"Be Different!"

(Be Unique) *(Part 1)*

Romans 12:9-21

9-13-2020

INTRODUCTION: As a Christian you are different. The result of <u>being</u> different is <u>living</u> different.

***Your lifestyle as a Christian should be distinctly different than the world's!**
In verses 9-21, God lists for us nine higher levels of living the Christian life; Nine unique ways of living:

I. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>LOVE</u> (v. 9a)**

II. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>MORAL STANDARDS</u> (v. 9b)**

III. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>FRIENDSHIPS</u> (v. 10)**

IV. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>SERVICE</u> (v. 11)**

V. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>SPIRITUALITY</u> (v. 12)**

VI. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>GIVING (sacrifice)</u> (v. 13)**

VII. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>DISPLAY of EMOTIONS</u> (v. 14-15)**

VIII. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **<u>THINKING</u> (v. 16)**

"Be Different!"

(Be Unique) *(Part 2)*

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9-13-2020

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III. *Let's be Unique in our* FRIENDSHIPS (v. 10)
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VII. *Let's be Unique in our* DISPLAY of EMOTIONS (v. 14-15)
VIII. *Let's be Unique in our* THINKING (v. 16)

IX. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **REVENGE (v. 17-21)**

*** Paying back evil with evil is wrong on three counts:**

A. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is saying that***
SIN JUSTIFIES SIN (v. 17-18)

Rather than seeking to justify evil for evil:

1. Seek to show SINCERE GOODNESS toward your enemies (v. 17b)

2. Seek to live PEACEABLY with your enemies (v. 18)

B. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Taking God's PREROGATIVES in their own hands (v. 19)

C. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Not practicing the LAW OF LOVE (v. 20-21)

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IV. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **_____ (v. 11)**

V. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **_____ (v. 12)**

VI. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **_____ <u>(sacrifice)</u> (v. 13)**

VII. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **_____ (v. 14-15)**

VIII. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **_____ (v. 16)**

"Be Different!"

(Be Unique) *(Part 2)*

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9-27-2020

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A. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is saying that***
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Rather than seeking to justify evil for evil:

1. Seek to show _____ toward your enemies (v. 17b)

2. Seek to live _____ with your enemies (v. 18)

B. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Taking _____ in their own hands (v. 19)

C. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Not practicing the _____ (v. 20-21)

"Be Different!"

(Be Unique)

Romans 12:9-21

9-13-2020

INTRODUCTION:

As a Christian you are different. The result of <u>being</u> different is <u>living</u> different.

After exhorting us to non-conformity to the world (v. 2), God describes in verses 9-20 a pattern of living that is totally different from the way the world lives and reacts.

Our lifestyle is unusual, unique, "out-of-this-world." We should not be ashamed to live on a new dimension, or on a "higher plane," for unto this we were saved.

ILLUS: Bob Jones University's Film Production is called "<u>Unusual Films</u>" Why? Because they are distinctly different than the productions of Hollywood.

Verses 9-21, basically describe our distinctiveness in regards to <u>relationships</u> [EX: our relationships to our Christian brothers (v. 9-13), to those in need (v. 13), to those who oppose us (v. 14), to those who are poor and humble (v. 16), and to those who do us wrong (v. 17-21)]

Much is known about the spirituality of an individual by the way he relates to others.

ILLUS: Song "Higher Ground"

***Your lifestyle as a Christian should be distinctly different than the world's!**

In verses 9-21, God lists for us nine higher levels of living the Christian life; Nine unique ways of living:

I. *Let's be Unique in our* LOVE (v. 9a)

"Let love be without dissimulation" -

If something is "simulated" it means it is a fake or phoney; it is something made to look genuine but really isn't.

The word "dissimulation" literally means without hypocrisy. The word hypocrite was used to describe a stage-actor or someone who wore a mask to cover up his real identity, to pretend to be someone else.

The world may portray a pretentious love (EX: salesmen, etc.), but we cannot.

We are to love in an unfeigned manner (II Cor. 6:6).

I Pet. 1:22 - "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently;"

How can you "play act" love?

1) By acting concerned about someone, when really you are not (a pretentious caring)

2) By giving with the motive of selfishly getting (a pretentious generosity)

3) By serving with the intention of receiving recognition (honor from men) (a pretentious service)

- Love does not wear a mask.
- Love is not an actor, or showman.
- Love is not to be mere externals.
- Love is not to be motivated by selfish ambitions.
- Don't be a pretender in the matter of love.

Hypocrisy is so devilish because it is a contradiction of truth. "Our Lord exposed its diabolical character when he said to Judas, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48) (Murray, p. 128).

II. *Let's be Unique in our* MORAL STANDARDS (v. 9b)

The world tends to be neutral concerning absolutes, right & wrong, standards of morality, the "Judeo-Christian ethic."

Today, there is a big push among liberals to bring into the public school system something called "Valueless Education"

That is, an education where right and wrong are "relative"; therefore, they are not essentials to "real training."

An education without values is exactly what it is called - "Valueless" -- it's worthless!

Contrary to the world, we are not to be neutral concerning good and evil.

"Abhor" = to hate something to the point of separating yourself from it.

The Greek word is "apostugeo"

"Apo" = away from (the idea is separation from)

"Stugeo" = to hate, to be disgusted at, to be horrified at, to be shocked or appalled (Mk. 10:22).

The things we would never dream of allowing to enter into our eye gate or ear gate 10-20 years ago, now don't seem so bad.

Satan has two methods to soften God's people concerning evil.

1) The Shock Treatment - in which he exposes us (usually via the media) to an extremely gross form of sin, so that other sin seems mild in comparison.

OR

2) The Desensitizing Treatment - in which we gradually get introduced to "mild" forms of ungodliness in small doses, sot hat after a period of time we have been conformed to the world without even realizing it.

Through a conditioning process, the world has systematically been inoculating God's people and numbing our feelings toward evil (EX: frog boiling in water).

There is a gradual movement toward neutrality, toward compromise.

We cannot be neutral regarding sin.

As Jude said, We must hate "even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23).

"Cleave" - to glue, cement, bond, or join together.

NOTE: After calling upon the believer to be detached (totally removed) from evil, God now commands us to be attached (totally glued) to good.

God's exhortation is toward a continual, permanent attachment to that which is good.

The decision is yours to join yourself (middle voice) together with moral goodness. No one can make that decision for you.

The same word is used by Jesus to illustrate the permanent inseparable bond of marriage (Mt. 19:5).

God is calling for commitment.

We need to be believers who are

- committed to truth,
- committed to high moral standards,
- committed to family
- committed to evangelism & discipleship

We should be as fastly joined to good **practically** as we are to the Lord positionally ("he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" [I Cor. 6:17]).

If it is good, we need to be 100% for it; if it is evil, we need to be 100% against it.

III. *Let's be Unique in our* **FRIENDSHIPS** **(v. 10)**

"Kindly affectioned" = Greek "philostorga" "Phileo" - affection; "Storga" - loyal, family devotion.

"To have a family affection; a loyal devotion like you have with your natural family members"

"Brotherly love" = we are to love each other as you do your physical brother. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are in God's family.

We should love each other because we are brethren.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren" (I Jn. 3:14; cp. Gal. 6:10).

In the early church, during a time of severe opposition to Christian, God's people stayed close to each other and cared for each other. The heathen were so deeply impressed by such a unique display of generosity, grace, and selflessness, that they said, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!"

"In honor" = treat others like a dignitary, someone special.

"Preferring" = lit. to let others go ahead of you. The word corresponds to the word "honor." Someone who is honorable goes first.

We need to put others first, to esteem others as better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

As Christians we should not strive to outdo one another to gain honor, but we should try to outdo one another in showing honor.

In other words, whether or not you honor me, I should turn around and give you double honor in return.

IV. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **SERVICE** **(v. 11)**

"Not slothful in business"

"Slothful" = lazy, idle, to be slow and "poky" (Robertson, p. 404).

[SEE: Prov. 6:6-11, 26:13-16]

"In business" = lit. in zeal [same word is translated "diligence" in v. 8]

Laziness may be a characteristic of the world (as they seek to earn the most money with the least amount of effort), but should not be for the Christian.

Sad to say, sometimes the world is more industrious and hard working at their cause than Christians are in theirs.

As Jesus described, it is often the case that: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than children of light" (Lk. 16:8)

"Fervent in spirit" = burning, boiling, red hot on fire for God in our human spirit, as we serve Christ in spiritual matters.

As is typically the case for new converts, the Bible describes a man named Apollos, who was "fervent in the spirit (as) he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord. . ." (Acts 18:25).

Our fervency is what should distinguish us from the main line denominations. Our spiritual heat should be many degrees higher than the most zealous of cults.

Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy mighty" (Eccl. 9:10).

Time is so short,
the need is so great
and our "business" is so urgent
that we can't afford to be
asleep on our Lord!

It's time to awake! (SEE Rom. 13:11-12)

"Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph. 5:14).

It's time to get "fired up"

It's time to break out of our ice closets; it's time to scrape off the frost; it's time to escalate our spiritual temperatures out of lukewarmness (Rev. 3:16) and serve the Lord with fervency.

Some things can't wait until tomorrow!

"Serving the Lord" = the "service" (douleuo) described is that of a slave (doulos).

We need the attitude of a humble slave who views all that he does for his master as "the least he is responsible to do."

It's our duty! (SEE: Luke 17:7-10).

You can never serve Christ too much!

Everything we do in life (secular or "sacred") is to be service as unto the Lord

(I Cor. 10:31 - "...all to the glory of God").

(Eph. 6:5-7 - "...doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men")

If we view everything we do as "serving the Lord," perhaps such motivation will inspire us to do it with a new fervency.

V. *Let's be Unique in our* **SPIRITUALITY** **(v. 12)**

A. "Rejoicing in Hope" (v. 12)

Our spirituality is not to be:

"Blah" - but joyful ("rejoicing")

Weak - but enduring ("patient")

"Turn on" when circumstances are right, and "Turn off" when times are rough, but it is to exhibit faithfulness ("continuing instant")

"Rejoicing" - Jesus came that we might have life and that you might have it more abundantly! (Jn. 10:10).

Living on the "higher plane" is living with real joy. Joy is not mere happiness which depends on "good happenings," but joy finds its well of refreshing waters from a living relationship with the water of life - Jesus Christ.

"Hope" = confidence; certainty.

Our "hope" is a confident expectation, not an unsure speculation (as the word is often used today).

What is our "hope"?

It is a fact of the certainty of our salvation and the certainty of our future resurrection (glorified bodies).

Rom. 5:1-2 - "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Does your salvation cause you to rejoice? If not, perhaps you have gone to the world to find joy.

- Paul does not say "rejoicing" in your job" but in your hope.
- Paul does not say "rejoicing in your money" but in your hope.
- Paul does not say "rejoicing in your girlfriend" but in your hope.
- Paul does not say "rejoicing in your easy lifestyle" but in your hope.

If your salvation does not give you reason to rejoice, maybe you don't have it?? Or perhaps you have forgotten that you do?

B. "Patient in Tribulation" (v. 12)

"Patient" - the ability to "remain under" pressure without giving up, quitting, or giving in to the enemy. It means to endure.

"Tribulation" = lit. pressure; those circumstances of life which attempt to squeeze you to the point where you do anything to get out, to run, to quit, to deny your faith.

For the Christian, struggles in life are nothing more than a series of God-assigned tests designed to reveal your faith and make you mature (James 1).

From God's vantage point tribulations are for your growth and maturity - to develop patience (James 1), but from Satan's they comprise a solicitation to evil.

The temptation of:
--financial pressure is to provoke you to be dishonest
--sexual pressure is to provoke you to be immoral
--persecution pressure is to provoke you to be unfaithful

True Christian character is revealed when things get tough, hot, tight, irritable, seeming "not worth it."

Being "patient in tribulation" is:

--Relying on God's grace and faithfulness, when your children are wayward;

--Giving 10% of your income to the Lord, when you don't know how you will pay the rent this month.

--Being faithful to Christ although your spouse, relatives, fellow employees are antagonistic to your faith.

--Keeping yourself morally pure, in the midst of a society that is applying pressure to encourage sex before marriage.

"If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small" (Prov. 24:10).

When pressure strikes the average unsaved person, he, having no convictions, will take the easy way out. This is why it will be so easy for the world to receive "the mark of the Beast." (Rev. 13).

C. "Continuing instant in prayer"

"Continuing instant" = lit. to be "strong wards"; to be faithful; to persevere or endure all attacks from the enemy to try to divert you from praying.

The implication is that prayer is hard work, easy to neglect, difficult to practice.

Satan hates witnessing, but He hates prayer more, because prayer gives power to your witness.

Satan hates pure living, but He is infuriated by prayer, since it is the key to holy living.

Satan hates when you serve the Lord, but he can't stand prayer, because it influences how effectively and consistently you serve.

Satan hates the family, but he really despises prayer, since "the family that prays together, stays together."

The early church "continued steadfastly in...prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Have you slipped in the consistency of your prayer life since you got saved?

One's hope is not that which the average person <u>rejoices</u> in; one's tribulations are not the easiest times of life through which to remain patient; praying is not the most natural thing to be faithful at.

VI. ***Let's be Unique in our*** **GIVING (sacrifice) (v. 13)**

Human sinful nature tends toward stinginess; to hoard, to be greedy. But when you come to grips with the gracious, bountiful riches given to you in Christ - your tight fist becomes an open hand.

No longer is your motto "What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine" . . . but rather, "What's mine is yours" if you have a need.

Unto this level of selflessness we are called. Are you living on higher ground in terms of your giving?

"Distributing" = sharing; giving.
"Necessity" = needs.

Before we supply our "wants" we should make sure we don't know a fellow-Christian who has an unmet need.

"Saints" = fellow-believers.

Rather than giving to the "United Way" "World Relief" or other secular social programs, (where you really don't know how your money is being spent), find a brother in need and personally and tangibly meet that need.

NOTE: The giving of the early church to meet needs - SEE: Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37.
II Cor. 8:1-5

"Given" = to be devoted to; lit. to "hunt" after or "pursue" after.
"Hospitality" = lit. a lover of strangers. To have affection for those you don't know.

Bible hospitality is not opening your home to relatives nor is it having over well-known friends for coffee and donuts or tea and cookies.

It is opening your home to some newcomer to our church; it is allowing your home to become a "hotel room" for a visiting Christian who passes through NY (Note: discretion is important).

Hospitality is basically saying, "What's mine is yours" for Jesus' sake.

Hospitality is the opposite of clique-ishness; the opposite of only loving those who love you. The opposite of saying, "I'll scratch your back if you first scratch mine."

Only God can give us an ability and desire to love those we barely know, to give to

those who have never given to us... but this is living on a higher dimension!

VII. *Let's be Unique in our* DISPLAY of EMOTIONS (v. 14-15)

V. 14

"Bless" = lit. to say a good word

In the ears of the world, such a statement sounds absurd. They would respond, "You mean God expects me to say something good about those who treat me like dirt?"

Only a Christian has such a capacity.

This whole context (v. 9-21), especially v. 14-21, is basically a restatement of the Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount of Jesus.

The Beatitudes are often explained away; or interpreted as "Kingdom teaching" (i.e. teaching that only applies to the future kingdom).

To the contrary, those principles are for you and me. Jesus said: "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Mt. 5:44).

"Curse not" - Certainly God never wants his children to use vulgarity or "smut" language toward anyone.

The prohibition against cursing, however, means more than our contemporary usage. It means not to invoke ill fortune upon someone; not to wish that they get paid back for what they did to you; but to rather wish a blessing upon them.

(Example: Melinda Raffensberger's parents pray that the men who murdered their son Witt will get saved!)

(Example: Christ's words while being crucified and reviled - "Father forgive them. . ." [Luke 23:34])

(Example: Stephen's words while being struck by boulders - "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" - Acts 7:60)

Such an attitude is totally contrary to the world, but God is calling His children to a higher level of living.

V. 15

"Rejoicing with them that do rejoice"

Beware: Our sin nature often prompts us to be jealous or envious when others rejoice, when we may not get the same exact blessing (EX: When someone else gets a promotion and you don't; when another preacher's church is growing and yours isn't; when another person gets engaged and you have not even found a date; when a friend finally got a baby boy and you have all girls, etc.)

Such an attitude of rejoicing shows your:

1. Love (you don't envy those you love)

2. Selflessness (You can honestly be happy because of someone else's happiness)

3. Faith (that God knows your needs and desires; and that He is in control and will bless you as He sees fit).

"Weep with them that weep" -

God now moves to an opposite emotion from that of rejoicing.

Sympathy - is feeling sorry for someone else.

Empathy - is feeling sorry with someone else.
(to be able to feel what they are feeling - to "put yourself in their shoes")

It's often easy to say to someone who is discouraged, down-hearted, saddened by tragedy - "Oh, come on, it's not that bad. Be strong! What are you crying for?"

When we respond this way, we are not living Romans 12:15.

The best therapeutic aid you can be toward those with wounded spirits is to let them know that you really care.

Job could honestly say: (Job 30:25) "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?"

Such an attitude is cultivated when we really view ourselves as "family" (brothers).

SEE Heb. 13:1-3

VIII. *Let's be Unique in our* **THINKING** **(v. 16)**

"Be of the same mind" = have the same thoughts toward one another. I.e. think about each other equally with no prejudice or partiality.

The carnal Corinthians needed such a lesson.

They, following the "big shots" of Christianity (I Cor. 1:12) needed the admonition of I Cor. 1:26=31 (READ).

"Mind not high things" - don't have thoughts toward that which is "high" or "exalted" in the eyes of the world. Carnal nature has a tendency to look up to (idolize) people based on worldly things:

1. Wealth
2. Popularity (fame)
3. Talent
4. Position

The true worth of an individual is not measured by how much they have, how many know them, what they can do, or how high they sit, but by who they are - a soul made in the image of God, a blood-bought child of God!

"Condescend" = lit. go along with; be led along with.

God is saying, "Fellowship, associate, make friends with those who are humble or lowly. Those who don't have much in the world's eyes.

"Be not wise in your own conceits" = Don't think too much of yourselves (Rom. 1:25; Prov. 3:7 - give the same imperative).

Pride is a killer!

IX. *Let's be Unique in our* REVENGE (v. 17-21)

INTRODUCTION:

Satan is influencing (especially via music) our society toward "war" and "rebellion"

The believer who lives for God will eventually have enemies.
Friction will inevitably come as you go across the grain of the world.

--Jesus had enemies

--Paul had enemies

--Stephen had enemies (Acts 7)

"Jesus warned His disciples that their worst enemies might be those of their own household" (Matt. 10:36) (Wiersbe, p. 556)

Make sure, however, that if you have enemies it is because of the "offense of the cross" (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-15) and not because you are an offensive Christian.

***Paying back evil with evil is wrong on three counts:**

A. *Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is saying that* SIN JUSTIFIES SIN (v. 17-18)

V. 17

The world's way of dealing with people is returning "evil for evil" and "good for good". . . "you stab me, I stab you" . . . "You tip me, I tip you."

In NYC, however, it goes: "You tip me, I still stab you."

"Recompense" = to pay back, give back, return.

"To no man" - regardless of who they are, or what they have done.

"Evil for evil" - the word "for" ("anti") means "in the place of."

We are not to return evil to replace the evil that someone else gave to us.

Those who fight evil with evil are saying: "You sin gives me a right to sin" (one wrong deserves another).

Of all sinful tendencies, this one is the easiest to give in to, and justify.

We think: "He stabbed me, I'll stab him. He gossiped about me . . . robbed . . . cheated . . . slandered . . . spoke against my child . . . I will do the same to him. He didn't give to me, I won't give to him."

- EX: Divorce - "You committed adultery . . . I'm going for a divorce."
- EX: Lawsuits - "You ruined my reputation (injured my character),etc., so I am going to sue you!"
- EX: Cheating an employer - "He doesn't pay me or treat me like he should, so I'm not going to do my best on the job."

However, no doctor would fight poison with poison! Or disease with disease. That is not a cure.

[NOTE: a vaccine when you are well is given so that you will build up antibodies; no one gives a vaccine to someone who has the virus already. You give an anti-biotic - the opposite of the virus.]

Rather than seeking to justify evil for evil:

1. Seek to show SINCERE GOODNESS toward your enemies (v. 17b)

I Thes. 5:15 - "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

"Provide things honest" -

"Provide" = to plan in advance; to think previously as to what you will do for those who did you wrong.

"Honest" = ethical goodness; intrinsic genuine goodness with no cover up.

Even though they may have treated us with unfairness, deceitfulness, maliciousness, we are to return their evil with honest-goodness.

EX: If someone does you "dirty" or "stabs you in the back," you don't invite them over for dinner and then slip some arsenic in the food.

We are not to have any pretentiousness or false motives (of revenge) behind our good treatment of others.

"In the sight of all men" - what they see is what they get. We are not to get revenge by covering up our hidden feelings and acting like all is OK,

when really we are seeking occasion to "move in for the kill."

2. Seek to live PEACEABLY with your enemies (v. 18)

"If it be possible" - if you are able, do what is in your power to maintain peaceful relations with others.

"As much as lieth in you" = from your standpoint, seek to be peaceful.

We cannot control whether or not someone else will be peaceful but we can control the peace from our end, from our side of the problem.

Too often you worry about the other side of the problem; you are concerned about their attitude and action toward you, and fail to remember you will not answer to God for them, but for you. Pay attention to how well you are doing to promote a peaceful relationship.

"Live peaceably with all men" -

Do your best to be what you should be to promote harmony and tranquility with:

1) your spouse
2) your employer
3) your neighbors
4) your in-laws and relatives
5) those who "hate your guts"

Some might say: "I can be nice to some enemies, some of the time; but certainly God does not expect me to be nice to all enemies, all of the time, does he?"

ANSWER: There are no exceptions.

Note - "no man" (v. 17a); "all men" (v. 17b); "all men" (v. 18). This includes saved and lost (cp. I Th. 5:15)

V. 18
You cannot influence anyone for righteousness unless they can feel at rest (at ease) in your presence.

James 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Mark 9:50 - "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another."

B. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Taking God's PREROGATIVES in their own hands (v. 19)

"Dearly beloved" - It is God who loves us; therefore, He will see that we are vindicated. Because God loves me, He will fight my battles. He will right all wrongs done to His beloved.

"Avenge" - lit. to "take out justice"; to seek to make a matter right by taking out revenge toward someone. To take justice into your own hands.

Some wrong thing that doing evil toward others is justified because of what they did to you.

"Give place unto wrath" - it is not "our place" to vent anger; it is God's place; it is His prerogative.

When we seek to make right a wrong done to us by retaliating, we have entered into God's place as judge and executioner.

[NOTE: Government does have the right as "the minister of God" to judge and pay back evil doers - See following context, especially v. 4b. But we are not to take the law into our own hands.]

Why should we "give place to wrath"?

Answer: Because the Bible says so!

"For [because] it has been written: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will pay back," says the LORD. Paul is citing Deut. 32:35.

Don't be quick to defend yourself. If you do, then the Lord can't defend you. God does a better job at being a prosecuting attorney anyway.

Just as we would be fools to go to the court of law to defend ourselves without a lawyer, so is the Christian who attempts to defend himself.

David said, "Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." Ps. 35:1

(Cp. the LORD's future defense of Israel - Isa. 49:25-26)

Remember, if God commands us not to "get even," then just the thought or desire to "get even" is wrong (sinful).

C. ***Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is***
Not practicing the LAW OF LOVE (v. 20-21)

Note the balance in the context between the negative prohibition and the positive injunction.

God says, "Recompense to no man for evil" (v. 170, "avenge not yourselves (v. 19); "be not overcome (v. 21).

Then in each case, He balances it out by commanding something we are to do. We are not merely to stop the negative (not give evil for evil) but we are to go a giant step further and replace it by doing the positive ("provide" [v. 17], "live peaceably" [v. 18], "feed him" [v. 20], "overcome evil with good" [v. 21]).

According to verse 19, to leave the retribution up to God requires faith. Faith in the fact that God will make right all wrongs.

According to verse 20, to return blessing to those who gave you misery, requires love. A love for their soul and their relationship to God.

Jesus taught against retaliation (SEE Mt. 5:38-48)

EX: How Elisha treated his enemies (a whole host of Syrian soldiers who had come to take Elisha captive
(II Ki. 6:22, 23).

EX: Joseph's response to his brothers.

"Heap coals" = to pile up fiery coals of conviction.
Each good deed is another coal, a re-confirmation of the inexcusability of your enemy's behavior and attitude toward you.

When you do good in return for the bad that someone else did to you, you cause the other person to be ashamed or embarrassed because of their wickedness. Such shame, brings conviction, and conviction, if responded to correctly, will bring about repentance!

Observe how God treated us when we were enemies (Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:3-4).
The goodness of God has as its goal to bring man to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Paul is quoting a Proverb (a portion of true wisdom) - Prov. 25:21-22 - "If

thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Doing good to an enemy will not only have an effect on your enemy, but will have a benefit for you.

Prov. 25:22 adds this phrase: "...and the LORD shall reward thee."

I Peter 3:9 - "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

God sees how you treat those who are your enemies. Though your enemies may never repay you, God will!

Jesus promised in Matt. 6:4 that our Father who sees our alms (righteous deeds) [though they are done in secret, with no one else knowing] "shall reward thee openly."

"Will they take advantage of us? Will they hate us more?"

Only the Lord knows. Our task is not to protect ourselves but to obey the Lord and leave the results to Him." (Wiersbe, p. 556).

What if they don't change at all? What if our efforts of love don't convert them? In such cases, "we have still experienced the love of God in our own hearts and have grown in grace" (Wiersbe, p. 556).

V. 21
How do you "win a fight" as a Christian?

"Be not overcome of evil" = do not be conquered by evil.

The implication is that evil--if returned for evil--makes you the loser, the victim, the casualty.

Sin conquers you every time you choose to lower yourself and yield to it. (Rom. 6:16).

"Overcome evil with good" - the secret to conquering evil (on a personal level) is with good.

Showers of goodness quench the flames of evil. This is lifestyle of one living on a higher plane.

"Overcome evil with good" - the way to fight fire is not with more fire. You don't quench fire with fire. But with the opposite of fire.

The best way to fight fire is not to add fuel to the fire, but to pour on that which robs the fire of its fuel.

CONCLUSION:

Doing good to those who do evil to you does not come natural.

But whoever said, we as Christians were to do what comes natural?
We are to live above the world, according to supernatural (Holy Spirit) promptings and impulses, not according to the flesh.

This is life on the higher plane!

Who is it that has done you wrong. Call that individual (or individuals) to mind.

Determine in your heart, right now, what good thing you are going to do for them. Maybe write a card, letter, mail a gift, invite them over for dinner, etc. Pray for them also.