

January 16, 2021

The news in America has been very upsetting and alarming since the new year rolled in on January 1, 2021. In this time of national divide and crisis, I felt it important to step back from my own opinions, understanding, and experience with the Lord, to lift up perhaps the most relevant verses in the Bible concerning times like these:

Romans 12:9-21 offers a way forward through division and the need to be right and prevail. Take a few moments now to prayerfully consider these powerful words from the apostle Paul.

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position.^[c] Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"^[d] says the Lord.

On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."^[e] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:9-21 (NIV)

These texts are not only straight-forward, they are based on the words of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:43-45 (NIV)

As we all navigate the days, weeks and months ahead, let's remember the guidance given so succinctly by the prophet Micah.

*He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To **act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.** Micah 6:8. (NIV)*