

Sermon #137 — Romans Series

Title: **“HEAP COALS OF FIRE ON HIS HEAD”**

Text: *Romans 12:14-21*

Subject: *You and Your Enemies*

Date: Sunday Morning — December 3, 2017

Reading: *Proverbs 25:1-28*

(Proverbs 25:1-26) “These *are* also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. (2) *It is* the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings *is* to search out a matter. (3) The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings *is* unsearchable. (4) Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. (5) Take away the wicked *from* before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness. (6) Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great *men*: (7) For better *it is* that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen. (8) Go not forth hastily to strive, lest *thou know not* what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath

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put thee to shame. (9) Debate thy cause with thy neighbour *himself*; and discover not a secret to another: (10) Lest he that heareth *it* put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away. (11) A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver. (12) As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, *so is* a wise reprover upon an obedient ear. (13) As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, *so is* a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters. (14) Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift *is like* clouds and wind without rain. (15) By long forbearing is a prince persuaded, and a soft tongue breaketh the bone. (16) Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee, lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it. (17) Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house; lest he be weary of thee, and *so* hate thee. (18) A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour *is* a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow. (19) Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble *is like* a broken tooth, and a foot

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out of joint. (20) *As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.* (21) *If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:* (22) *For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.* (23) *The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.* (24) *It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman and in a wide house.* (25) *As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.* (26) *A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring.* (27) *It is not good to eat much honey: so for men to search their own glory is not glory.* (28) *He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”*

INTRODUCTION

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How do you deal with your enemies? I mean those people who oppose you, injure you, seek to harm you, and speak and do evil against you. Your enemies — Those people who hate you, hate your God, hate your gospel, and hate you because of the gospel you believe. How do you deal with them? How do you think of them? How do you treat them? More importantly, how should we deal with our enemies? If you will open your Bible to the 12th chapter of the Gospel of Romans, I will show you what God says about this matter.

In the first 13 verses of this chapter, the Apostle Paul tells us how we are to deal with our brethren, God’s people, his church. Giving our bodies as a living sacrifice to God means that we are to devote lives to the service of God’s church, serving in every way we can the temporal and everlasting good of our brethren.

Proposition: In verses 14-21, the Apostle tells us that, giving our bodies as a living sacrifice to Christ

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means devoting lives to the temporal and everlasting good of our enemies, too.

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

That’s the basis of everything Paul says in this chapter.

Now, let’s pick up in verse 14. **In this part of the chapter, the Spirit of God teaches us, as much as possible, to treat our enemies as our brethren. — After all, some of them are!**

(Romans 12:14) **“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.”** — Our Savior fed the

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multitudes, healed their sick, and attended their weddings and, when invited, even went to their dinner parties, though he had nothing in common with them except humanity.

- He **came to** many who received him not, that he might come to some he would cause to receive him.
- He **fed** multitudes who wanted nothing but what he gave them to eat, that he might feed some with the bread of heaven.
- He **healed many lepers** who never believed him, that he might cause one to return to him with deep gratitude and worship him.
- He **wept** over multitudes who would not weep for themselves, that he might cause some to weep for him whom they had pierced.
- He **prayed** for those who crucified him.
- He **died for** many who were his tormenters and murderers.

Shall I do less?

- He died for me when I despised him.

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- He prayed for me when I cursed him.
- He provided for me when I blasphemed him.
- He protected me when I had no regard for him.
- He redeemed me when would not have him.
- He sought me when I refused to seek him.
- He called me when I was determined not to call upon him.
- Shall I do less for you?

(Romans 12:15) **“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”** — Don’t be a wet blanket on their joys. If they have cause for rejoicing, join in it. Help them to sing their songs of joy. And weep with them that weep. sympathize with mourners. Take a share of their burden. I really believe that it is easier to weep with them that weep than it is to rejoice with them that rejoice; for this old flesh of ours begins to envy those who rejoice. But it does not so much object to sympathizing with those that sorrow. Carry out both commands. — *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice. Weep with them that weep.”*

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(Romans 12:16) **“Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.”** — Whenever possible, agree even with the basest of men. I mean by that, be peaceable, not argumentive. — *“The servant of the Lord must not strive.”* I see no reason to argue with man on the brink of hell about politics, science, history, or much else. Wouldn't it be better to talk to him about Christ, redemption, grace, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life?

- Don't seek high things or high company.
- Make it your business to help, encourage, and befriend those others choose to ignore.
- Stop looking upon yourself as wise and meaningful above others, as righteous and good above others, and as superior to others.

(Romans 12:17) **“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”**

— Never avenge yourself, by word, or deed, or

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influence. Rather, be studiously thoughtful in seeking to treat people right, with care, gentleness, and kindness, especially those who do you wrong.

(Romans 12:18) **“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.”** — Do the best you can to get along with people, even people who are cranky and disagreeable, even wicked men and women who are cranky and disagreeable.

(Romans 12:19) **“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”** — Leave wrath and judgment in God’s hands!

(Romans 12:20) **“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”** — Paul is not here undoing all that he has taught us here and all that he teaches about kindness, love, tenderness, and generosity throughout his epistles.

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He is not telling us to be nice to people because that will make hell hotter for them, as if such a cruel desire is commendable. — It isn't!

PAUL'S DOCTRINE

What, then, is Paul telling us? He takes his words in verse 20 directly from Proverbs 25, where the wise man Solomon, who was an eminent type of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, teaches us how to live as wise men and women in godliness.

CHRIST THE COALHEAVER

(Proverbs 25:21-22) “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: (22) For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.”

What a strange word of wisdom! Feed our enemies? Give water to those who hate us? **This doctrine is**

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not from below, but from above! This is the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of God’s free grace, heaven’s divine formula that transforms the believer’s most implacable enemies into his most faithful friends and trusted allies.

COALS OF GRACE

These coals of fire are not coals of judgment, but coals of grace, by which the hearts of our enemies are melted and won over.

Our Savior preached this doctrine with great clarity in his **Sermon on the Mount**. In that notable message, he said...

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

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Nothing is more grueling to our flesh than the exercise of kindness and love toward those who hate us. But if we would honor our Savior and subdue our enemies we dare not resort to the sinful practice of revenge. **We must conquer the hearts of our enemies the same way that Christ conquered our hateful hearts — by relentlessly heaving the coals of unmerited grace upon their wicked heads.**

The apostle Paul knew all about these coals of grace. He says to us...

“Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not...Recompense to no man evil for evil...Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

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A mighty king may very well use angry force to subjugate his enemies. Yet, though they be successfully subdued, they will never love him or serve him with willing and happy hearts. **Willing service, heart commitment, and life-loyalty can only be enforced by grace, mercy, and love.**

The Lord Jesus Christ does not win sinners to himself with threats of punishment or promises of reward. — He wins sinners to himself by his free grace (John 16:7-11; Zechariah 12:10; 13:1).

- He turns bitter enemies into beloved friends by his grace!
- He converts hardhearted adversaries into faithful disciples by his grace!
- He causes rebels to stack arms and surrender their hearts to him, not with brute force and overwhelming power, but with tender, irresistible love and grace!

Not only is he the indisputable Master of the

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universe and the sovereign Master of the hearts of men — **he is the Master Coalheaver!** With the gospel shovel in his hands, he sovereignly heaves the covenant coals of free grace onto the heads of his enemies, and in so doing, he melts their hearts of stone into soft, pliable, elastic masses of wax — putty in the hands of the Master!

CALVARY’S COALS

No chosen, redeemed sinner can successfully withstand the melting effects of Calvary’s coals. When the coals of **effectual blood redemption**, **free forgiveness**, and **perfect righteousness** begin to stack up on the sinner’s depraved heart, coal upon coal and ember upon ember, and the heat of Christ’s indescribable, infinite love grows warmer and warmer, that unbreakable, **adamant heart of stone** (Ezekiel 3:9; Zechariah 7:12) is eventually smitten, smelted, and effectually liquefied into a puddle of gratitude and love for the crucified Coalheaver.

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Illustration: *Adamant Dissolved by Kids Blood*

That’s what Paul tells us to do to our enemies.

Heap upon them coals of heart-melting fire, mercy, love, and grace, kindness, tenderness, and love. Thereby, “*God may, peradventure, grant them repentance.*”

- Tell them about Christ and his salvation.
- Treat them graciously.
- The one whose wrath you meet with heaping coals of grace just might be one of God’s elect.
- If he is not, you will have lost nothing.

(Romans 12:21) “**Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**” — Overcome the evil actions and attitudes of wicked men by the goodness and mercy of God you’ve experienced. Maybe God’s goodness and mercy will bless it to them and lead them to repentance too. — “*And the LORD shall reward thee.*”

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(1 Thessalonians 2:19) “For what *is* our **hope**, or **joy**, or **crown** of **rejoicing**? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?”

(Romans 12:1-2) “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

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Amen.