

## Romans #27 - Rebels With A Cause Trade Good For Evil

- Well, let me just start by saying, I really love you and it's such an honor to see you, and it is such a great section of God's word that we have for us today. If you're new, we're in a book of the Bible called Romans, one of the most amazing significant books ever written in the history of the world. And we find ourselves in chapter 12, we're taking about a year just going through this book of the Bible, we're gonna continue all summer, I'll be in this book, finishing it up in June and July preaching pretty much all the services live. We're just gonna keep going forward, but the big idea in Romans is chapter one through 11 is about our relationship with God and how God loves us and brings us into a relationship with Him through Jesus Christ. And then chapters 12 through 16, where we find ourselves is largely about our relationship with one another and how God's love flows through us to others to be God's church family. And so this sermon is gonna be a little bit different, I'm gonna sit down, this is gonna be what we would call at the Driscoll house, a family meeting. So we've got five kids, Grace and I do, and oftentimes we would call a family meeting and the kids would call upstairs, "Family meeting, everybody come downstairs." And that meant we were all gonna talk about something that was important for the health and the well-being of our family. So the kids would sit on the couch and I would sit in the daddy chair and would have the family meeting. And this text that we find ourselves in, in Romans chapter 12, it's a family meeting text. And the question is, all right, father, what kind of family do you want us to be? You are God's people, this is God's house, and God is a father in this text is a family meeting and it is our Heavenly Father telling us as His children, how He wants His family to operate. And the timing of this is really incredible. I was thinking about it this week, it was one year ago this week, our church was still closed, which was kind of unbelievable. And I would encourage you to be praying for other churches and ministries that are still closed and or throttled. It's quite amazing that we've been open for a year and some still aren't open. This last week, I took a mission trip to a foreign country, an international mission trip to a place called California. And when I landed in California, it was in and around San Francisco, San Jose, San crazy, all in that region right there, and I was teaching at a pastors conference and a lot of the churches are still throttled and closed. I was talking to one woman, she's a Hispanic leader at an urban church in LA and she said that they'd been closed now for 57 weekends in a row that their church was closed. And so we're just very blessed to be open, and I told them when I started teaching, I said, "I just flew in from America and I bring you greetings." And so you laugh, they didn't, so thank you. And so where we're at is since we've reopened, God's done supernatural things, it's been incredible. And the average church is running about 36%, one in five, 20% is at risk of dying and closing. We've doubled in the last year, we've just seen an incredible outpouring of God's grace, we're nearing 300 baptisms of new Christians just since we've started the book of Romans, it's been a really incredible supernatural season that we praise God for. And what that means, however, is that many, if not, most of you are brand new and we love you, we're glad to have you. And then the question is, as we get to know one another and we do life together, what kind of church family are we going to be? And that's the heart of what's going on in Romans 12:9-21. And these principles will get tested and tried under two circumstances, either difficult seasons or in the context of difficult

relationships, and those invariably happen. And there will be times that you're going to be offended or hurt or something that you don't like will be said or done and these principles will be tested and or you will take up offense for someone who has some sort of concern or problem or pain. And God never has anything good to say about taking up an offense. If you take up an offense, you're actually in sin and what this is is that someone has a problem and you join them, making it a bigger problem. That's what taking up an offense is. I don't have a problem that they do, so I'm going to now double the problem, which is not part of the solution. And so these principles are gonna get tested and tried in difficult relationships and difficult seasons, especially when you feel offended or you're tempted to pick up an offense for someone else. And so we're gonna read it all and then I'm gonna unpack it all. And in seminary and Bible college, they tell you that the best sermon has three points, this one has 17. Okay, so I'm a union preacher, I get paid by the point, okay? So this is gonna be a while, all right? So Romans 12:9-21, it's about rebels with a cause trade evil, good rather for evil, in a world filled with evil, we've got an opportunity to do a lot of good. Let love be genuine, abhor or hate. What is evil? Hold fast to what is good, love one another with brotherly affection, outdo one another in showing honor, do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. It's like a series of proverbs, contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them, rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another, do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight, repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all if possible. So far as it depends on you live peaceably with all. Beloved, you are loved of God, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written, Deuteronomy 32:35, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, when he's gonna quote Proverbs, if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink, for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head. And here's the summary statement for the whole section, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good, overcome evil with good." So 17 things and the Holy Spirit, I hope and pray would highlight for you at least one thing, maybe multiple things that would be your application and have great implications for your life. So He starts with love, that's always the best place to start and everything else is pretty much just different aspects and applications of love. So He says, let love be genuine, and so what He's doing here, He's comparing and contrasting love that is genuine and love that is disingenuous. Okay, now there are people who will say and do things that look loving, but they're really manipulating and controlling and they're seeking not to do what is in your best interest, but to gain your trust so that they can take advantage of you and do what is in their best interest. If you don't know what this is like, ask a single woman. This is her whole life, right? A lot of guys say, "Hey, you're great, "you're amazing, I think a lot of you, you're pretty, you're smart." And you're like, "You're manipulative, and I know what you're trying to do and it's naughty, and so go home." So these are people who they're not seeking your best interests, but they're seeking to earn your trust so they can manipulate you for their best interest, it's disingenuous love. Sometimes this is through flattery. The Bible talks about the flatterer, they come to tell you how great you are, so that then they can manipulate you for their ends. And perhaps the worst disingenuous love of all is the disingenuous love of religious people. Religious people will say religious words that sound

loving and do religious deeds that look loving, but like Jesus said, "Some people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. That man looks at the outward God sees the heart." These are the people who've you've never met, and they're like, "All right brother, sister, hallelujah, praise the Lord, I was praying for you, I feel like I got a word for you." I have a word too, discernment, so I don't trust you, right? And let me give you the quintessential example of this. So on the night that Jesus was approaching his death on the cross in our place for our sins. He's up all night, He's anxious, He's sweating like drops of blood. His disciples fail Him, they fall asleep, they don't stay awake and pray for Him. If you were standing at a distance, however, you would see one disciple approaching Him. Who was that? Judas Iscariot. And you might think, oh, it's very loving, everyone else has abandoned Jesus and one is pursuing Him. And then you would see Judas approach Jesus and greet Him with a kiss. This is like our knuckles or bro hug or firm handshake, this was a welcome greeting, a warm greeting in their culture. And you would think, oh my goodness, Judas, He's the one who really loves Jesus. He is approaching Him and he greets Him as a friend, and he's there for Jesus when no one else is there with Jesus but his love is not genuine. He's there to betray Jesus, he's there to destroy Jesus, he is there to assault Jesus. But it would have looked outwardly like he was loving, but inwardly, it was gutting, that's what he was doing. Be very wary of people who start very quickly with intense passion, affection, devotion, love, and expectation. Oftentimes their hearts are not in the same place that their words or their deeds would indicate. And love is this, love is doing what is in the best interest of someone else, even if it is at your own expense. And so love is one way grace and love is sometimes what we feel, but it's always what we do, love is sometimes an emotion, but it's always an action. That's why Jesus says we can love our enemies. How many of you don't feel like loving your enemies? We just don't, but we can override our feelings with obedience of the will, and that's ultimately what love is. Love is doing what God says even when you're not feeling what God says. The second he moves on toward then his discernment. And he says it this way, "Abhor or detest, or hate some of your translations will say, what is evil hold fast to what is good." And so He has two categories here, good and evil. Just so you know, America has lost these categories. Instead we have tolerance, not discernment, and we do not want to call things right and wrong, good and evil, black and white, truth and lies, that which is of the Lord and that which is against the Lord. But to be discerning, you need to say, there are things that are good and there are things that are evil and you need to be binary. I said it, binary in your categories because God is. If you don't have binary categories like good and evil, right and wrong, truth and lies, that which is holy and that which is unholy, you lack discernment, that means you're living in harm's way, you're a gullible, vulnerable person to evil. The key then is to figure out what does God determine is evil. And there is a list of things that God hates, and the word here for hate is very strong, and we tend to think of love and hatred as opposed to one another, they're actually aligned with one another. If you love someone or something, you hate that which threatens to destroy it. So if you love children, you hate predators, if you love life, you hate death, if you love the truth, you hate lies, if you love the holy spirit, you hate demonic spirits, if you love marriage, you hate adultery. To be for is also to be against that which is against what you are for. This is discernment, God gives us a list in Proverbs six of things he is against verses 16 through 19. There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him. I just think this is kind of interesting, He's like tell

them there are six things, make that seven. And you're like somebody somewhere did something and God's like put it on the list, that's crazy. And here are the things haughty or proud eyes, we can either look down on people or look up to God. If you look down on people, you have haughty eyes, if you look up to God, that's how you grow in humility. A lying tongue saying things that just aren't true, hands that shed innocent blood, you're attacking the wrong people or things. A heart, the devices, wicked plans, you're organizing and architecting to do harm, feet that haste to run to evil, some people they can't do wrong quickly enough, it's a priority for them. A false witness who breathes out lies, they're publicly saying things that are untrue, but they're very convincing because they're very deceptive. And lastly, He says in one who sows discord among the brothers. So if God hates pride, lying, bringing people together to architect plans to do harm, and then publicly causing division among God's people, what God loves must be humility where people tell the truth, they live together in unity and harmony and they make plans to do ministry, not cause misery. And so what He says is here are your options, pick what team you're on and you need to be discerning between the two. What undermines this in our culture is we have all been taught, not to practice discrimination, but the result is we also tend not to be discriminating. You should not practice discrimination toward people based upon their race or their class or the rest, ethnicity. But you need to be discriminating regarding people concerning their beliefs and behaviors. And the truth is we do this, this is why you can't smoke in a, excuse me, in a hospital. If you're in a hospital, you're like, I'm a smoker, like you can't do that indoor, are you discriminating? Yes, we are go outside and stay 10 feet away from the building. If you're drunk and you're at the bar and you grab your keys and the bartender grabs your keys from you and calls a cab for you, they are discriminating against you because to be for life is to be against drunk driving. This is why if you're registered convicted sex offender, and you try to get a job as an elementary school teacher, you will be declined because they are discriminating against the behavior that you have demonstrated. The point is that we do this all the time and that God does this and we need to think in God's categories, good and evil, right and wrong that which we receive and that which we reject. And then he proceeds forward to talk about affection, how to hold fast to what is good is to have affection toward that which is right and good. He says love one another with brotherly affection. When you're born, you're born into a family, when you're born again, you're born again into the family of God. True or false in your family you put up with stuff from relatives that you wouldn't from other people. That's why you're like, "Hey, if you didn't have my last name, I would not eat this turkey with you in November." What we tend to do with family is we tend to endure more out of brotherly affection or familial devotion. When you're born again, you tend to have more grace for God's people because you are now part of God's family. So He says brotherly affection. When He's talking with this brotherly affection is ultimately it's, God's love to us, and through us. The Bible says in 1 John 4, that God is love and it's not that we have loved God, but that God has loved us. And so, as God has loved us with a one way love, then God gives us that love to be devoted to one another with brotherly affection, to give that love of God through us, to them. Let me say the simplest way, perhaps to be devoted to one another in brotherly affection is something that we call being a burden lifter or not a burden giver, that we live in a world where there are a lot of burden givers, people are wanting to just dump their problems on you. A burden lifter is a person who comes along and says, how can I help? What do you need? How can I add value to your life? How can I be a blessing, an

encouragement, a burden lifter to you? That's really what being devoted to one another in brotherly affection is. I'm here to help carry your burdens, I'm here to help lift your burdens because I have love for you, and that love is the love that God has entrusted to me to share with you. He then goes on to talk about as well honor, something that Americans know nothing about. We just don't do honor, we do dishonor. All of us, our minor in college was dishonor, doesn't matter what you studied, your minor was dishonor, that we live in a world where we have the rebel always presented as the hero, that's all of our cultural narratives. Here's what he says in contrast, 'cause we're supposed to be a counter-cultural kingdom people. We're not supposed to be conformed to the pattern of this world He told us just previously, but transformed by the renewing of your mind. He says, "I'll do one another in showing honor." There are things in life that we sort of push one another toward. This can be workout partners at the gym, sort of pushing one another to greater levels of fitness. He says to outdo one another with honor, this is like coaching and encouraging one another up in honor. Now let me say this, that if you want blessing to come down, you need to send honor up. All of us want blessing to come, God bless me. Blessing comes down to those who send honor up. This is a principle of the Bible, that is not in our culture. One of the 10 commandments is about honor, it tells children to honor who? Their mother and father both not their mother or father. If you have kids, they're always trying to divide and conquer strategy, so you've gotta stay aligned as mom and dad. Honor your mother and father, and then Paul quotes that in the New Testament and he says, so that it may go well with you and you have a healthy, joyful, prosperous life on the earth. And he says it is the first commandment that comes with a blessing. What Paul is saying is if honor goes up, blessing comes down. If they child honors their parents and their Lord, blessing will come down from their Lord and their parents, it'll give them a better, longer, life, blessing. The principle is this, you cannot expect God to bless if you dishonor, God will only bless honor. Sometimes this means that we need to begin with our parenting teaching arts children to honor their mother and father, their mother and father honoring the Lord. That everyone should be under authority and should be honoring said authority. Now, sometimes there is someone occupying a position of authority, a teacher, a boss, a parent, whatever the case may be a spiritual leader, and we don't respect them. My military friends talk a lot about saluting the uniform. And the point is simply this, even if you don't truly deeply profoundly respect the person holding the uniform, you still honor the uniform because the majority of people who wear it are honorable. And if at some point you should be allowed to have a certain level of influence or leadership, you will want to be honored as well. And what happens is sometimes we dishonor and in so doing we saw the branch off that we're sitting on. So let's say for example, that there's a mother who trashes dad in front of the kids. What she's teaching them is we dishonor authority and leadership in this home. And then she's shocked that the children trash her while she is reaping what she has sowed, these are her disciples, she has trained them in dishonor, and our whole culture does this. We teach our citizens to dishonor law enforcement, we teach children to dishonor parents, we teach employees to dishonor employers. And then we wonder why we're not blessed, well, because God doesn't bless that. If you will honor your employer, you'll probably have a better career path. If you honor your parents, you'll probably have more freedom. What I always told our kids growing up, I said, the more responsible you are, the more freedom you get. If you will honor our authority in God's authority, we will give you more freedom. Our hope and goal is that you

would become a fully functioning adult and have total freedom, that's our end zone. But if you want more freedom, you need to demonstrate more honor, so we can give you more blessing. Now, this being said, this starts in our families and it extends to our work and our church. And I'll give you a bit of a shocking illustration, and I want us to be honoring of other churches and other pastors and other ministries. And as we are growing, and some churches are struggling, we want to be loving and serving and helping and praying. Some years ago, there was a conference that I had the honor of speaking at, it was the large national international pastors conference, I spoke out a few times and it was very tribal. And unfortunately, Christianity tends to be very tribal, here's our speakers, our schools, our books, our publishers, our translation of the Bible and then there's other people in other tribes and we're suspicious of them. And the truth is if we're all on team Jesus, we're in the same team. And so they invited in a tribal leader, a well-known pastor from another tribe, and it was very controversial, does he fit our doctrines? Is he safe? Is he a false teacher? We don't know him, should we associate with him? It had gotten a bit controversial on the day of the event, I don't remember if I was slated to speak that year or not, but on the day of the event, the invited guest pastor canceled. Called me, he said, I can't make the trip, I'm gonna need to do the event via video, I'm not gonna be able to travel. And this was many years ago, today we've all accepted Zoom in our heart, we're all used to video, it's not a big thing, but in that day it was a big thing. Well, an eruption in Zoom, and there was impugning of motive, "Oh, he's too good for us, we're not even a big enough event to get on a plane for." Other young arrogant guys, and those are synonyms, young arrogant guys, were like, "Well, he's a false teacher, he's afraid to show his face in the room with us, he knows we're gonna judge him, we're gonna hold them accountable, we're gonna point out is false teaching." It just got really ugly. And so then the pastor did their main session via video, they did a great job. I know the event leaders, and I know the pastor, they're all friends of mine, and I knew what was going on behind the scenes, and I didn't say anything 'cause it wasn't my place. Some years later, the pastor's son killed himself, committed suicide. The pastor and his wife were very public saying that their son had struggled with mental illness, depression, and suicidal thoughts since he was a little boy. And so the pastor said that there were times that he was scheduled to get on a plane and go speak at an event that he would cancel last minute because his son was having a difficult day that he was literally on suicide watch. And he couldn't bear the thought of being at a conference and getting a call that his son had killed himself, if he had left the side of his son. Now, I knew this man, and I knew that that's why he didn't come. So I talked to one of my, at the time, associates, somebody, I knew a bit who kind of led the pajama hot gear opposition and he was the one who sort of got the pitchforks and let the torches and found the dead cats to swing by the tail and filled the box with a rotten tomatoes to throw, he was that guy. And I asked him, I said, now that you know that you are completely wrong and you were all completely wrong, how do you feel? And he said, I'll never forget, he said, "Well, he should have told us what was going on." I said, "No, his son has mental illness, he's struggling with depression and suicide, to invite the universe into that could potentially push him over the edge. I said, "This man is a public figure, but he and his family have a right to privacy." I said, furthermore, I said, "Do you tell the universe what's going on in your family?" I said, "Is there anybody in your family that has mental illness or depression, anybody struggling?" I said, "How's the sex life between you and your wife?" I said, "'Cause maybe people need to know

about that." He said, "Hey, that's personal." I said, "Yeah, a lot of things are." I said, "And what you should have done is honored him. Just assume that he loves the Lord, and he's a brother, and maybe there's things you don't know because it's not your business." There's a difference between secrecy and privacy. Secrecy is where we're covering something up, privacy is it's none of your business. I said, "The mental health of his son is not your business." I asked this guy said, "Are you gonna apologize?" He said, "Yeah, I'll send them a private apology." I said, "But it was a public attack, that's not honorable." See we live in this day when the best way to get attention is either to do something or someone who has. And the latter is not honorable in the sight of God. What Paul is saying here is this, seek to outdo one another in honor. What this means is husbands let's honor our wives, wives let's honor our husbands, children let's honor our parents, employees let's honor our employers, Christians let's honor spiritual leaders and Bible teachers. And I'm not just saying for myself, but anyone and everyone. There's enough division in the world, there needs to be unity in the church.

- [Congregation] Amen.

- And the truth is that when things happen, we can be conformed to the pattern of the world, meaning we just pull hell in here or we're transformed by the renewing of our minds, and we invite the kingdom down here so that we can live in a little different environment as God's people, and then bring that to the world that there is hope of a better way and His name is Jesus Christ. He then continues to talk about zeal, He says, do not be slothful in zeal, but in fervency, in spirit, serve the Lord. What He's talking about as being self-motivated to serve and do ministry. That many of you are new, we love you, we wanna find a place for you to do meaningful ministry, but the key is this, when you serve, you serve the Lord, that's what He says. If you're serving anyone or anything other than the Lord, eventually you're gonna get very bitter. You're gonna say, "I did so much, and you didn't say thank you, I did so much, and you didn't honor me." The truth is if you're serving the Lord, He knows and He rewards and He honors, and so others don't need to. And when He talks about zeal, the truth is, let me just ask you a question, culturally speaking, let me put two words together, and you tell me whether they are positively or negatively perceived in the culture. Religious zeal, that's negative. Now, sports fan zeal, it's positive. Stock market is up, my retirement portfolio is awesome, zeal, is okay. Everybody moved here from California, my house has worked twice as much, zeal is okay. My political candidate is winning and as a result, I am very excited, zeal is okay. If there can be political zeal, economic zeal, if there can be real estate zeal, if there can be athletics, there can be spiritual zeal. And what he's saying here is be excited about Jesus, serve Jesus and if they're gonna be excited about their sports team, their political candidate, their portfolio, or their price per square foot, you be excited about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and that our God saves sinners, He changes lives, and He's got a forever place for us, that's a lot better than place we're in. And so what this means is friends, at some point, somebody is gonna push back on you. I had a guy recently, he's like, "Oh, you're one of those born again, Jesus freak, Bible thumpers." I am thank you for bringing it up, let's talk about Jesus. And if everybody else is gonna come out of the closet, I'm just staying out of the closet. I'm just gonna tell ya what team I'm on and who I'm for, and I think you need him too, He also talks about patient, how many of

us are not patient? I'm not, I am not, that's why I always talk about horn ministry in the car, I'm just not a very patient person. But He talks about rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in praise, talking about tribulation trials and troubles, pains, problems and perils. In a broken world, there are seasons that are gonna break you. And these are the hard times and let me say this, everybody you meet is probably enduring something that you don't know about that is difficult for them. Everybody's kind of curing their load, dealing with their difficulty. And what He says is when tribulation comes, how does the believer handle it? Well, again, the context is don't be conformed to the pattern of the world, blame shifting, arguing, self-medicating, destructing, raging, be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And He says, you do that by hope and prayer, so He bookends the tribulation with hope and prayer. This is where the Christian and the non-Christian can go through the same thing, but they process are very differently. And the hope is this, there is a God who's over it, so at least he's involved and he has authority, there's hope in that. Furthermore, the God that I worship Jesus Christ, He came into human history and whatever I'm going through, He's been through something similar, so He knows how to get through it. In addition, He's given me the Holy Spirit, the same power that got Him through it, to get me through it. As I go through it, I'm gonna grow in character and become more like Jesus and I'll have greater appreciation for His enduring, the kind of thing that I'm enduring. And on the other side of it, at some point it will end and I'm gonna be with Jesus forever and everything's gonna be perfect, and at some point, no matter how bad it gets, it doesn't last forever, that's the hope of the believer. And so what sustains us through it, He says is prayer, so hope and prayer are what surround tribulation for the believer. And prayer is this, it is processing it with God. Rather than venting, be praying. Rather than drinking or self-destructing, or self-medicating be praying. Rather than posting and commenting, be praying and what you do in prayer, you invite God in and you transfer burdens to the Lord. There are things that you cannot carry that you need God to carry with you and for you, and you transfer those burdens in prayer. And it may mean that things aren't okay, but you're okay, and it may not mean that things change, but that you change, and it may not mean that things get better, but you get better. And let me say this, as you have hope and prayer through your tribulation, what God will do is He will increase your pain threshold. The result of this is really a blessing and a gift. If you want to have greater character, you need to increase your pain threshold. If you want to have greater ministry, you need to increase your pain threshold. If you want to lead at greater levels of leadership, you need to increase your pain threshold. The people that are most like Jesus have endured a lot, the people that have the most insightful ministry have endured a lot, and the people that lead have paid a great price to be in that position. And so God will take what is potentially evil and he'll use it for your good, if you will surrounded with hope and prayer. And let me say this, how many of you face something in your life that you thought for sure was gonna kill you, there's no way you're gonna make it? Congratulations, you're still here. You are stronger than you think, and God's grace was more available than you had anticipated. He then continues as well with generosity and hospitality says contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. First generosity is first and foremost for God's people, it's for other people, but God's people first. That God's people need to tend to, look out for, care for one another. Generosity can be let me help you find a job, generosity can be, let me give you a car, generosity might be let me help you with the rent or the groceries. This is not enabling, this is

loving. And what generosity is, it's literally one way grace, no strings attached. And this is very important 'cause some people give gifts and there's a lot of conditions. Sometimes I've seen this with parents of adult children. When kids are little, you can control their decision-making as they get bigger and more independent, you can't. But then almost like a marionette with a puppet, the strings are dollars. I will pay for college if you go where I tell you to, I will help you with your house if you do what I say, I will help your family if your husband, or wife or whomever you're married to does what I think needs to be done, and all of a sudden they are controlling and manipulating. Don't just cut those strings, don't take those dollars. The generosity is literally just grace, it's one way, no expectation, no control, no manipulation. And generosity is one way grace, where God meets practical needs through someone else. And so we talk a lot about giving grace or at least the Bible does, generosity is the way of giving grace that you can hold in your hands. It's a meal, it's a dollar, it's a car, it's a couch, it's a blessing, it's a provision. And there's a false teaching that says it's called prosperity theology that you give to get a blessing, and it turns God into a Ponzi scheme. The truth is that we don't give to get a blessing, we give because giving is the blessing. So Jesus says it's more blessed to give than receive, that God so loved the world that He gave His only son. It's one way, not two way, there's no, you owe me, you owe me a favor, remember what I did, you need to pay me back. And do you know what this is like? Because anytime you have given, and someone else has been blessed, the blessing is in the giving and being the conduit by which God provides their blessing. If you're a parent or a grandparent, you know exactly what this feels like. You do something for a kid you love and you see the smile on their face, you're like, "They're blessed and so am I, 'cause I get to see them blessed." God's got a father's heart and when he gives and he sees his children blessed, he's blessed to see that we're blessed, that's generosity. In addition, another form of generosity, He says is hospitality. Fellowship is where God's people, do life together, hospitality means the welcoming of the stranger. The difference between a stranger and a friend is hospitality, it's initiating to welcome them. And so let me just say this, we're in the fastest growing city in county, in America, people are moving here and this summer we're gonna see a ton of people continue to flood into our city and region, welcome them, when you see the moving truck pull up in your neighborhood, be the weirdo who walks over and says hi. Because we all pretend like we care, we wave to strangers while we pull into our garage and hit the click button before they can talk to us. Okay, welcome to your HOA. What we wanna do is we want to say, okay, there's a moving truck, welcome. Because people don't know the school system, they don't know what to do when it's 120 degrees, they just don't know, it's a dry heat. So it was a pizza of it, I don't wanna crawl into one for three months, what do I do? Here's a water bottle, sunscreen, and a map to the mountains, welcome to Arizona. Okay, so it's how do you engage in love? And what I would say as well is how many of you in the middle of the school year have transferred into a school and you're the new kid, you don't know anybody, you don't know anything, it's the weirdest thing in the world. A lot of people feel that way even when they show up at church and they're gonna be coming, we have a lot of visitors and a lot of new people. And you could tell that they're new, they show up early, once you have God's grace, you're like, I'll be there later. If their kid is wearing like really nice Sunday best instead of a swimsuit, first time, first time, that's how we know who they are. And sometimes they just look confused and they're like, "I don't know what to do." Engage those people, welcome those people, practice hospitality. Okay, He

goes on to talk about grace, He says, bless those who persecute you and I know a lot of you'd be like, are you sure? So he says it again, bless them, do not curse them. When people curse you and persecute you, what that means is they're against you and it's personal, it's personal. And the result is that we can seek to return fire. You say something, I'm gonna say something, you do something, I'm gonna do something. In combat sports, there are two kinds of strikers. There are strikers and counter strikers, they're our punchers and counter punchers. Some people are the strikers and the punchers, they just, they initiate it, they oppose, they harass, they attack. There are other people, some of you you're the counter punchers, you're like, I don't start a fight, but I finish them, that's what I do. I just wait for an opening and chinny, chin, chin, here I come. And what he's saying is when someone, they criticize you, when they persecute you, when they curse you, your counter-strike needs to be grace. This is supernatural, not natural, this is gonna take the power of the Holy Spirit. We're now into miracle category and territory, okay? And what He's saying is that every Christian, every family and every church family faces seasons of persecution and opposition, and sometimes saying and doing nothing is how you bless. If they really are evil, He's already talked about enemies and evil doers, if they're really evil doers and enemies, you can't lie about them and say that they're great 'cause now other people will trust you and you'll be in harm's way. And so sometimes the best thing to do is nothing, sometimes the best thing to say is nothing, that's how you bless them and just pray for them. And what this is friends, this is not weakness, this is meekness, and there's a big difference though two people can be not engaging for entirely different reasons. One is very cowardly, one is very courageous, the weakness is cowardice. I don't do conflict, I don't like to get in trouble, I don't want any issues, I'm not gonna sit here and do it, that's the coward and it's weakness. Courage is maintenance and what maintenance is, its strength that is restrained and controlled. It means I could destroy you, but instead I'm going to use that power to love and bless you. This is where Jesus says that the meek will inherit what? The earth. The only people in the kingdom of God who are fit to rule and reign are those who know what to do with power. The meek, they use it for the benefit of others, not for the benefit of themselves. Jesus demonstrates this perfectly, He's on the cross, He's being crucified, they are persecuting Him and cursing Him. They're literally destroying Him and trashing Him in front of His mother. If there was ever a time to return fire, this would be it, and He does return fire with grace. Father, forgive them, He prays for them. Now what He could have done, He could have called down an angelic army, "Gabriel, Michael, get the cycles, it's go time." He could have declared war, and He didn't, He declared peace. And as people are falsely accusing Him, He could have been truthfully, eviscerated them, Jesus knew the truth about everybody who was there telling lies about Him. Oh, let me tell you, your husband's there, did you tell him about your boyfriend and your boyfriend's girlfriend, your girlfriend's boyfriend? I mean, He could have really unpacked it. Oh, you're there with your employer, does he know that you're stealing from them? He could have eviscerated everyone, and instead He interceded for everyone, He prayed. He returned fire with grace, this is supernatural. If we do that, He also talks about the ability then to be emotionally healthy and to practice the ministry of presence. He says rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. If you're not emotionally unhealthy, you can be emotionally present to help others. How many of you, don't raise your hand if you're here with them, but you've got two kinds of friends. You got the I'm weeping friends and the I'm rejoicing friends. The I'm

weeping friends, they're always sad, they're always bombed, they're always down, they listen to punk rock, they're Puddleglum and you are it's always bad, it's just some of you are like, I'm having a bad day, they're like, well, me too. Yeah, I know, you're always having a bad day, that's why I called, you can sympathize and empathize. And you'd never called that person on your good day. You're like, "I'm having a good day." They're like, "I'm glad one of us is." You're like, you don't call them out, you'll call them on them. And then the other person is your rejoice friend, they're always happy, optimistic, they're always positive, look on the bright side, they're cheering, oddly so. Okay, these are the people they got versus two, they're like, "Greater is He who is in you than He who's in the world. You're more than a conqueror in Christ. God works out all things for the good of those who love and are called according to his purpose, ." And then they have little pity statements, like when God closes a door, He opens a window. Yes, so I can climb in and smother you with a pillow in your sleep. You're so annoying, and on a good day, you call them, then you're like, I'm having a good day, they're like me too, every day's a good day, you never call them on a bad day. I'm having a bad day, I'm sure it'll get better in just a minute. Yeah, well, I'm hanging up. Okay, so if you're emotionally unhealthy, you can't be emotionally present with other people, if you're emotionally healthy, you can be. You're having a good day, let me rejoice with you, you're having a bad day, let me weep with you. And this is the emotional ministry of presence, where you are healthy enough to consider others and not just yourself their day and not just your own, their feelings and not just your own. He then talks about unity, live in harmony with one another. Let me say this unified unbelievers are stronger than divided believers. There's a story in the Old Testament, it's called babble, a bunch of pagans come together and they try to make heaven on earth without God. They all come together, they're unified. God looks down and says, they've come together and nothing will be impossible for them. So God scatters their languages and scatters their geography. What happens then is the Lord Jesus comes and He says a house divided can't stand. And nobody's talking about is God's people in God's house that unified unbelievers are stronger than divided believers. This is why we need to live in harmony with one another, because unity is godly and division is demonic, that's the principle. And so God wants His people to be divided not, excuse me, God wants His people to be unified, Satan wants God's people to be divided. And so you can be conformed to the pattern of the world, divided or transformed by the renewing of your mind, united. And so what He's saying here is this, that we need to seek to live in harmony with one another. And the language that kind of comes to mind is a band. Now, when a band plays, everybody's got their instrument and he's already told us that you all have various spiritual gifts, so that's your instrument to play in the proverbial band called church. But then we all need to play the same song, we need to be in cadence and rhythm, we need to keep beats and we need to stay in harmony and on tune. And the truth is it takes time, just like any band, I used to run an all ages, punk rock concert venue years ago, that's why I wore the black jacket, it's a tribute weekend. And so what happens is when a band starts playing together, are they immediately on beat and in key and in harmony? Well, it takes a while to get there. Many of you are new, welcome to our church family, we love you, the key is to live in harmony one another, and the only way that we really stay in harmony and on key and on pitch and on beat is if we stay filled with the spirit and the Holy Spirit's the only one who can really keep the people of God living in harmony with one another. And then He says, humility do not be haughty, but associate with the

lowly. See, in our culture, we tend to think there are people who are up here, there are people who are down here. Rich people are up here, poor people are down here, Beautiful people are up here, the rest of us are down there. Famous people are up here, common people are down here, successful people are up here, just normal people are down here and we all want to be with these people. And God says, what about these people? 'Cause the truth is God's economy is to find people who have character. They may not be rich, but they have character, they may not be powerful, but they have character, they may not be beautiful, but they have character, they may not have a platform, but they have character. And so oftentimes we're seeking to have relationships with people based upon the wrong thing. Now here's the key, the Lord Jesus, when He was in heaven, He was having a great day. He sat on the throne, worshiped by angels, in a neighborhood where the streets are lined with gold. He's doing great, He's looking at paradise valley's like dump, okay, that's what He's thinking. So He was up here and what did He do? He came down near to be with us, us who are lonely on this fallen sinful planet earth. And He lived in a small town, not a big town, He came into a poor family, not a rich family, and He didn't have a big job, He did carpentry with His dad. If you're not willing to associate with the lowly, you're probably unwilling or unable of associating with Jesus because He was lowly. And let me just say this, the older I get, I'm just looking for people who demonstrate the fruit of the spirit, the character of Christ. If they're an addict, fresh out of rehab and filled with the spirit, that's a lot better than the CEO of a Fortune 500 company who isn't filled with the spirit, and doesn't demonstrate the character of Christ. What He's saying is in God's family, don't overlook the people that look like Jesus, the people that our culture tends to overlook. Then He says, wisdom, "Never be wise in your own site" We call this college, and wise in your own site is where I'm very smart, I have great ideas, it's a good thing I'm here, to tell you what I see. If you're wise, the first thing you know is you're not always wise. And we're gonna get into this later on in this book of Romans, there are three kinds of people in the Bible, wise, foolish and evil. He's talked about evil people and enemies and evildoers. foolish people, they tend to be naive and gullible and wise, people are teachable and humble and they invite others in to course correct them. So what He's saying is the key to being wise is realizing that you're not always wise. Who do you invite into your life to correct you, to teach you, to instruct you, to advise you? All right, if you're only wise in your own eyes, meaning this, if your first instinct, when someone disagrees with you is just to assume that they're wrong, it's probably not smart. When someone says that that you're a miss and your first thought is no, you're the problem, you're probably not wise, okay? If you don't believe me, ask your wife, this is the problem in our world. We think that we're right when we're wrong, we think that we're good when we're not, and we think that we're going the right direction when we're going the wrong direction and no one can tell us otherwise, because we trust ourselves too much and we trust wise too little. He then continues, and He talks about prayer. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to what to do, and that which is honorable in the sight of all. And I believe the way that we decide what is honorable in the sight of all is through prayer. What He says is simply this, someone does evil, you wanna pay them what? Evil. Let me say this, evil cannot conquer evil any more than a demon can cast out a demon, that only good can overcome evil, and only the Holy Spirit can overcome demonic spirits. And what He says is if someone gives evil, don't return evil instead, pray, seek God, ask what is honorable in the sight of all. So you think, okay, who is seeing what

we are saying and doing as we are living? Well, first there's God, 'cause see, when someone hits you or harms you, you stop looking up and you just start looking at them. And now you can overlook the fact that God is seeing and it's okay, Lord, no, wait, not what did they do, but what do you want me to do? You've got to re shift your focus, this is what prayer does, so you're not reacting to them, you're responding to him. Furthermore not only is God watching, so are non Christians. Let me say this, when Christians fight with Christians in front of non-Christian, Satan's the only person that wins that war. In addition, you're discipling people who are the people that look up to you or follow you? And if you're responding to evil with evil, what you are doing, you are discipling people and evil. This is so important, especially for those of us who are parents. Somebody says or does something and if we attack them, guess what? We're training our children to do evil. Instead He says, find what is honorable in the sight of all. Now, let me say that this is harder than ever because of technology, Paul wrote this a few thousand years ago. In our day, and it used to be, if somebody did evil and you wanted to respond, first of all, what they said or did, would need to get to you through some sort of verbal communication chain. And then you'd have to be angry enough to either walk to their house for miles or find a donkey, or like I'm gonna donkey up and we're gonna do this. Well, you're gonna go deal with this, then you get to get to their house, you're like, knock on the door, they're not home, you gotta wait. Wait, I donkey it up, I'm not wasting this, we're gonna argue now, I gotta wait. And then they come home and they open the door, now you got to look them in the eye, and now you gotta have the argument. There were very few things that were worth that much effort. Okay, today, you've got your phone, you're like, I got two thumbs. Just fire up the carnival music and just respond. To people you don't have to exert any effort to get in the face of, and you don't need to look in the eye. So we say and do things that we would never say and do. How'd we do exert any effort or be in their presence? And so I'm reading a book it's called, "Trust Me, I'm Lying: Confessions of a Media Manipulator". It's not a Christian book, but it is insightful, and what it says is that blogs and social media and all these things, they exist primarily to elicit a very emotional, raw, instantaneous response so that you will get very emotional, and then your primary emotion will be anger. And out of anger, you'll respond and then they'll get angry and then they'll respond, and then it escalates and we call this marketing or clickbait. And it just doesn't lead to a culture of health, it's just everybody's always on their phone and always angry. And this means, it's gonna take the fruit of the spirit, which is self-control to be transformed by the renewing of our minds and not conform to the pattern of the world. And this sent me some years ago, I've been a senior pastor, 25 years, this was maybe 20 years ago, I don't even remember, I started ministry kind of before the Internet was a thing. And I'll never forget, it was early on when we had early social media, like Myspace. And if you wanted to get on the Internet, you had to take your phone line and put it in your computer, and it just sounded like someone was dying. And then it was so slow, if you wanted to like download a photo, you'd have to make that decision four days in advance, so it was a situation. And I'll never forget, I got done preaching one weekend and I was down front and an older woman in our church an elderly woman came up and she said, Pastor Mark, I just want to let you know, I'm leaving the church. I said, "Oh, okay. I'm sorry to hear that." I said, "I said, are you moving? She said, no, I'm leaving. She said, I need you to know why. I said, okay. She said, I can't be in a church where a pastor beats his wife. I said, well, whoa, I said neither can I tell me which pastor you

think is doing this, and I promise you, I will go investigate. She said, no, it's you. I'm like me? You think I beat Grace? She said, yeah, I know you do. I said, ma'am have never laid hands on any woman in my whole life, and I would never lay hands Grace. And I got defensive, my first thought was, okay, I'm gonna get to the bottom of this. I said, who told you that? She said, well, I read it on the computer. And I said, well, who said that? She said, I don't know. I was like, okay. I said, ma'am, I promise you, that's not true. She said, well, it's true. And I said, ma'am Grace is right here, she was like 20 feet away, I said, just go ask Grace, just go ask Grace. She said, I don't need to. She said, she's just gonna cover for you 'cause she knows that you're gonna get fired for hitting her. I said, so I'm a wife beater and she's a liar? She said, yeah, that's why I'm leaving the church. And I prayed for her and I asked that God would bless her and find her a good church home, but as she walked away, this was more than 20 years ago. I remember just being sort of shell shocked, and I thought to myself, what does the future look like? And now we know. And it's not great, and it's so easy to return evil for evil and reviling for reviling and shot for return shot, and strike for return strike. And what He says is don't be conformed, be transformed, invite the kingdom down here, don't pull the world in here. And the goal ultimately is peace, He says, if possible, so far as it depends on you live peaceably with all, can you live at peace with all people? No, some people just won't stop fighting. The person who's wrong needs to say, I'm sorry, I repent, the person who was wrong needs to say, I forgive you, that's how you have peace. It takes two people and all you can do is your part, either owning it or forgiving it. And sometimes the best thing is just to not engage, Gavin de Becker, he teaches counter terrorism and secret service. And in his book, "The Gift of Fear", he says, if you engage, you will enrage. That some people who have decided that they're gonna be at war with you, anything you do or say will be seen as a hostile, aggressive act. And so you just create a boundary and you love them, and you just seek to live at peace and not increase or escalate the conflict. And he says in so far as possible with you, seek to live peaceably with all, you can't live at peace with everyone, but you can try and you can pray and you can hope. And God's not gonna judge you for their behavior, but he will judge you for your behavior, and he will judge them for their behavior. Underneath all of this is forgiveness, He says, beloved, you are loved of God, even if not loved by them, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God for it is written vengeance is mine, I will repay says the Lord, quotes Deuteronomy. There is your vengeance, God's wrath. When you are offended, you're like, that's it, somebody has gotta do something. God's like, let that be me. No, but God, somebody needs to set the record straight. God says, trust me, I've got this. But God, they're getting away with it and God's like, actually, I'm in charge of them. It's an act of faith, when you are sinned against and or offended to trust that the God who dealt with you will deal with them. See, we tend to trust God to deal with our sin, but not their sin. We want God to deal with our sin, and then we want to deal with their sin. Vengeance is imperfect, wrath is perfect, vengeance is based on partial knowledge, wrath is based on total knowledge, vengeance comes to an end, God's wrath endures forever. And so there are two ways that God gets his wrath, either at the cross of Jesus or in hell. So God has justice for everyone and everything. If you belong to the Lord, Jesus, you're a Christian. Jesus died on the cross, in your place for your sins, He endured the wrath of God for you, so the grace of God could be given to you. If you reject the Lord, Jesus, you will stand before Him as judge in the end and you'll be sentenced to hell, which is the eternal unending wrath of God poured out on

the rebel against God. And what He's saying is this don't get involved, leave room for me to get involved. And the essence of this is forgiveness, so I won't get into this in great depth, I've got some they're really special for you that really excited about it. There's a man named R.T. Kendall. He was pastor at Westminster Chapel in London, succeeding the fame, preacher Martin Lloyd Jones, he preached there for a few decades, PhD from Cambridge, at Oxford, he's written many books, his best-selling book and his life message is called "Total Forgiveness". He's a friend of mine, I love him, he's in his 80s, he preaches all around the world, he's hardly ever available, he's coming here June 12th and 13th, he's coming here, June 12th and 13th. For all first time guests, we're gonna give them a free copy of his book, "Total Forgiveness", I've asked him to preach his life message on total forgiveness, he will do so live at all of our services, people are gonna have their lives changed. If you know broken people, bring them to be healed, if you know bitter people bring them to be delivered, in addition, he talks about blessing. To the contrary if your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink for by doing so, you're heaping burning coals on his head. What He's saying here is this, don't treat them the way they treat you, treat them the way He treats you. It's a lot more about your relationship with Jesus than it is your relationship with them. And don't let your relationship with them damage your relationship with Jesus. There's a debate as to what the heaping burning coals means, but generally it's killing with kindness. And we looked earlier at Pharaoh's hardening of his heart, the nicer God was the harder Pharaoh got. That wasn't God's problem, that was Pharaoh's fault. And then lastly talks about goodness, do not overcome evil with evil, but overcome evil with good. Meaning sometimes you don't fight with them, so you can minister to them. Sometimes you don't spend all your energy on them so you can invest your energy in them. Sometimes you move on from one broken relationship to go help other broken people. I'll close with a story that I used for men's last Wednesday, we have our final Real Men this week, and I'd all you men to join us on Wednesday night at 6:30. Some years ago, there was a guy that I know and I love, and he's a believer and I care for him and he's a bit of a friend of mine. But he went into business with some supposedly professing Christians, they start a company, it became quite successful, was doing very, very well, and then it was kind of a Joseph story where all the other business partners conspired against him to betray him, to got him to destroy him. They literally sort of threw him in a pit and left him for dead. They got to him financially, they bankrupted his family, they trashed his reputation and they won, he lost. And in my opinion, it was absolutely evil and unjust situation. He lawyered out, went through a multi-year legal battle. We'll deal with this next week in Romans 13, governing authorities, civil disobedience, civil law, we'll get into all this next week. And over and over and over, he kept winning in the courts, he was vindicated in the courts, he got a lot of the money back and his family was restored financially, but his reputation was still destroyed. And so he became very bitter and very angry and very jaded, now he's stalking them on social media, if they're having a good day, he's having a bad day. If they're having a bad day, he's having a good day, that's how you know, your heart is broken, your soul is sour and he's attacking them all the time, so they start a new company, he's attacking it, he's meeting with clients, he's trashing them, he's in the fight, he called it the fight. So I met with him, I said, "How's it going?" He said, "Well, I'm winning the fight." I said, "You're winning?" I said, "Can we just examine for a moment?" I say I'm your friend, I love you, all right?" He said, yeah. I said, "Can we examine what you're losing?" I said,

"How's your health?" You can just tell it, he looked horrible. He said, "Yeah, I'm not doing good, I put on weight, I can't sleep, I'm stressed, I got a lot of anxiety, so yeah, health wise, I'm not doing good, I'm in the worst shape of my life." I said, "Okay, how's your marriage? How's your wife?" He had a great wife. He said, "Well, we're probably in the worst season of our marriage, she's just sick of me. Always being angry and sour and on my phone, and in the fight." I said, "How are your kids? As he said, "I don't know, they don't really call that much anymore." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "I don't know, maybe they're just tired of hearing about the latest drama." I said, "How are your grandkids?" He had beautiful little grandkids. He said, "I don't know, I haven't seen them in a while, I've been busy." I said, "So you're losing your health, you're losing your God, you're losing your wife, you're losing your kids, you're losing your grandkids." I said, "You're not winning anything." I said, "You're gonna win your fight and lose your family." I said, "I would really encourage you to lose your fight and win your family." I said, "Cause when it's all said and done, it's not what you have, it's who you're with. You're gonna be with these people forever, and this stuff ain't gonna follow you." I said, "What are you trying to win? He said, "I'm trying to win back my reputation." Then I made a little joke with him, I said, "Yeah, I've read the whole Bible." I said, "I can't find first and second reputation." "It's not in there. It's like here's how you manage your reputation." I told him the story, there was an old proverb, Jewish proverb guy had a pillow case filled with feathers, he's walking through town, didn't notice the hole in the bottom, one by one, all the feathers fall out, the wind blows them all over town, he gets to his destination realizes, oh my goodness, I've lost all my feathers. So he tries to retrace his steps and he tries to find every single feather to get it back in the pillow case. And I said that guy's wasting his life. I said, "That's your reputation, it's gone, just let it be gone." Let eternity vindicate you, not history. Let Jesus vindicate you and not yourself. See friends, here's the deal, I love you, I want you to be the healthiest version of you. I want your relationship with God to be the best relationship you can have. I want your spouse to get the first and best version of you, I want your kids to have the best, healthiest version of you. I want your grandkids to have the healthiest and best version of you. For that to happen, you can't return evil for evil and reviling with reviling, you can't return evil with evil, you have to return it with good. You can't choose bitterness, you have to choose forgiveness. And what makes it so hard and I love ya, and I thank you for letting me preach a long, hard word and do a little soul surgery, is every time you try to do what is right, Satan is there to try to oppose it. Here's where he's gonna end in Romans 16, Romans 12 through 16 is about healthy life in the spirit, and here is the opposition. I appeal to you brothers to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles. There's always divisions and obstacles when you're trying to do what is right contrary to the doctrine you've been taught. What Paul's saying is if you've been taught the Bible, you need to do what it says. He says with those kinds of people, what? Avoid them, don't hate them, don't attack them, don't reconcile with them, avoid them. If they're in the ring, just get out of the ring. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites and by smooth talk and flattery, they deceive the hearts of the naive, they're always trying to form an alliance, for your obedience is known to all so that I rejoice over you. But I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent, to what is evil? The God of peace will soon crush Satan, it's all spiritual warfare, it's demonic. It's him trying to get you to be conformed to the pattern of the world, not transformed by the renewing of your mind. The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet, the

grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with you. I'm gonna pray for you, I'm gonna pray that the Spirit of God is on you and in you and through you. And that you get to enjoy the kingdom of God and bring it into the world and not the culture of hell and bring the world into your life and your family. And as He says to live in harmony, we're gonna sing in harmony as we seek to live in harmony. So Father God, I thank you so much for the great opportunity of teaching your word here at the Trinity Church and Lord, I thank you that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we don't need to be conformed to the pattern of this world. And God we ask for the grace and the Holy Spirit to choose good over evil, to choose truth over lies, to choose forgiveness over bitterness and to choose peace over war. And God, we want you to fight our battles and we don't want to be in the fight, instead, we wanna be in the faith. We wanna live by faith, we wanna worship by faith, we wanna trust by faith that you go before us, that you are for us, that you are good and that you were dealing with them and you were dealing with us and so Lord God, I ask the Holy Spirit to come on these precious people and to give them the anointing and grace to walk in your word in Jesus' good name, amen.

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