12:1-2.

## II. Message

The internal literary structure of verses nine through twenty-one is fairly clear in the underlying Greek text, but completely obscured by English translation, since Greek participles and infinitives are doing things grammatically that their English counterparts can't begin to do in expressing ideas. Thus the translation process into English by necessity has to completely restructure the ideas set forth by Paul originally. For a schematization of the original Greek text illustrating this thought structure, see the [Appendix](#) at the end of this study. The [semantic diagram](#) of the Greek text, which follows the Appendix I, reflects the rationale for the outline division of Rom. 12:9-21 followed below.

These verses of scripture revolve around four central ideas: (a) loving others, vv. 9-13; (b) praising others, vv. 14-16; (c) forming right attitudes toward others, vv. 17-20; (d) and living victorious over evil, v. 21. The first three lead up to the climatic pair of admonitions in verse twenty-one: to live in victory over evil by doing good to others.

### a. Love genuinely, vv. 9-13

#### The Greek NT

12·9 Ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνυπόκριτος, ἀποστυγοῦντες τὸ πονηρόν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ, 12·10 τῆ φιλαδελφία εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, τῆ τιμῆ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι, 12·11 τῆ σπουδῆ μὴ ὀκνηροί, τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες, τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες, 12·12 τῆ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες, τῆ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες, τῆ προσευχῆ προσκαρτεροῦντες, 12·13 ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἀγίων κοινωνοῦντες, τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες.

#### NRSV

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. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

#### NLT

9 Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. 10 Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. 11 Never be lazy in your work, but serve the Lord enthusiastically. 12 Be glad for all God is planning for you. Be patient in trouble, and always be prayerful. 13 When God's children are in need, be the one to help them out. And get into the habit of inviting guests home for dinner or, if they need lodging, for the night.

## Comments:

In making sense of these verses, first we must remember their foundation in 12:1-2. There Paul admonished believers to give their lives back to God as a sacrifice dedicated completely to Him. This idea led to the dual emphasis of don't be conformed to this age but be transformed by continual spiritual renewal. The admonitions in vv. 9-21 grow out of this 'sacrificial' approach to Christian living. Strip away this foundation and these admonitions quickly turn into a shallow 'do-goodism' with heavy tones of legalistic religion. What we do toward others in the community of faith always grows out of our relationship with and devotion to the Lord.

Verses nine through thirteen hang together in the following way. The core admonition is in verse nine: "Let love be genuine" (NRSV). Literally, the Greek text says "without hypocrisy" (ἀνυπόκριτος). Paul's concern was that the Roman Christians demonstrate a love commitment to one another that was real, rather than artificial or pretense. The New Living Translation captures this idea perhaps better with its translation, "Don't just pretend that you love others." The one place where people need to be genuine in their relationships is inside the community of faith. There's no room for pretence or phoniness inside the church! The idea of love here is the ancient Greek agape love. This love isn't 'warm fuzzy feelings for others.' Rather, it's the sacrificial commitment for the benefit of others that God demonstrated in Christ, which John 3:16 describes.

What does this kind of love imply in our relationships with others? Following this core admonition, Paul laid out a series of twelve admonitions that illustrate sacrificial, genuine love (12:9b-13). When we implement this love toward others, these are some of the concrete actions that we will do. In this ancient '[virtue list](#)', several of these are closely connected to one another, sometimes as a positive/negative set etc. We will briefly take a look at them:

(1) "hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good" (v. 9, NRSV; ἀποστυγούντες τὸ πονηρὸν, κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ). Genuine love positions us on the side of what God defines as good. It also positions us in opposition to what is wrong and harmful, especially to others. Thus the first thing coming out of genuine love is a commitment to do what will help others, rather than anything that will harm them. Here the negative/positive couplet surfaces.

(2) "love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor" (v. 10, NRSV, τῆ φιλადελφία εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, τῆ τιμῆ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι). The beginning words in the Greek text provide help here: (1) in regard to brotherly love [philadelphia]...; (2) in regard to honor [timé]... The common link of 'one another' is also present. Not only are we committed in genuine love to doing good, but here we are committed to being "devoted" to one another, to showing honor to one another. As Douglas Moo summarizes in the Romans volume of the *New International Greek Testament Commentary* series (pp. 777-778), "Paul is then calling on Christians to outdo each other in bestowing honor on one another; for example, to recognize and praise one another's accomplishments and to defer to one another." Here the pair of expressions follow a synonymous parallelism structure.

(3) "Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord" (v. 11, NRSV, τῆ σπουδῆ μὴ ὀκνηροί, τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες, τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες). These three admonitions hang together, although the first one could easily be connected to the pair in verse ten (2 above). Taken together they form a step parallelistic expression leading to the climatic third admonition, "serve the Lord." The negative emphasis is first: our zeal in serving God must never be allowed to slip. Paul's words literally mean, "in earnestness not lazy people." The positive contrasting statement follows: "in your spirit being set on fire." The image is of enthusiasm. The channel through which this excitement flows: "serving the Lord." Sacrificial commitment (12:1-2) means excited, animated service to God; not dull, uninterested obligatory service. This is the cure for religious legalism. It was one of the differences that Paul discovered about religion after meeting the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. This excitement must be an expression of genuine love. As a professor at Southwestern Seminary used to tell students in the 1920s, "Boys, let the cup overflow naturally when God fills it. You don't have to shake it in order to make it overflow!"

(4) "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer" (v. 12, NRSV; τῆ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες, τῆ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες, τῆ προσευχῆ προσκατεροῦντες). Rejoicing, being consistent, being persistent -- these three admonitions are linked to hope, affliction and prayer. Collectively they allude to the hard times that

come to us as believers and to us as communities of faith. In those moments we reach beyond the dark clouds surrounding us to the bright ray of confidence in the future blessing of God. This means we find the resources to ‘hang in there’ in hardship without faltering or giving up. The key to the needed resources: God’s strength gained through persistent prayer. When this takes place inside the community of faith as an expression of genuine love, no hardship can overwhelm us.

(5) “Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers” (v. 13, NRSV; ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἁγίων κοινωνοῦντες, τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες). This genuine love for others will take on the concrete expression of ministry to the needs, here including and stressing physical needs, of others inside the community of believers. In Acts where the word for ‘needs’ [χρείαις] shows up, the stress is upon the willingness of believers to sell whatever property they had in order to take care of the physical needs of others. Cf. Acts 2:44-45, “44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need” (NRSV).

But believers were to also reach out to fellow Christians who were passing through their city. Showing hospitality to strangers is a significant emphasis in the New Testament as in 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9. Christian travelers, especially itinerant missionaries, in the ancient world had no safe place to stay in their journeys, apart from the homes of fellow Christians. The inns that were available were little more than brothels and not a place that Christians would want to stay in. Thus hospitality played a very important role in early Christianity. Paul here heightens the emphasis with the admonition to “pursue” strangers, that is, to go out of one’s way to be hospitable.

Thus, as this first segment of 12:9-21 shows, we must demonstrate genuine love for others. And this love will naturally flow into the patterns of expression defined in verses 9b-13.

### b. Bless others, vv. 14-16a

#### The Greek NT

12·14 εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας ὑμᾶς, εὐλογεῖτε καὶ μὴ καταρᾶσθε.  
12·15 χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων. 12·16 τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες, μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες ἀλλὰ τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι.

#### NRSV

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;

#### NLT

14 If people persecute you because you are a Christian, don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. 15 When others are happy, be happy with them. If they are sad, share their sorrow. 16 Live in harmony with each other. Don't try to act important, but enjoy the company of ordinary people.

#### Comments:

This second segment continues the underlying theme of love but shifts the focus from inside the community of faith to those on the outside. A subtle play on words is present in the Greek text that isn't possible to preserve in English translation. In verse thirteen we are to pursue [διώκοντες] hospitality; in verse fourteen we are to bless those persecuting us [διώκοντας]. This provides a conceptual link between the two statements in an ironic play on word meaning. Paul was fond of doing this and repeats a similar play on the same verb in Phil. 3:6, 12. He once was the persecutor of Christians as an outsider. Now he admonishes Christians to bless (εὐλογεῖτε, eulogeite) the persecutors. In Hebraistic thought pattern the admonition is issued, then quickly repeated with its counterpart added (bless, bless and curse not). This achieved powerful emphasis upon the admonition. Both verbs refer to prayer language. We are to pray for God’s blessing rather than His curse upon those persecuting us.

These words echo the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Note both Matthew’s and Luke’s rendering of this important teaching:

[Mt. 5:43-45](#), “43 “You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and **pray for those who persecute you**, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven;...” (NRSV).

[Lu. 6:27-28](#), “27 “But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 **bless** those who curse you, **pray for those who abuse you**” (NRSV).

Thus in following both the teaching and the example that Jesus set, we reach out to our enemies in ‘unnatural’ ways. Sinful humanity reacts typically to opposition by striking back, usually with greater force in order to destroy the enemy. As Paul declared earlier in the ‘theological’ section, “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life” ([Rom. 5:10](#), NRSV). God loved us as enemies. As His children we can do no less toward our enemies.

This invoking of God’s blessings on persecutors then takes on tangible expression in the following series of admonitions growing out of this core admonition (vv. 15-16), here expressed not as a regular verb but by a series of infinitives and participles in the original text. Two sets of admonitions surface.

(1) “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (v. 15, NRSV; χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων, κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων). The context here points toward our relationships with the outsiders and admonishes the expression of sympathy, that is, the ability to feel the same feelings as the other person. In moments of joy by others, we reach out to them in joy; in moments of sorrow we reach out with tears. Not only then are we praying for God to bless our enemies, but we reach out to them in the good and bad in their lives with genuine sharing of their emotions during those moments. What a powerful witness to the love of God at work in us! It won’t be long before those enemies become brothers in this situation.

(2) “Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly” (v. 16a, NRSV; τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες, μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες ἀλλὰ τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι). Again contextually the thrust is toward outsiders, although not excluding those inside the community of faith. Spiritual elitism has no place inside the community of faith, either in attitudes toward each other, or toward non-Christians. When we ask God to bless others, we can’t then turn toward them with a ‘holy Joeism’ that considers them somehow inferior to us. Christianity has often been crippled in its efforts to win others to faith in Christ because it failed to heed what Paul is talking about here. The non-believing world often looks down on Christians as inferior people who have sought refuge in religion to escape their problems and failures. But believers have no justification of reciprocating this elitist attitude by considering the non-believing world as spiritual morons who deserve eternal damnation. Genuine love precludes such attitudes.

### c. Have the right attitude, vv. 17-20

#### The Greek NT

μη γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ' ἑαυτοῖς. 12:17 μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες, προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων· 12:18 εἰ δυνατὸν τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν, μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες· 12:19 μὴ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδικοῦντες, ἀγαπητοί, ἀλλὰ δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ, γέγραπται γάρ, Ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω, λέγει κύριος. 12:20 ἀλλὰ ἐὰν πεινᾷ ὁ ἐχθρὸς σου, ψάμιζε αὐτόν· ἐὰν διψᾷ, πότιζε αὐτόν· τοῦτο γὰρ ποιῶν ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.

#### NRSV

Do not claim to be wiser than you are. 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."

#### NLT

And don't think you know it all! 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible. 19 Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, "I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it," says the Lord. 20 Instead, do what the Scriptures say: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you."

#### Comments:

This third section is introduced by a regular verb based admonition: “Do not claim to be wiser than you

are” (NRSV; μή γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι παρ’ ἑαυτοῦς.). The theme of spiritual elitism is continued from the preceding segment by this expression, but the thrust turns inward. We must not form a bloated opinion of ourselves, especially in regard to our spirituality. The New Living Translation captures the essence of the admonition quite well: “And don't think you know it all!” Literally the expression is along the lines of “don't become wise in your own eyes.” The point contextually here seems to be that we need a healthy self image before we will be able to reach out to others properly and in God's ways. In order to live in a sinful world and relate to other people properly, the believer must have “his head screwed on properly.” With a distorted perspective of who we are, we will be very inclined to reach out to “those poor pagans” with a phoney piety. Or, as the following admonitions growing out of this ‘header’ admonition suggest, we will sink down to their degenerate level in a tit-for-tatism.

Jesus rejected the “eye for an eye” principle in the Old Testament: “38 You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.” (NRSV, [Matt. 5:38-42](#))

Paul moves the same direction: “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. 18 Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible. 19 Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God.” (NLT, 17b-19) The five admonitions here underscore the importance of reaching out to others in constructive, relationship building ways if at all possible. These admonitions, especially the last two, are buttressed by Paul's citing to two Old Testament passages. They follow a chiasmic sequence of expression (AB//B'A):

A “Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (vv. 17-18)

B “Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God” (v. 19a)

B' “I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it,” says the Lord. (v. 19b, from [Deut. 32:35](#))

A' “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you.” (v. 20, from [Prov. 25:21-22](#))

This kind of thought structure is very common in both the Old and New Testaments. Thus the Deut. 32 quote reinforces the second set of admonitions, and the Prov. 25 quote supports the first set of admonitions.

The point is that when Christians with a proper understanding of who they are before God reach out in constructive ways to others, especially those who are hostile, they are following in the ancient tradition God established with His covenant people Israel.

#### d. Be victorious, v. 21

##### The Greek NT

12:21 μὴ νικῶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀλλὰ νικά ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ τὸ κακόν.

##### NRSV

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

##### NLT

21 Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.

##### Comments:

This climatic set of negative/positive admonitions returns to the ideas of evil and good. Evil is a powerful presence in our sinful, hostile world and would defeat the community of faith in a heartbeat if allowed to. But it has no claim to victory over us. It achieves victory only if we allow it domination. In contrast, we are admonished to use the good, i.e., what God has defined as right, as the instrument to gain victory over Evil. To the non-Christian, and maybe at times even to us believers, evil seems to be the superior force. Love and doing good are often denigrated as expressions of weakness. But in reality the Good is far more powerful than Evil. Evil tears down and destroys; Good builds up and restores. Evil guts a person's life into an empty, meaningless shell; Good takes the rotten sinner and makes him/her a child of God. In the end, Good will triumph over Evil when our Lord returns to claim his bride for eternity.

Thus presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God (12:1-2) means that we live in a community of genuine love and engage in actions that build up the community and help that community present the face of God and His grace to the outside non-believing world. As Jesus put it, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” ([Mt. 5:16](#), NRSV).

(1) 12·9 Ἡ ἀγάπη (ἔστω) ἀνυπόκριτος.  
ἀποστυγοῦντες τὸ πονηρόν,  
12·10 κολλώμενοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ,  
τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι,  
12·11 τῇ τιμῇ ἀλλήλους προηγούμενοι,  
τῇ σπουδῇ μὴ ὀκνηροί,  
τῷ πνεύματι ζέοντες,  
12·12 τῷ κυρίῳ δουλεύοντες,  
τῇ ἐλπίδι χαίροντες,  
τῇ θλίψει ὑπομένοντες,  
12·13 τῇ προσευχῇ προσκαρτεροῦντες,  
ταῖς χρείαις τῶν ἀγίων κοινωνοῦντες,  
τὴν φιλοξενίαν διώκοντες.

(2) 12·14 εὐλογεῖτε τοὺς διώκοντας ὑμᾶς,  
(3) εὐλογεῖτε  
καὶ  
(4) μὴ καταρᾶσθε.  
12·15 χαίρειν μετὰ χαιρόντων,  
κλαίειν μετὰ κλαιόντων.  
12·16 τὸ αὐτὸ εἰς ἀλλήλους φρονοῦντες,  
μὴ τὰ ὑψηλὰ φρονοῦντες  
ἀλλὰ  
τοῖς ταπεινοῖς συναπαγόμενοι.

(5) μὴ γίνεσθε φρόνιμοι  
παρ' ἑαυτοῖς.  
12·17 μηδενὶ κακὸν ἀντὶ κακοῦ ἀποδιδόντες,  
προνοούμενοι καλὰ ἐνώπιον πάντων ἀνθρώπων·  
12·18 εἰ δυνατόν τὸ ἐξ ὑμῶν,  
μετὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων εἰρηνεύοντες·  
12·19 μὴ ἑαυτοὺς ἐκδικοῦντες,  
ἀγαπητοί,  
ἀλλὰ

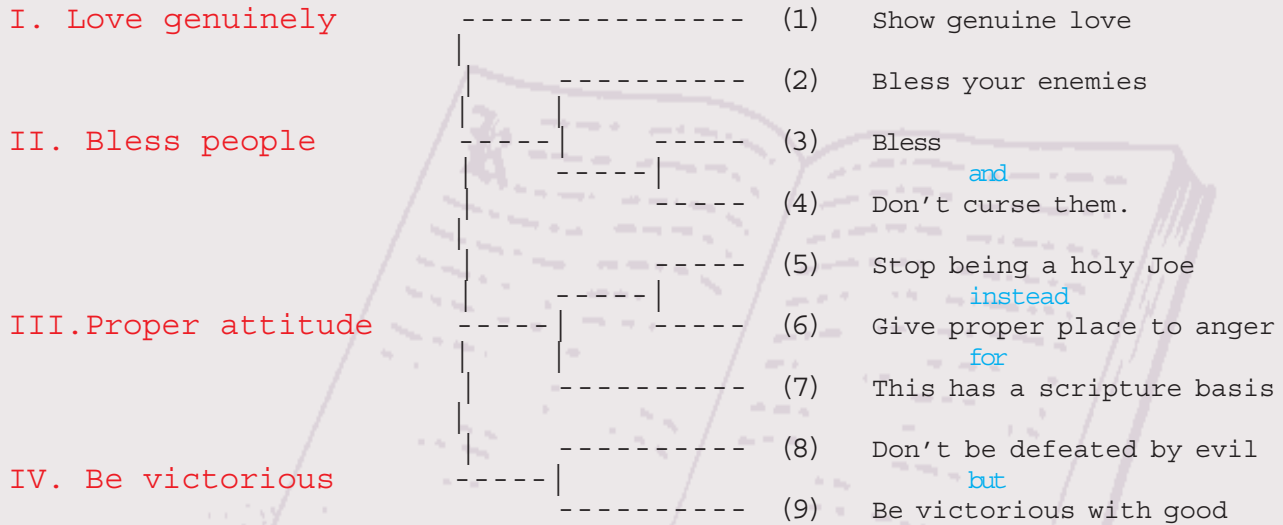
(6) δότε τόπον τῇ ὀργῇ,  
γάρ  
(7) γέγραπται,  
Ἐμοὶ ἐκδίκησις,  
ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω,  
λέγει κύριος.

12·20 ἀλλὰ  
ἐὰν πεινᾷ ὁ ἐχθρὸς σου,  
ψάμιζε αὐτόν·  
ἐὰν διψᾷ,  
πότιζε αὐτόν·  
γάρ  
τοῦτο ποιῶν  
ἄνθρακας πυρὸς σωρεύσεις  
ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ.

(8) 12·21 μὴ νικῶ  
ὑπὸ τοῦ κακοῦ  
ἀλλὰ  
(9) νίκα... τὸ κακόν.  
ἐν τῷ ἀγαθῷ



## Semantic Diagram of 12:9-21



This provides the basis for the outline in the Bible study, since it comes from within the internal thought structure of Rom. 12:9-21, rather than being superimposed down on to the scripture. The above numbers in (-) reflect the core declarations found in the block diagram on the preceding page.

In studying the block diagram on the preceding page, you will notice a lot of Greek text in *italicized blue*, with numbers in the beginning left margin. These represent the core statements (main clauses, grammatically) in this passage. Underneath these core statements you will notice many modifying elements. Paul utilized some capabilities of Koine Greek that our English language has no ability to copy. Through the use of a whole series of independent imperatival usage of Greek participles and infinitives, he expanded the core ideas with numerous secondary admonitions. By this combination of regular verbs and then verbal forms he built a very clear core structure with regular verbs and then fleshed out this skeleton with the verbal expressions. Unfortunately, the grammatical limitations of our English language make reproducing this structure in a coherent English expression utterly impossible.

But understanding this structure enables the Bible student to see very clearly the inner relationship among all the admonitions contained in this passage. Hopefully, the study provided in this lesson will throw some helpful light on making sense of Rom. 12:9-21.