

Romans (80)
Practical Words of Exhortation (Part 6)

Last Lord's Day we addressed the first portion of Romans 12:13, which reads, "**Contribute to the needs of the saints...**" (Rom. 12:13). We showed how this instruction to care for other Christians had a specific historical context, raising money to give relief to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem who were enduring a terrible famine. Let us now consider the latter half of the verse: "**seek to show hospitality.**"

Although the command to show hospitality is rather broad, the biblical setting of this command was the common practice and sense of obligation that people of the Middle East provide lodging in their home for travelers. To find a safe place to stay in a city for a night or for several nights was not an easy matter. Christians were to make available their homes for strangers. The command is given in Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." This does not mean that you should entertain strangers because you never know when you might entertain angels. It may simply be suggesting that you just do not know to whom you might be providing important service.

Hospitality was to be characteristic of church leaders. An elder had to demonstrate this practice: "An elder then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, **hospitable**, able to teach" (1 Tim 3:3). Also we read in Titus 1:8, "For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but **hospitable**, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined" (Tit 1:6-8).

But not only were church leaders to practice hospitality, but we see here in Romans 12:13 that all Christians are to be hospitable. We should be willing to open ourselves and our homes to entertain and provide for others. As 1 Peter 4:9 instructs us, "Show hospitality to one another without grumbling."

The early churches supported some Christian widows who had faithfully shown hospitality. In order for a widow to be supported by the church she had to meet specific qualifications. These had been faithful women through their lives. We read in 1 Timothy 5:9ff:

⁹Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, ¹⁰and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, **has shown hospitality**, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.

The Greek word for hospitality carries the idea of showing hospitality to "strangers."¹ The King James Version reflects this idea. It reads, "If she has lodged strangers."

Invitations to come into your home would be extended to friends, strangers, and even enemies. Hospitality was commonly extended to strangers. To extend hospitality to ones to stay in your home, you were assuming the responsibility to protect them as well as feed them. David Bradley wrote me an email the other day to tell me that he had viewed the new movie that was released, "Lone Survivor." It is the story of the lone survivor of a navy seal that engaged in a battle in Afghanistan. David had read our notes last week in which we addressed this matter of hospitality shown enemies. He wrote to me

¹ Greek, ἐξενδοχῆσεν (*exenodoxasen*). This is the combination of *xeno* (stranger) and *doxa* (show). You might be familiar with the word **xenophobia**, which is the irrational or unreasoned fear of that which is perceived to be foreign or strange. It comes from the Greek words ξένος (*xenos*), meaning "stranger" or "foreigner," and φόβος (*phobos*), meaning "fear."

that the reason the one navy seal, Marcus Luttrell, became the lone survivor was because he had managed to enter a village of the Pashtuns, that observed the 2,000 year tradition of “Pashtunwali”, in which the village would assume the responsibility of hospitality to protect their guest from his enemies. Here is a summary of their practice:

- □ **Memastia (hospitality)** - Showing hospitality and profound respect to all visitors, regardless of race, religion, national affiliation or economic status and doing so without any hope of remuneration or favour. Pashtuns will go to great lengths to show their hospitality.
- □ **Nanawatai (asylum)** - Derived from the verb meaning *to go in*, this refers to the protection given to a person against his or her enemies. People are protected at all costs; even those running from the law must be given refuge until the situation can be clarified. This was demonstrated when Osama bin Laden was provided special protection by a group of Pashtuns in Abbottabad. Nanawatai can also be used when the vanquished party in a dispute is prepared to go in to the house of the victors and ask for their forgiveness. (It is a peculiar form of “chivalrous” surrender, in which an enemy seeks “sanctuary” at his enemy’s house). A notable example is that of Navy Petty Officer First Class Marcus Luttrell, the sole survivor of a US Navy SEAL team ambushed by Taliban fighters. Wounded, he evaded the enemy and was aided by members of the Sabray tribe who took him to their village. The tribal chief protected him, fending off attacking tribes until word was sent to nearby US forces.²

In the ancient world, particularly in Old Testament times, strangers could expect that someone in a town they were passing through open his home to them. And when one extended hospitality to ones to stay in his home, he was assuming the responsibility to protect them as well as feed them. Invitations to come into one’s home would be extended to friends, strangers, and even enemies.

One remarkable feature of Oriental hospitality is that sometimes an enemy is received as a guest, and as long as he remains in that relationship, he is perfectly safe and is treated as a friend. There are certain Oriental tribes of tent-dwellers who have the rule that an enemy who has “once dismounted and touched the rope of a single tent, is safe.”³

Failure to show hospitality was regarded as a great sin in the biblical world. If an invitation were not extended to a stranger who had come into town, it was regarded as a reproach upon all of the inhabitants of that town. It maybe that when people steeped in this culture had heard or read of Joseph and Mary being able to find a suitable place of lodging in Bethlehem, that the inhospitality of the place would have been understood. That Bethlehem failed or refused to render hospitality, and that to a man whose wife was about to give birth, shows the unwillingness and hardheartedness of not only the town, but perhaps even of the world toward the Son of David who was born into the world. It may be one way in which the Scriptures show that “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). There is an insensitivity and failure on the part of people not to welcome Him into their homes.

In order to illustrate the importance and seriousness of this matter of ancient hospitality, consider the account during the period of the Judges in which a man was traveling near ancient Jerusalem, before it had been inhabited by the Jews. The man, rather than choosing to lodge in Jerusalem for the night, chose to travel past sundown so that he could stay in a city inhabited by Jews, that being Gibeah, a town of the tribe of Benjamin. Here is the account of Judges 19.

² This is the first time I have provided a citation fro the dubious source of Wikipedia, but I found it interesting and applicable.

³ Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Moody Press, 1953), p. 70.

¹⁰However, the man was not willing to spend that night; so he rose and departed, and came opposite Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). With him were the two saddled donkeys; his concubine was also with him. ¹¹They were near Jebus, and the day was far spent; and the servant said to his master, “Come, please, and let us turn aside into this city of the Jebusites and lodge in it.”

¹²But his master said to him, “We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah.” ¹³So he said to his servant, “Come, let us draw near to one of these places, and spend the night in Gibeah or in Ramah.” ¹⁴And they passed by and went their way; and the sun went down on them near Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin. ¹⁵They turned aside there to go in to lodge in Gibeah. And when he went in, he sat down in the open square of the city, for no one would take them into his house to spend the night.

¹⁶Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening, who also was from the mountains of Ephraim; he was staying in Gibeah, whereas the men of the place were Benjamites. ¹⁷And when he raised his eyes, he saw the traveler in the open square of the city; and the old man said, “Where are you going, and where do you come from?”

¹⁸So he said to him, “We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim; I am from there. I went to Bethlehem in Judah; now I am going to the house of the LORD. But there is no one who will take me into his house, ¹⁹although we have both straw and fodder for our donkeys, and bread and wine for myself, for your female servant, and for the young man who is with your servant; there is no lack of anything.”

²⁰And the old man said, “Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility; only do not spend the night in the open square.” ²¹So he brought him into his house, and gave fodder to the donkeys. And they washed their feet, and ate and drank.

We will not rehearse in detail what happened to this traveler that night in Gibeah, but the crimes committed were aggravated because they were shown to have been a failure of the town to extend hospitality to them. The inhabitants duplicated the sins of Sodom recorded in Genesis 19. This event shows that Benjamin, a tribe of Israel, had become as wicked and deserving of judgment as had Sodom.

One reason that I brought this matter up is to address how some, who try to legitimize homosexual behavior, claim that the Bible does not teach against the behavior. We argue that the Bible clearly records that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah because of their great sexual sin. This is recorded in Genesis 18. How do those who argue the Bible does not forbid homosexual behavior justify their belief and practice? They say, “God did not judge or condemn Sodom and Gomorrah for sexual sin, and certainly not for homosexual behavior; rather, God judged those cities severely for having violated laws of hospitality.” This is a common argument that you will hear people claim who attempt to retain their Bibles but justify this behavior. No, this is illegitimate. The failure to provide hospitality was regarded as great sin, but the sin of sodomy was set forth as an abomination that warranted God’s wrath both upon Sodom, as well as upon Gibeah, which is recorded in the extended passage from which we just read.

Let us now give our attention to the next command in this list of 17 commandments.

8. ***“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them”*** (Rom. 12:14)

This is perhaps one of the hardest of commands for people, even Christian people, to put into practice. The natural response is to ***curse*** them. I suspect the common “Christian” response is to ***remain silent***. But the response of a true disciple of Jesus Christ, who is thinking rightly and reacting rightly, is to ***bless those*** who persecute you, to speak kindly to them and of them. **John Calvin** wrote,

I have said that this is more difficult than to let go revenge when anyone is injured; for though some restrain their hands and are not led away by the passion of doing harm, they yet wish that

some calamity or loss would in some way happen to their enemies; and even when they are so pacified that they wish no evil, there is yet hardly one in a hundred who wishes well to him from whom he has received an injury; nay, most men daringly burst forth into imprecations. But God by His Word not only restrains our hands from doing evil, but also subdues the bitter feelings within; and not only so, but He would have us be solicitous for the well-being of those who unjustly trouble us and seek our destruction.⁴

We are instructed to “*Bless those who persecute* you. “Persecute” carries the idea of being the object of someone’s deliberate and personal attack. It is suggested by the verbal response that it is verbal persecution that is being addressed. Persecution implies unjust charges or accusations, malicious and damaging words, that another levels against another. When people persecute us we feel that we are being unjustly treated. It is easy to feel a sense of righteous anger toward the persecutor, for we desire that others treat us justly, not unkindly. We can easily justify our retaliation of a sharply worded verbal response, which is cutting and demeaning to the other person. But the Christian is not to react in this manner. He is to bless the one who persecutes him.

God often draws people to Himself through bringing them into conflict with His people. God bids one to abuse us, or persecute us. Our response to that abuse should be a vivid demonstration of the reality of God in our lives. Maybe God has bidden someone to abuse you so that He might win that one through your godly response to him. If we recognize and acknowledge that God in His sovereign rule has caused someone to persecute us, we will be better able to submit to God’s dealings with us and will be better able to respond in the manner that God would have us do. Remember how **King David** responded to the one who persecuted him?

Now when King David came to Bahurim, there was a man from the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei the son of Gera, coming from there. He came out, cursing continuously as he came. ⁶And he threw stones at David and at all the servants of King David. And all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left. ⁷Also Shimei said thus when he cursed: “Come out! Come out! You bloodthirsty man, you rogue! ⁸The LORD has brought upon you all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose place you have reigned; and the LORD has delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom your son. So now you are caught in your own evil, because you are a bloodthirsty man!”

⁹Then Abishai the son of Zeruiah said to the king, “Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? Please, let me go over and take off his head!”

¹⁰But the king said, “What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, ‘Curse David.’ Who then shall say, ‘Why have you done so?’?”

¹¹And David said to Abishai and all his servants, “See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjamite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him. ¹²It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day.” ¹³And as David and his men went along the road, Shimei went along the hillside opposite him and cursed as he went, threw stones at him and kicked up dust. ¹⁴Now the king and all the people who were with him became weary; so they refreshed themselves there. (2 Sam. 16:5-14)

We are commanded to respond to such a one with “blessing.” What is implied by “blessing”? Let us consider several ways in which blessing another is described in Scripture. First, **when we bless God**, we are ascribing praise to God for who He is or for what He has done. Thanksgiving to God is suggested in the idea of “blessing God.” We read of Zechariah, upon the birth of his son, John the Baptist, and upon the restoration of his voice, expressed:

⁴ William Hendriksen, *Romans* New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1981), p. 417.

And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, **blessing** God. ⁶⁵And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea, ⁶⁶and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, “What then will this child be?” For the hand of the Lord was with him. ⁶⁷And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, ⁶⁸“**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel**, for he has visited and redeemed his people...” (Luke 1:64-68)

Second, when we read in the Scriptures of **God blessing people**, He is bestowing His goodness upon them; He gives them blessing. In Matthew 25 we read of the granting of eternal life to His people. Jesus said that one day “the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you **who are blessed by my Father**, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’” (Matt. 25:34). And Peter described how God had blessed the Jews in sending Jesus to be their Savior: “God, having raised up His Servant, sent Him to you first, **to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness**” (Acts 3:26). Both of these ideas, first, of our blessing (praising) God and second, God bestowing blessing on us, is found in Ephesians 1:3: “**Blessed** be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **who has blessed us** in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Here we read of Paul praising God for having bestowed His grace upon His people through Jesus Christ.

What is meant when **we are to bless one who persecutes us**? When we bless others, we are desiring, seeking, even asking for God’s blessing upon them. Hebrews 11:20 reads, “By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau”; that is, Isaac desired and pronounced God’s blessing upon his sons. And so, when we are told to “**bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them,**” we are to desire that God would be merciful and gracious to them. Even though they desire evil for us, we are to desire good for them.

Of course in reading this command in Romans 12, we are mindful of our Lord’s teaching in Luke 6:27 and 28: “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸**bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.**” What is suggested here is that one in which we may love our enemies is to bless them even while they are cursing us.

When we are instructed to bless and not to curse, it means that we are not to be doing both. James wrote similarly,

²For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. ¹¹Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? ¹²Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. ¹⁵This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. (James 3:2-14)

It is a soft and meek spirit that reveals the true Christian. It is a hard, retaliating spirit that perhaps betrays a hypocrite, who is no true Christian. Refusing to bless when persecuted would usually be due to anger, and unrighteous anger is not Christian behavior. I recalled **Charles Spurgeon** describing supposed converts who were actually unconverted. In his book, *The Soulwinner*, he was describing those who appear to be saved but in time show themselves to have been unsaved. Here are his words:

Another proof of the conquest of a soul for Christ will be found in a real change of life. If the man does not live differently from what he did before, both at home and abroad, his repentance needs to be repented of; and his conversion is a fiction. Not only action and language, but spirit and temper must be changed. "But," says someone, "grace is often grafted on a crab-stock." I know it is; but what is the fruit of the grafting? The fruit will be like the graft, and not after the nature of the original stem. "But," says another, "I have an awful temper, and all of a sudden it overcomes me. My anger is soon over, and I feel very penitent. Though I cannot control myself; I am quite sure I am a Christian." Not so fast, my friend, or I may answer that I am quite as sure the other way. What is the use of your soon cooling if in two or three moments you scald all around you? If a man stabs me in a fury, it will not heal my wound to see him grieving over his madness. Hasty temper must be conquered, and the whole man must be renewed, or conversion will be questionable. We are not to hold up a modified holiness before our people, and say, You will be all right if you reach that standard. The Scripture says, "He that committeth sin is of the devil." Abiding under the power of any known sin is a mark of our being the servants of sin, for "his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Idle are the boasts of a man who harbours within himself the love of any transgression. He may feel what he likes, and believe what he likes, he is still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity while a single sin rules his heart and life. True regeneration implants a hatred of all evil; and where one sin is delighted in, the evidence is fatal to a sound hope. A man need not take a dozen poisons to destroy his life, one is quite sufficient.⁵

When God has dealt with us according to His abundant mercies and not according to our sins, then we will tend to relate to others by extending them mercy and not dealing with them according to their sins. May our Lord help us to be a blessing-bestowing people.

9. "***Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.***" (Rom. 12:15)

We may look at these commands and assume that they are not that difficult to perform, but this is not necessarily the case. The unbeliever is often characterized with attitudes that are not conducive to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Fallen man is characteristically envious, even jealous of others' good or benefit. We envy those who rejoice rather than rejoice with those who rejoice. This was illustrated this week in sports talk radio. Through polling of sports' fans across the country Tom Brady was declared to be the most hated quarterback in the country. The local sports broadcasters were attempting to explain why this was the case. They all seemed to be in agreement that this hatred is because people are jealous of him for what he is and for what he has. He is an elite quarterback, has three Superbowl rings, is good looking, has a supermodel for a wife, is wealthy, and has good looking kids. "He has everything that one could possibly want!" Or at least that is the assessment of these sports broadcasters. Of course we know that without Jesus Christ all that Tom Brady is and has amounts to less than nothing. For we think in terms as the Lord Jesus taught, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Our hearts resonate with the sons of Korah, "For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness" (Psa. 84:10). And so, it is not all that common

⁵ Charles Spurgeon, *The Soulwinner* (Eerdmans, 1974), pp. 36f.

for people “to rejoice with those who rejoice.” Some Christians struggle with this. They have feelings of envy and jealousy well up with them when they see what others have or of what others do not have to deal with. As result they fail to rejoice with them that rejoice. This command is a fitting one and perhaps for many a very important one. **Rejoice with those who rejoice.**

But we are also to **weep with those who weep.** This too, is not necessarily something we tend to do. Rather, than weep with those who weep, often times fallen people delight in the calamity that befalls others.

The point of the exhortation is that we are to enter into this rejoicing as if the occasion for it were our own. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, if we appreciate the community within the body of Christ, the joys of others will be ours (cf. 1 Cor. 12:26b). This mutuality is not native to us. Jealousy and envy, hatred and malice are our native bents (cf. Gal. 3:20, 21; Tit. 3:13) and this exhortation, as much as any in this catalogue of virtues, demonstrates the transformation (cf. vs. 2) that must be wrought in those who are “one body in Christ.”⁶

We may secretly rejoice in the downfall of another. We do not care for their well-being. Or, perhaps we do not rejoice in their difficulty, but we do not sympathize with them either.

The fact that these two commands are set side by side, “**Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep**”, may suggest that there is a time for both, even a fitting time for one or the other. If this is so, then the assessment of “the Preacher” may come to mind:

To everything *there is* a season,
A time for every purpose under heaven:

²A time to be born,
And a time to die;
A time to plant,
And a time to pluck *what is* planted;
³A time to kill,
And a time to heal;
A time to break down,
And a time to build up;
⁴A time to weep,
And a time to laugh;
A time to mourn,
And a time to dance;

What is the point that is being emphasized in Romans 12:16? It is this, we should be mindful of what other are going through and we should desire there good and stand alongside them, rejoicing with them in their time of blessing, but sympathizing and standing with them in times of struggle, heartache, and loss.

That this is the emphasis can be determined may be supported by the command that follows:

10. “**Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.**” (Rom. 12:16)

The first command in this verse may be directed by Paul because he has in mind the differing groups of Jews and Gentile within the one church at Rome. But in order for the first command of this

⁶ John Murray, *Romans*, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1965), p. 134.

verse to be obeyed, the second command must be obeyed also, perhaps even obeyed first of all. “Do not be haughty” speaks of not being “proud.” Only associating with the more popular or more respected persons in the church is wrong. We should purpose to associate with the lowly.

Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly,
Than to divide the spoil with the proud. (Prov. 16:19)

We should desire and delight in the associating with “the lowly” for their setting and situation probably resonates much more with what we are to be as Christians than to those who are “higher” in stature or reputation. Are the lowly poor? Are the lowly needy? Are the lowly humble? Are the lowly marginalized and dismissed by others? They in a measure experience physically what we are to be like spiritually. Did not our Lord say:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁴Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.
⁵Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth. (Matt. 5:3-5)

The third of these commands in Romans 12:16 reads, “*Never be wise in your own sight.*” This goes hand-in-hand with the previous command, “*Do not be haughty.*” We foolishly think that if good comes to us it is because we deserved it for we earned it. “By my own wit and brawn I am a self-made man.” The king of Assyria thought that he was the cause of his own success. But it was God that had used the King of Assyria as His rod of judgment upon Israel. But the king of Assyria, although an instrument of God in His sovereign dealings in history, had no understanding he was but an instrument of God. He boasted in his achievements as though it had been through his own wisdom and might that he had successfully conquered the nations that had become subservient to him. God, therefore, pronounced His judgment upon the king of Assyria for His arrogance and His cruelty. This is set before us in **Isaiah 10:5-11**.

⁵“Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger
And the staff in whose hand is My indignation.
⁶I will send him against an ungodly nation,
And against the people of My wrath
I will give him charge,
To seize the spoil, to take the prey,
And to tread them down like the mire of the streets.
⁷Yet he does not mean so,
Nor does his heart think so;
But it is in his heart to destroy,
And cut off not a few nations.
⁸For he says,
‘Are not my princes altogether kings?
⁹Is not Calno like Carchemish?
Is not Hamath like Arpad?
Is not Samaria like Damascus?
¹⁰As my hand has found the kingdoms of the idols,
Whose carved images excelled those of Jerusalem and Samaria,

¹¹As I have done to Samaria and her idols,
Shall I not do also to Jerusalem and her idols?'"

Romans 12:9-16 have centered primarily (but not exclusively) on relationships between believers.⁷ But with verses 17 through 21 Paul addresses the response that Christians should give to unbelievers who persecute them. These commands instruct us on how to relate to non-Christians with whom we are having conflict. The major principle put forward is that we are not to treat them as they have treated us, that we are to overcome evil by doing good.

Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ. (2 Thess. 3:5)

⁷ Thomas Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Academic, 1998), p. 671.