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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Do Not Repay Evil with Evil

1 Peter 3:9-15

Prayer: *Father, we just again thank you for your word. We just continue to pray that you would give us the ability to hide it away in our hearts. And Lord, one of the ways of doing that is by opening up your word and exposing ourselves to it, asking for your Holy Spirit to accompany us, guide us as we look into your word and give us the ability to see it, to hide it, and to make it of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well last time out if you remember we were looking at five simple commands that God had laid out in 1 Peter 3:8. It was this: *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.* We found that those commands were not simple at all. In fact we found that those commands were impossible to do on our own. We saw that we can only do pale imitations of what verse 8 demanded and that our version of harmony or sympathy and brotherly love, compassion and humility was very different than the standard that was set by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well this week we're going to find ourselves jumping as it were from the frying pan right into the fire because the thrust of Peter's letter changes at this point, I mean he's just given us five very positive commands all based on our living out our mandate as bearers of God's image. Well, this next section that we're looking at is really all about how we behave when we are under attack, when we are insulted, when we are slandered, when we are harmed. You have to remember Peter is writing to a people who are soon to be under the authority of Nero who was arguably one of the most wicked emperors who ever lived. And Peter's sheep would be no stranger to the suffering, even to torture, and so Peter in the Holy Spirit is intent to give them strength. And so our text this morning is 1 Peter 3:9 and following. It says this: *Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

Well the instructions in verse 9 are actually very simple: *Do not*

repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. We are to respond to evil and insult with blessing. And the question that I want to examine this morning is basically, okay, how do we do that? I mean it's one thing to be able to sing do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good, I mean we sing that all the time, it's one thing to sing it, it's another thing to do it.

So how do we respond to evil? How do we respond to insult? And evil and insults are similar, I mean, they're both malicious. But insult or reviling is really kind of a minor-league malice, and evil is the major leagues. They're very different for other types of attacks that we might receive such as wrath or cunning or deception, and each one of those God gives us a specific defense towards. God tells us that a soft answer turns away wrath, he tells us that godly wisdom is what we use against cunning and that the truth is our weapon against deception. But what about, what about evil itself? I mean the Lord's prayer contains a petition about it, it says deliver us from evil. So what is our weapon against evil and reviling? Well, it's the same weapon that Peter refers to in verses 10 through 12. You have to understand, Peter is quoting here from one of the Psalms, he's quoting from Psalm 34, it's a Psalm of David, it's a Psalm that he wrote after acting

crazy in front of King Abimelech and it was a Psalm that he wrote of thanksgiving and he's acknowledging God as the ultimate weapon against evil. Let me just read to you some of *Psalm 34* which is what Peter bases his text on this morning. It says of David: When he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away. *I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together! I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him and delivers them, Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is there who desires life and loves many days, that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn away from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*

Well, those are the very verses that Peter quoted in our text this

morning, and God tells us in this Psalm that we can follow Peter's instructions when we are experiencing evil from others by understanding that he, that is God, is the ultimate weapon against malice and evil. David says, this poor man called and the Lord heard him, he saved him out of all his troubles.

So I have a question to ask all of us this morning, and the question is this: How many of you noticed that all of your troubles have gone since you've become a Christian? Now we know that it's true that the scriptures are filled with spectacular answers from evil, rescues from evil. I mean Joseph is maliciously sold by his brothers in the book of Genesis and he ends up becoming second in command in all of Egypt, he tells his terrified brothers who had sold him into slavery that God had taken their evil actions and turned them around for good. We have Mordecai, he's facing certain death as Haman in the book of Esther decides that Mordecai has dishonored him and he builds this huge gallows to hang Mordecai on. We read how God completely turns that situation around so that Haman is forced to honor the man that he's trying to hang and then gets hung himself on the very gallows that he's built for Mordecai. We have Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the book of Daniel, they're ordered into this fiery furnace for refusing to worship an idol. And as they're thrown in this furnace, a fourth figure is seen with them in the midst of the flames. You see all three of

them come out without their hair even being singed because God has intervened. And so we look at Joseph, we look at Mordecai, we look at Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we see that God did indeed deliver them from all of their troubles. But then we think of others, righteous men like Uriah the Hittite or John the Baptist, or Stephen, the first martyr, all of whom died at the hands of malicious people and we realize that our faith is no guarantee of personal safety. And I don't think we realize that that's the way it really has to be. I mean if you just think about it for a second, if Christianity actually guaranteed my personal safety, then virtually all of Port Jervis would be Christian. In fact all of the world would be. There'd be no need for self-defense or personal safety courses, police departments would be unnecessary because as Christians we'd all be delivered from evil. We'd also have no reason to have faith. See we know that our faith does not stop bad things from happening to us and that Peter especially tells us to expect bad things. In *1 Peter 4:12* he says: *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.*

So Christians are no strangers to trouble. So again, how do we handle it when it comes to evil, when it comes to this idea of

insult? Well, God tells us in the very next verse, verse 14, he says: *If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.* And again, we have to understand that God is making a distinction here in the type of insult and evil we might receive. I mean there are insults because of the name of Christ and there are just plain insults.

You know, Winston Churchill was the master of the art of insult itself and one night he was at a reception and he was being served tea and a woman who sat next to him who was no fan of Churchill said, "If you were my husband, sir, I would poison your tea." And Churchill was said to have responded, "Madam, if you were my wife, I would drink it." Now was Winston Churchill violating our text this morning? And the text says: *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.* I mean is there a Christian response to that kind of insult? I mean, should Churchill have simply said, "Well, praise the Lord for tea" or something like that. Well, you have to understand, this is not really what Peter is referring to, and Proverbs actually tells us that the best way to handle those kind of insults is to just overlook them. *Proverbs 12 says: Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult.* But you see the insult

that Peter's referring to is much deeper and hate driven than the one that Churchill had to deal with. It has its roots in man's fundamental fear and hatred of God and that hatred expresses itself as a spirit of evil and insult toward the Spirit of God in his children. And Jesus himself made that crystally clear in *John 15*, he says this, he says: *"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."*

See the default response of this world to Jesus is according to Jesus himself, hatred. And that used to be a relatively hard argument to make, I mean after all, we still live within the remnants of a Judeo-Christian culture that's willing to tolerate and acknowledge a generic god as long as he is kind, as long as he is benevolent, as long as he is absolutely non threatening. But step outside of that boundary and begin to describe or discuss the real God of the Bible, the God to whom all of us are accountable, and things immediately begin to take a decidedly downward turn.

The closer you get to Jesus Christ as Lord the more you're going to find yourself kicking a hornet's nest. The more closely you align your life with his, the more you can expect a push back from this culture because the evil and reviling that Peter's speaking of is not against us per se, rather they are against God's Spirit within us. *Matthew 5:11* says: *"Blessed are you when people insult you,*

persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

So when we get insulted, really our first order of business is actually determining who is this insult directed at? Is it directed toward me or is it directed toward the Spirit of Christ within me? This requires honest discernment. Many a time many a Christian has perceived deserved insults directed at their character as insults directed at Christ. I mean many response to obnoxious behavior is falsely interpreted as being persecuted for Christ's sake. In other words being a Christian is never an excuse for being a jerk. And the only thing offensive about us should be the cross. And so the very first place that I should look to when I'm treated with evil and insults is me. And when I -- I sense that and when I hear that, when I know that, only when I've ruled out perhaps with the help of someone objective, my personality, maybe my habits, my hang-ups, then I should consider that I may be receiving insults and evil on account of Christ.

So let's say that happens and whether it's at work or at home or school, you find yourself on the receiving end of evil and insults. How do we respond? I mean how do we then respond with blessing?

There's only one way to really have the power to bless when we are in such circumstances and believe me if you've never been there, if you're serious about your faith, you will eventually be there. The only way to have the power to bless when being insulted or when experiencing evil is by owning, buying and owning the sovereignty of God. It's by practically accepting the actual reality of God's complete control over every last molecule in the universe. People think if I give God that much control, then that's going to make him responsible for all the bad things that happen in this world. I mean is God responsible for every single thing that happens in this world and the answer to that question is yes. He is. If God ordains everything in this world then in some way God is responsible for everything that takes place on this planet including some terribly awful things. I mean just for a minute consider the alternative. I mean what if all of these terrible things happen outside of God's control? I mean is that really a better way of thinking, that God is so weak and that he's so powerless that all he can do when things go south is to sympathize with us? But folks say but doesn't that make God responsible for some truly terrible things like disease and starving children and floods and hurricanes? And the answer is yes, it does indeed do that. But listen to what God says. In *Isaiah 45* he says: *I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the Lord, who does all these things.* But you have to understand

something that we all have to grapple with, and that is the fact that God has the power to ordain things does not necessarily mean that he doesn't hate them. I mean God hates injustice, he hates poverty, he hates child abuse and yet for reasons known to him alone he allows them. We know that he allows things that he detests because we know that he allowed his own Son to be stripped naked and nailed to a cross. And it's the cross that answers our concerns about the love of God. Because God says: *This is love, not that we have loved God but that he has loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* And we also know that he allowed the cross because he had a broader and bigger purpose in mind, namely our redemption. If God himself would become a man, live the life that we all have to live and live it perfectly and then offer that life up for us so that by faith we could claim his righteousness, if God was willing to do that, he can point to that and say that's the proof that I love you. We may not understand all of these individual terrible things that are going on and on around us, but we have to trust that there are bigger and broader purposes to all of those things that make us wonder why, and so we place our trust in a sovereign God. It's one thing to pay lip service to God's sovereignty, it's another thing entirely to live your life fully dependent on it. We love to sing God is in control, but when push comes to shove, that notion may very well be the very first notion to go. See Psalm 34 is a Psalm whose power

rests in a sovereign God. I mean in verse 4 God answers and delivers. In verse 6 he hears and saves. In verse 7 his angels encamp around and deliver. In verse 8 we take refuge in him.

And so the question we have to ask ourselves this morning is: Am I willing to really buy into that notion? Do you believe God is in absolute control? Or do you think he just kind of winds us up and then just lets us unwind on our own? Well many Christians do. Andrew Murray once wrote this, he said: "In creating men with a free will and making him a partner in the rule of the earth, God limited himself. He made himself dependent on what man would do. Man, by his prayer, would hold the measure of what God could do in blessing." I couldn't possibly disagree more with Andrew Murray in that statement. I think he's wrong. You see, if God is limited in any way by man himself then he's not all powerful. And if he's not all powerful, then I have no business trusting him. As Jerry Bridges points out in his book *Trusting God*, for reasons known only to himself God allows people to act contrary to and in defiance of his revealed will that is revealed in scripture. We do it all the time. We call that sin. But he will never permit any creature including man to act contrary to his sovereign will. I don't know how anyone could say God is limited and dependent on what man would do in light of the following scriptures. It says in *Proverbs 16:9*: *In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes*

their steps. Proverbs 19:21 says: Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails. Ecclesiastes 7: Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? Lamentations 3: Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Just consider, if God is in any way dependent on what man does, then wouldn't my ultimate fate be in man's hands rather than in God's?

With regard to evil and insults, listen to what Jerry Bridges has to say. He says this in his book *Trusting God*. He says: "Not only are the willful malevolent acts of other people under God's sovereign control, so also are the mistakes and failures of other people. Did another driver go through a red light, strike your car, and send you to the hospital with multiple fractures? Did a physician fail to detect your cancer in its early stages when it would have been treatable? Did you end up with an incompetent instructor in a very important course in college, or an inept supervisor that blocked your career in business? All of these circumstances are under the controlling handle of our sovereign God, who is working them out in our lives for our good. Neither the willful, malicious acts nor the unintended mistakes of people can thwart God's purpose for us." *"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord." Proverbs 21:30.*

You see, when push comes to shove in our lives there are really two different pathways, two different paradigms that we can embrace. One says God really, really is in control, the other one says what are my options? Now I'm not talking about passivity versus activism here. Remember the context. When I am innocently on the receiving end of a malicious insult, when I'm on the receiving end of evil itself, I what? I go to my knees? Or I reach for my cell phone. I go to my prayer closet or I go to my friends or my allies or my lawyer. I search the scriptures or I search the Internet. It all depends on who I believe is in control. Is it God or is it me? I mean you may be thinking it's easy to trust in God's sovereignty if your name is Joseph or Mordecai or Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, but what if your name is Stephen? What if your name is John the Baptist or Uriah the Hittite. How does Psalm 34 apply to them? Stephen was stoned to death simply for proclaiming the truth of the gospel. John the Baptist had his head severed and offered up as a party favor by Herod. Uriah the Hittite was murdered by David himself simply because David lusted after his wife Bathsheba. *Psalm 34:7 says: The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them.* Well, how does that square with them? I mean what parts of Psalm 34 apply to them and what parts don't? Well the answer is the very same parts that didn't apply to their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he died in their place. You have to understand, Jesus Christ wasn't saved, he

wasn't delivered or redeemed either because he was the redeemer. And God's face was set against him even though he alone among Stephen, John and Uriah was the only one who was totally innocent.

Fact is while some saints are delivered from death, others are delivered through death. We call them martyrs. Of the three people that I mentioned here, perhaps Stephen alone understood the depths of God's sovereign control even while he was being attacked. I mean Uriah was the victim of a malicious attack. He died never even knowing that David had plotted his murder, but God made it clear how terrible that murder was, I mean, he cursed David's family for the rest of his life. And we know John the Baptist experienced grave doubts as he rotted in that dank dungeon. He even asked the Lord Jesus if he was the one or if they should expect someone else. And Jesus in response says: *Truly I tell you, among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.* Yet he, too, was the victim of Herod's malice. So how did Psalm 34 apply to him? Well it all depends on how big your understanding of the big picture is. It all depends on where you place the borders of God's sovereign kingdom. I mean if it's this place, this time and this life alone, then God is truly not in control and there is a great deal to fear. But if we understand that God's kingdom and God's sovereignty and God's plan goes from eternity past to eternity future and that we are merely

passing through it totally under his control, then we can have true peace. I mean Stephen looked to all the world like a victim when he was stoned for presenting the gospel. I mean look at him, he responded exactly how Peter tells us to when he was under attack. He didn't repay evil for evil, he didn't repay insult with insult, but instead he blessed those who stoned him. I mean his last words were: *"Lord, do not hold this sin against them."* When he had said this, he fell asleep. You can look at Stephen and the promises that Peter references in Psalm 34 to conclude either of two pathways or paradise. You can read 1 Peter 3:10 where it says: *"For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."* You can apply those verses that we just looked at in Psalm 34 to Stephen. I mean he kept his tongue from evil, he kept his lips from deceit, he turned from evil and he sought peace, but the angels didn't encamp around him and he wasn't delivered from the crowd. In fact he was murdered by a bloodthirsty crowd. You can either say that God was in control or perhaps Stephen should have chosen a different option because he sure didn't get to love life and see good days.

If you're of the opinion that Stephen should have chosen some other option, I submit to you that you're probably missing the big picture. You see, it's been 2,000 years since that event. Safe to say that the earthly life of both Stephen and his killers has long been over. They were alive for some 40 to 80 years and they've been dead close to 2,000 years now. Well, actually some of them have been dead for 2,000 years but not Stephen. Jesus said this in *John 11*, he said: *"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live."* See just before Stephen's earthly life ended, he looked directly up and he saw a world that we know very little about. But this much we know. That world that Stephen saw is the real world that exists after this temporary world is over. Listen to what *Acts* says about what he saw. This is *Acts 7:54*. It says: *Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. But he -- this is Stephen -- full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And falling to his knees he cried out*

with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

So what happened to Stephen? Well, Stephen actually went from this murderous miserable situation directly into the kingdom of heaven. But you have to notice something extraordinary about what he saw. Stephen says: *"Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."* Well, Stephen is describing the risen Lord Jesus Christ who is now rightfully back on his throne in a place of unspeakable glory. But notice what Stephen says about Jesus. He says: *"I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."* Jesus has risen to greet Stephen. I mean Jesus is the king of the universe, he's normally seated on his throne, he's standing up to greet with extraordinary honor Stephen who has just left this earth. He's entered into a place where there's nothing but good days. By my count he's had over 2,000 years of good days so far. That's about 730,000 of them, and we're still counting. Stephen was called to martyrdom by a sovereign God who controls all things. He had the perfect model to pattern his life and his death after. It's the same model that we have. It's the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus lived out his life and death modeling exactly how Peter tells us to live ours in 1 Peter 3:9. And if you remember, it was only a chapter ago in 1 Peter 2:21 that Peter gave us Christ's answer to

victorious living in spite of insults and evil. This is what he said: *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* Jesus modeled for us how to receive insults and evil. And Jesus' key is our key. I mean you've heard me say it enough, *he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.* Do that, entrust God and you will have the very same power that Jesus and Stephen both demonstrated. Believe that the sovereign God of the universe who controls every single molecule in that universe has the power to be trusted no matter what the circumstances. That's the big picture.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, they saw the big picture, they understood it. In Daniel 3 Nebuchadnezzar is threatening to throw them into a fiery furnace and they refuse to worship the idol. In response to his threat, listen to what it says starting at verse 16 of Daniel 3, says: *Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not -- crucial words -- But if*

not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up." Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated.

See, these three men understood three things very clearly: number one, a sovereign God is always, always in charge; number two, it is God's sovereign choice to rescue or not; and number three, that changes exactly nothing. God chose to rescue Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, he chose not to rescue Stephen. God reserves the right to do as he pleases without having to justify his decisions before us. Peter himself learned that lesson during an appearance by Christ to him after the resurrection. I mean Peter -- Jesus has just assured Peter that he's forgiven him for denying him three times. This is Jesus cooking breakfast for the disciples after he has risen from the dead and he's speaking to Peter and he's charging him to feed and care for his sheep, and he goes on at that point to tell Peter exactly how Peter himself is going to die. This is *John 21*, it says: "*Truly, truly, I say to you -- Jesus' words -- when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.*" This he said to show by what kind of death he was

to glorify God. And after saying this, he said to him, "Follow me." So Peter receives this information and then shortly after he sees the apostle John and his curiosity gets the best of him. So he asks Jesus this question in *John 21:21*, says: *When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" "What is that to you?" says Jesus to Peter. I'm the creator, you're the creature; I'm the king, you're the subject. If I want to deliver you through martyrdom and deliver John by banishment to an island, that's my business and not yours, Jesus says lovingly but firmly. Mind your own business, Peter. I know what I'm doing. I've got this. This is what Jesus is saying.*

Peter's letter to us this morning reflects the lessons he's learned from Jesus. Don't look to the left, don't look to the right, don't look up, don't look down. In fact, don't look at anyone else because God's going to treat you specifically and individually according to what he deems is best for you and the kingdom. Peter is taking his lesson directly from *Psalm 34* which he quotes in our text. It says: *Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.* See that's what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and Stephen and John the Baptist all understood. They were all able to entrust themselves to him who judges justly regardless the outcome, I mean, the outcome was almost immaterial.

If we live, praise God; if we die, praise God. And all that matters is that God be praised. And you know why nothing else matters? It's because God knows that we have all of eternity just waiting ahead of us. I mean Stephen's life was cut short compared to Peter's or John's, but Stephen has already been enjoying eternity for 730,000 days so far with eternity as his future. I mean you think Stephen or John or Peter would care in the slightest who had the longest life span on earth? Paul summed it up perfectly with the right perspective on this is. He said this in *2 Corinthians 4:17*, he said: *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* You see for now all of us are stuck and we are stuck temporarily in this seen world. God knows it's the unseen world that truly matters, and God promises us great blessing if we allow our focus to include the unseen world as well as the seen world. And we can sum up that perspective with one word and that word is "freedom." It is the freedom to which we have been called. It's the freedom to entrust yourself to him who judges justly, to trust your job and your friends and your spouse and your health and your reputation and your future not to the vagaries of circumstance, but to an attitude of absolute certitude in the sovereignty of God who controls every last molecule in this universe. We don't need to

repay evil for evil or insult for insult precisely because we know who controls all evildoers. And we know from *Romans 8:28* that God says that all things including evil and insults are going to work together for good to those who love him and who are called according to his purpose. And furthermore we know that our light momentary trials on this planet are serving to create an eternity of glory for us in the unseen kingdom. And so we're free to bless precisely because we know that he who judges justly has called us to defer our judgment of times, of places, of people and things to his sovereign control. Or to put it another way: *Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."* Let's pray.

Father God, I just feel for those who are experiencing reviling, insult and evil. It is my prayer today that they would buy and own and make their own the sovereignty of God the notion that you are in absolute control of absolutely every single thing including those vast areas that we just don't understand and can't yet figure

out. I pray that you would give us the ability to see not just a big picture but a bigger picture, a picture that includes the seen and the unseen world and that what you are doing here on this planet in our lives is for what's going to benefit us for eternity. I pray you would give us that insight, that grace, that wisdom, and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.