



A Living Sacrifice: Part 4

Romans 12:14-21

Main Idea: In the grace God gives, the Lord calls believers to live their lives to reflect and to share God's grace with one another.

In this section of the letter to the church in Rome, the Lord revealed some incredibly important heart attitudes and faith-driven actions that he desires in the lives of his children – the church. Last week we examined the heart attitudes that underlie and produce faith-driven action in a believer's life, such as humility before the Lord; thoughtfulness for the Lord; responsibility to the Lord; and dependence on the Lord. This week, we'll examine the faith-driven action that the Lord calls us to live out in order to reflect him and to share his grace with others. As you study God's Word, allow the Holy Spirit through the living Word of God to shine his light of truth into your heart, asking him to reveal and to adjust your actions in alignment to his will for your life in Christ. Below are some important faith-driven actions of a life that's a living sacrifice in service to the Lord.

Treat enemies in a way that reflects your faith and displays God's grace (14-21).

- *Bless those who persecute you (14).*
- *Never return evil with evil (17, 19).*
- *Overcome evil with good (20-21).*

How we view and treat others reveals a lot about our faith. Even the best of relationships are often strained with the stresses of life, conflicts of interests, and sins in and around us. From Judas' betrayal to Peter's denial to most of his disciples distancing themselves from



him in the final hours before his death, Jesus dealt with the strains on relationships even within his group of disciples. Outside of this group, Jesus faced the real force of his enemies as well! Yet, he never returned a hit with a hit. He never returned a curse with a curse. Instead, he entrusted himself to the Father, and he prayed for his enemies, asking for God's forgiveness rather than his judgment for those who persecuted him. The Lord, through the apostle Paul, reminds us that Christ's example is the example we follow by faith! One of the themes in these verses is our actions in relationship to our enemies, and in these cases, the Lord calls us to treat enemies in a way that reflects our faith and displays his grace. As Jesus commanded in the Sermon on the Mount, Paul reinforced that we are to bless those who persecute us. We shouldn't curse, pronouncing judgment and evil on others. We are to bless, calling for God's grace even where judgment is deserved. As with Jesus, we should never return evil with evil. Instead, we are to overcome evil with good, meeting the needs of even our enemies in order to hopefully bring conviction that will lead to repentance in their hearts.

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on "persecute" in verse 14. Based on the range of meaning of this word, what are some ways that you've experienced persecution for your faith? Did you want to bless or curse the person(s) who hurt you?
2. How can you bless an enemy or someone who has persecuted you? Thinking back to the examples you discussed in question 1, what are some practical ways to bless someone?
3. Have you ever returned evil for evil? Why would God command us not to respond with evil?
4. Verse 20 is a quote, so use the cross-references in the BlueLetterBible app to find out where this verse comes from in



Scripture. Why does the Lord call us to meet the basic needs of our enemies? What does it mean that doing this heaps burning coals on someone's head?

Treat others in a way that reflects your faith and displays God's grace (14-21).

- *Share each other's joys and bear each other's burdens (15).*
- *Seek unity in your relationships with other believers (16).*
- *Pursue peace in your relationship with all people (18).*

In addition to dealing with our actions in relationship to enemies, the Lord also gave us instruction in verses 14-21 for our actions in relationship to others, both those outside of the church and within the church. As these verses intermingle, the Lord's purpose is clear. Our purpose as witnesses for Jesus Christ remains the same regardless of the actions of those around us and the circumstances of our situations. Just as we bless our enemies, we should also share each other's joys and bear each other's burdens. Verse 15 provides a beautiful picture of relationships in the church, which are reinforced in many other verses in Scripture. At times of joy and times of difficulty and sorrow, believers have a great opportunity to come alongside one another to reflect and to share God's grace. In fact, God's desire in the church is that relationships between his children would be harmonious. The word picture in this translation of verse 16 is that of harmony, but the literal translation is closer to "be of the same mind [with] one another." As such, believers must seek unity in their relationships with other believers, but that desire for healthy relationships with others doesn't stop within the church. Rather, in verse 18, the Lord called his people to pursue peace in their relationships with all people. While relationship takes two, the Lord



demands that his people do their part, both in terms of relationships with each other as well as with those outside of the church. In all cases, we must treat others in a way that reflects our faith and displays God's grace.

1. What are some joys in your life right now? Share, and together thank the Lord for these graces in your lives.
2. What are some burdens in your life right now? Share, and together encourage one another in the grace of God in your lives.
3. Are you of the same mind with your brothers and sisters in Christ in your church? What does that mean? How do you pursue this? What do you do when there are disagreements over points of doctrine or preferences in practice at your church?
4. How do you pursue peace with all people? What's your responsibility in the effort to do this? Is there someone you need to pursue peace with? How can you pray for them and for yourself? What can you do this week to pursue peace with that individual?