

# WEEK 26 | ROMANS 12:14-21

## ROMANS | THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S POWER

### OTHER HELPFUL PASSAGES.

The following passages may be helpful to you as you consider this text.

- 1 Peter 3:8-22
- Matthew 5:38-42

### THEMES.

The overarching theme of Romans is the gospel—salvation through Jesus Christ. That is important to remember and keep in front of your group, because the letter is a theological masterpiece. But as with any work of art, each brush stroke's true beauty is best seen when the piece as a whole is realized. To that end, we will deal with many sub-themes, but remember that each one weaves together to give the "fullest, plainest and grandest statement of the gospel in the New Testament."<sup>1</sup>

1. Gospel-transformed people are characterized by good conduct toward non-Christians. (Rom. 12:14-17)
2. Contrary to man's sinful tendencies, God justly avenges evil. (Rom. 12:19-21)

### QUESTIONS.

Feel free to use any, all, or none of these questions as you facilitate your group. Their purpose is to be an aid to you as you consider how to teach the implications of the week's Scriptures.

1. Did the Holy Spirit use last week's passage or sermon to convict, challenge, or encourage you in any way? Did he use it to confirm or answer a prayer in any way? If you're willing, share with the group.
2. Romans 12:14-21 is filled with concise commands, detailing how Christians should conduct themselves toward non-Christians. Considering that many are responses to mistreatment, do any strike you as particularly interesting? Are there any that are not present in your life? Any that are present?

*Note:* They seem to be the opposite of our normal response to mistreatment. It's strange to bless our persecutors; it's odd to rejoice with those who rejoice at our misery; it's odd to weep when our enemies are weeping, etc.

3. Paul places the responsibility square on believers for spreading peace in v. 18. Obviously, people may provoke or chirp at us, so what are some right ways to respond peaceably in such situations?
4. How does v. 19 inform affect/inform your response to those who mistreat you? Do you trust God to avenge sin?

*Note:* A natural response to mistreatment or provocation is to take matters into your own hands. The thought, "They deserve it," comes to mind as we avenge ourselves. But this passage warns us against that. Why? It's very difficult for mistreated Christians to respond in a holy way; it's easy to think of vengeance as justified. But vengeance is nothing more than justified sin, and sin always wages war on our souls. Here's what Cornelius Plantinga has to say about this in his book on sin: "Victims victimize others, who then send their own vengeance ricocheting through the larger human family. Nobody is more dangerous than a victim... What makes victims dangerous is that they are unlikely to exercise stern self-control. They feel entitled."<sup>2</sup>

God kindly holds us back from sin by promising to avenge sin on our behalf.

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<sup>1</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's good news for the world*. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 19.

<sup>2</sup> Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 57-58.

5. How might the Lord be prompting you to respond to this passage? Share with the group.

PRAY TO CLOSE.