



Sunday, May 29, 2022

OVERCOME

Evil with

GOOD

Main Verse: Rom. 12:17-21—(17) Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. ¹⁹ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. ²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. ²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Introduction: Who but the blind would deny that evil is persistent and increasing in the world. Almost daily, news of atrocities bombard media outlets around the world, while reports of any good deeds are sparse and hardly mentioned. But the proliferation of evil nor the attention it receives must overwhelm God's people; for good and evil have always been in the world and locked in a dual to the death. The battle was ongoing in the 1st century, and in chapter 12 of his epistle to the church of Rome, the apostle Paul instructed the saints on how to win. Paul reminded the saints that their consecration to God, love for people, and practical Christian living would overcome evil, and they have. Despite the evil present in the world and the persecution the first Christians faced, Christianity spread around the globe and has become the third largest religion in the world. Now, the end of the age is near, and Satan is not backing down. But neither should the church. Our strategy need not change. Righteousness and truth will win out. If Christians stick to the Scriptures, we will overcome the evil of today with "good" just as the early Christians overcame evil in years gone by.

Jesus Went About Doing Good: Acts 10:38, 1 Pet. 2:21

Acts 10:38-- How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.

1 Pet. 2:21-- For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

John 4:34-- Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

Note: In his sermon to the household of Cornelius, the apostle Peter said that Jesus went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Not surprisingly, Paul's instructions for overcoming evil matches what Christ taught and lived. Christ left us an example that we should follow in His steps. He was completely sold out to God. Doing the will of God was Jesus's spiritual sustenance. In other words, fulfilling God's will was more important to Jesus than anything else. To overcome evil, Christians today must live as Christ lived. We must take of the mantle of doing good just as Jesus did. But first, we must consecrate ourselves to God.

Overcoming Evil Begins with Consecration to God: Rom. 12:1-2

Rom. 12:1-2—I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. (2) And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Note: Even though the saints in the church of Rome had already experienced the new birth (John 3:1-5, Acts 2:38), they needed a closer walk with Christ. Paul urged the saints to consecrate themselves to God. The Greek word for “beseech” means to plead, beg, or urge. Paul pointed to God’s mercies as the reason Christians should sacrifice (dedicate) themselves to God. In the Old Testament animals were sacrificed involuntarily. However, since Christ died for us “while we were yet sinners” (Rom. 5:8) and offered Himself willingly to God (Phil. 2:5-10) for us, we should willingly offer ourselves to live sacrificially for Him (2 Cor. 5:15). We do not earn our salvation because we live holy. We become holy (separated and consecrated) when we willingly dedicate our bodies to God, which is acceptable to God and our reasonable service. As bondservants to Christ, Christians should not conform to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The word conforms means “to be fashioned after or patterned after.” In other words, Christians should not become adapted to the customs and practices of the current time. Transforming the mind means taking on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-10), and thinking according to spiritual principles. With body and mind dedicated to Christ, Christians take on His nature and progressively become like Christ, enabling us to overcome evil in the world as Christ overcame.

Turn the Other Cheek: Rom. 12:17, Matt. 5:38-48

Rom. 12:17, 19-- Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Matt. 5:38-48—(38) Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (39) But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. ⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Note: Like Jesus Paul told the saints not to trade evil for evil. Saints are not to seek revenge even if the evil done to us is deliberate. This is a powerful and effective concept, but one that is not always easy to implement. History is littered with people who deployed this strategy with great results, often turning those against them into supporters or friends. During His sermons on the mount, Jesus told the people to abandon the Old Testament maxim of an “eye for an eye”; which basically meant whatever evil one does to another, the same or equivalent evil would be done to him. Jesus said, don’t resist evil, and if it does happen, turn the other cheek. The Greek word for resist means to withstand or oppose. We are not to provoke violence, but we are not to resist it either. If evil cannot be avoided, we are to forgive. Jesus demonstrated His “turn the other cheek” teaching in the Garden of Gethsemane before his crucifixion. When the Jews arrested Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the attackers. Jesus quickly told Peter to put his sword away, and replaced the man’s severed ear.

Be Honest at All Times: Rom. 12:17, 2 Cor. 8:21

Rom. 12:17-- Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

2 Cor. 8:21—(21) Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

Note: Honesty seems to be at an all-time low in today's society. Sadly, that spirit has crept into the church as well. Providing things honest in the sight of all men means to be honest at all times and in everything. Paul admonished the Corinthian Christians to live the same way. Unbelievers as well as other Christians should be able to attest to the Christian's honesty.

Live in Peace with Others: Rom. 12:18

Rom. 12:18--¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Note: Here's something some Christians need to understand. We don't live on an island. We share the world with other people, saints and unbelievers. We need to live in peace with those people who are like us and those who aren't. When Paul said as much as lieth in you, he basically means as it depends on you. In other words, is try not to let "you" be the reason that you can be at peace with someone.

Let Wrath Take its Course: Rom. 12:19, Luke 21:19

Rom. 12:19--(19) Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Proverbs 20:22--Say not thou, I will recompense evil; *but* wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Luke 21:19--In your patience possess ye your souls.

Note: One important thing to understand about how Satan works is that he never seeks to destroy one person at a time. Satan is the master of mass casualties. Pride is his weapon of mass destruction. When someone offends us, we either become saddened or angry! If we do not quickly re-channel our emotions, pride can motivate us to seek revenge. Revenge always causes more people than were involved in the original conflict to be hurt. Paul urged the saints not to seek revenge, but to "give place unto wrath." We should let the person committing the evil vent his/her rage, or as Paul seems to write, allow the wrath of God to run its course. Paul quotes from an Old Testament verse which declares that vengeance belongs to God. God promises to repay those who commit evil against others—especially evil committed against born again believers. King Solomon said it is wise to wait on God to save us than to seek revenge. And Jesus told his disciples, "in your patience possess ye your souls." By not taking matters into our own hands, we allow God to work on our behalf. Satan's plan is hindered, and the evil-doer may come to shame and repentance as a result of God's divine wrath.

Do Good to Your Enemies: Rom. 12:20, Matt. 5:44

Rom. 12:20—(20) Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Matt. 5:44—But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Note: First, it is important to understand the word "enemy". The Christian's "true" enemy is the devil (James 5:8). All other "enemies" are simply people who are manipulated by our real enemy, the

devil. Therefore, an “enemy” is someone Satan causes to hate Christians. Jesus told his disciples they would be hated (Matt. 10:22). He didn’t say they (the disciples) would hate others. Christians aren’t permitted to hate others. If anyone is the Christian’s enemy, it is because he or she hates the Christian, not the reverse! Christians must love our enemies (those who hate us). We should bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us. In so doing, said Paul, we heap coals of fire on our enemy’s head. Several interpretations to Paul’s metaphor of coals-on-the-head exist. One interpretation is that coals symbolize damnation; that we increase our enemy’s guilt and punishment by loving them. Another thought is that hot coals refer to an eastern practice of helping one’s neighbor by given him/her coals in a pan to rekindle a fire (in his home or other place) which had gone out. A third interpretation is that the coals are symbolic of shame. By loving our enemy his face would become red or hot with shame as if coals had been poured on him, which might lead to repentance. Forth, it was once believed that heat placed in a pan upon the head of a sick person, aiding in the healing process. Whatever Paul meant by the saying, we know he was not encouraging revenge or hostility from Christians, but that Christians should not withhold acts of kindness even towards those who hated them.

Don’t Let Evil Win: Rom. 12:21

Rom. 12:21—Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Rom. 8:37—Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Note: Verse 21 summarizes Paul’s discussion in the previous verses about the Christian’s behavior. He encourages the saints not to let evil overcome them, by living out those things he mentioned. The Greek word overcome “nikao” (pronounce nick-k-o) means to conquer, prevail, or get the victory over. Paul said we are more than conquerors through Christ. He did not say we will be conquerors at some future time, but through Christ, we are conquerors at this moment. We are conquerors at the present and in the future. We will continue to conquer as long as we abide in Christ, because truth and righteousness always wins over evil. Since Satan’s only nature is evil, and he is the god of this world, we can expect evil to exist and persist. But we should never expect evil to prevail. Like Paul, we must be persuaded that “nothing will separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Summary: The battle between good and evil has been ongoing since Adam’s sin. That battle will continue until Satan is bound and cast into the lake of fire for eternity. Until then the church of Jesus Christ is called upon to overcome evil in every age. In his epistle to the church of Rome, Paul instructed the saints on how to accomplish that goal. To overcome evil Christians must be spiritually equipped. We must be dedicated to God, become renewed in our minds, and practice Christian living in the world. We must pattern ourselves after Christ; going about doing good as He did. We must practice turning the other cheek and be honest with everyone we encounter. When evil is committed against us, we must not seek revenge, but allow God to administer justice as He sees fit. If our enemy is hungry, thirsty, or sick, it is our responsibility to demonstrate the kindness and love of God, and help them. If we follow Jesus and Paul’s example, evil may come upon us, but it will not overcome us! We will overcome evil. Truth and righteousness will win, and God will be glorified in the earth.