

## **Overcome Evil With Good**

### **Roman 12:14-21**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Repay evil with good! Wow, that is a tough directive. How does that deal with the adage, “I don’t get mad, I get even!” How does ‘repay evil with good’ sit in your stomach when you remember how you have been scheming to get even with Renaldo Repschinsky for how he stole that mower at auction, bidding higher than you could go, especially since he knew how badly you really wanted it? How does ‘repay evil with good’ fit with the gossip you told about Helga Hempelstein because she told those whopper about you?

And you know what, over a beer you could probably explain the situations so that all your friends would agree that they deserve what you did – and probably a little bit more – after all, they really hurt you.

As much as it might seem right to us, that they get theirs for what they did, it is wrong. While it might be true that they deserved some sort of punishment for their sins against you, is it your place to mete vengeance? No!

If someone does something illegal, then it is the government’s place – instituted by God to punish people who do us wrong. God does not say that evil should be excused. If someone does something evil and unloving against you, then God speaks in our text about it:

Repay no one evil for evil. . . Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. . . . Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Our text echoes the words of our Lord Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus said:

You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. (Matthew 5:38-39)

How many have a hard time with that one? It just does not sit well in the craw, does it? But dear friends, God has already taken out vengeance for every sin. Justice has been served for every wrongdoing. But it does not come from us. Instead, we are to commend our cause to God.

Consider Jesus, how did he deal with those who lied about Him? How did He reap vengeance upon those who beat Him and whipped Him? What did He want done to those who screamed out begging for Him to be crucified? However Jesus responded is how we should respond to those who have done us wrong. Listen to the inspired words of St. Peter:

For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls. (1 Peter 2:21-25)

The only One who never sinned was brutally sinned against. He never said an unkind word and He never did an unkind deed. When evil men lied about Him, He silently endured it. When they cruelly mocked Him, He did not revile in turn. When the judicial system showed cynical contempt for justice, He issued no complaints, no threats, no recriminations. How does that even make sense? Where is fairness? Why didn’t God stop it?

Why? Because God's plan was that this most vile of all atrocities would be the means of salvation for sinners. It was while they abused the innocent Son of God, that the Father was placing upon Him your sins and mine, and He was doing so in love. God used the vile hatred of sick and evil men, and directed it for the purpose of His divine love. The most incredible act of evil against the most perfect innocence is how good overcomes evil.

Jesus bears your sins in His body. When we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there is at least one person out there who thinks that we deserve God to take vengeance upon us. We have sinned against someone... Indeed, there are no close friends or family against whom we have not sinned.

In Jesus though, our evil has been overcome with good. Jesus has borne our sin and the sins of all people. In Jesus the forgiveness of sins is freely given. In the Christ's crucifixion for the forgiveness of sins is true righteousness. Good has overcome evil and we no longer need vengeance. True justice has been meted out for the sins of all people, for Christ suffered the punishment due for all sin – good has overcome evil.

That's right. We don't need to get even. All the sinfulness, of all sinners, of all time, was heaped upon Jesus' innocent head and He fully bore it. In so doing He fulfilled the Divine demands for vengeance. There can be no point in personal vengeance. Vengeance is mine says the Lord our God. If you want to see vengeance displayed, look at God's Christ suffering under a crown of thorns, nailed to a cross. See Him suffer, not only for the sins which you have committed against God and your neighbor, but also for the sins committed against you. When Jesus tells you to turn the other cheek and to bless those who curse you, He is not telling you to do anything He hasn't already done. And He is not telling you to ignore justice. He faced justice. You don't need to establish what He has already established.

Christians can, and they do overcome evil with good. Our text says: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." We are to overcome evil with good. When we behave as Christ behaved and refuse to repay evil with evil, we are speaking more loudly than shouting at the top of our voice. Actions speak louder than words. The crucifixion of Jesus proves this.

When Christians, whose sins are covered with the righteousness of Christ, behave as if they need no justice that they don't already have and seek no vengeance but that which God in His own way and time will exact, they are living lives that reflect their confession of faith. That is repaying evil with good. The "coals of fire" mentioned, refer to the shame people feel when Christians treat those who have hurt them with love, when they refuse to respond to their evil in kind. And if people won't be shamed, let God worry about it. We have no need to fight battles for ourselves.

How can we seek vengeance upon those for whom Christ also died? If they have no repentance and faith in the forgiveness of Christ, their eternity will be much different than ours – hell is not a nice place to spend forever. On our part though, we are to live peaceably with all.

The atrocity committed in Orlando last weekend was horrific. Followers of Christ can in no way condone such behavior as the wanton destruction of life. And God's ministers of justice, those to whom He gives authority to evildoers, acted with the sword and meted out justice that day. We need to pray for those who were affected, the injured survivors, and the loved ones who are grieving.

But in our private lives, the message of Christ, and all His followers is a word of forgiveness to those who are repentant of their sinfulness. Period!

The innocent One, Jesus Christ, has taken all sin into Himself – evil has been overcome by the Good One. He has taken your sin, my sins, and the sins of all people into His own flesh. He died that forgiveness might be granted to all sinners – good overcomes evil.

Jesus gathers us today to live peaceably with us – so that we might live peaceably with others. He grants us His peace in the Word that we hear and in His body and blood as we gather at His table. We have an Advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ, the righteous. He pleads our case for us. He overcomes our evil with His own good, His perfect blood is the offered sacrifice which covers all our sin. It will stand the test of time and endure into eternity.

We live under mercy, at peace with all. God provides it. And as we give what we have received we show that we are children of God. Lord, grant this to us all. Amen.