

Do not Repay Evil with Evil

Mike Shultz

Romans 12:9-21

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9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 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," says the Lord. 20 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." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

I can recall many times when growing up where I thought that when someone did something to me that it was my job to "get

even.” After all, doesn’t the Old Testament give the description of a life for a life or a tooth for a tooth? Yet that was simply because man was full of wickedness. It was not because God wanted us to “get even” with others. It is not our job to repay evil with evil because God will be the ultimate judge in the end. He will be the one to have vengeance. It is not our responsibility to worry about punishment being brought upon someone else. If we want to be concerned about punishment, then we can be concerned about our own. However, that doesn’t mean that we should ignore when someone is doing evil. We can acknowledge the evil. If we don’t acknowledge the evil, then how can we discern if someone is drawing us toward Jesus or away from Him? That is hard to do without being able to label something as evil or as good. Our Scripture tells us today that we must know what evil is, but that it is not our job to repay evil with evil. We are to turn the other cheek. Or as modern language may say, “Kill them with kindness.”

So, let’s begin by diving into our verses for today. ***9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil. Cling to what is good.*** A common argument that I hear be spread, especially on Facebook, is that we are supposed to “love our neighbors and our children unconditionally.” However, those same people are quick to say that they don’t love you, and in fact, insult you if you disagree with them. They put conditions on loving you by telling you that you should love without conditions. Families have been more torn apart lately because of who someone voted

for than what we have seen in the past. We have seen people argue about abortion. Is it about controlling women, wanting both parties to be held accountable, is it murder? There are many arguments that will never be agreed upon. Something that is a big deal within our own denomination is about homosexuality. Some argue that Scripture says that it is sinful and needs to be repented of, while others state that Paul made up the word homosexual. They argue that it was never about homosexuality, but it was about forced sexual encounters upon young children. I will not tell you what I believe from the pulpit, but if you want to know my opinion, then you can talk to me privately. I just want you to be aware of the arguments.

The bigger question becomes, though, if we can explain away any sin, no matter what it is, then are we giving an excuse to evil instead of hating it like we are told to do? Those who oppose abortion are told that if they don't have a uterus, then they don't get to have an opinion. They say that if it is not your body, then you don't get a say in it. They say that no matter the reason, then you need to mind your own business. However, if all we did was mind our own business, then how would any evil ever get abolished? If Jesus just minded His own business, then He would have never gone to the cross. If the Good Samaritan had minded his own business, then the man that he rescued would have died right there after his brutal assault. If the women had minded their own business, then how would they have told the disciples that Jesus had returned. We must know how to

accurately judge sin. “Thos who love righteousness intensely will hate sin. They must regard evil with horror.”¹

10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. What does it mean to love someone. Love is honest. Love does not keep a record of wrongdoing. Love is being willing to cry when someone is hurting and laugh when someone is filled with joy. Love means that we are willing to sacrifice for someone else. Love means that we want the best for someone. Love does not mean agreeing with everything someone does. That includes that we shouldn't hate someone for their religious views or their political beliefs. If we love someone, then we have a desire to rescue them from harm. If we see someone is headed toward hell, then our job is to love them enough to tell them what they are doing and why it is wrong. It should not come from a place of attack, but rather they should feel our heart on our sleeve for them. It isn't about telling them how much better we are, but how much better they can be with God. “One of the evidences of Christianity in the Apostolic Church (and today it should be the same) was the testimony in word and deed of brotherly love, an evidence of real discipleship.”

We share this love because of the hope we have in who Jesus is and what He accomplished for us. We have hope that He has

¹ The Complete Biblical Library

granted us salvation if we simply choose to accept Him as our Lord and Savior. He will not force Himself upon us. He will not force us to be enslaved to Him in the next life either. We have a choice. We can choose to want Him in the next life, or we can choose to be separated from Him in the next life. He loves us enough to give us the choice. There are some who don't understand that concept. They see it as "God is so loving that because I rejected Him, He will send me to hell forever." The reality is that He did not send us to hell, but we told Him that that was where we wanted to go, and He accepted it. He saw the danger and tried to warn us, but we could choose to ignore it. Instead, I have hope because I know that eternity with God in heaven will be so much better than eternity in hell without Him. He repays our evil with love; it is just whether we can understand the love He offers. It breaks His heart when we don't choose Him, but life is so much better if we do.

13 Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. There are people in need all over when we simply open our eyes to it. There are homeless people. There are single parents. There are people in need of a job. There are people who have been victims of terrible events. There are people who have been mistreated by church. What kind of

example would we set if we saw the need and just pretended that we didn't. If God places someone in our path to help and we ignore them, then why should God care for us? God called Jonah out when he was more upset about shade than he was about the whole area of Ninevah. He wanted God to immediately repay their evil with evil instead of mercy and grace. Never mind the fact that Jonah was extended that same mercy and grace as he tried to run away. Let me ask you this, what was Rahab remembered for most? Was it being a prostitute or was it the way that she took care of the spies of Joshua? She was remembered for saving and welcoming these strangers. She showed love because she knew that God was taking care of these men. She was called to do something that was out of the norm for her. She had to do something and judge evil by sacrificing her own safety when the guards came to her home. Esther loved her people enough to put her life on the line when it came to going in to see King Xerxes. These heroes were willing to extend love to people that they didn't know and were blessed for it. How much more so could we be today to do the same? That doesn't mean that it is a free-for-all. There are still rules that must be followed and laws, but that doesn't mean that we can't love them. If we just allow them to do whatever and not acknowledge the justice that must be served, then we do not love them truly. To love them truly means that we want them to be able to grow in maturity and accept responsibility. It is not our place to judge them if we are committing the same sin, but we can acknowledge the sin.

Some people struggle when they see someone succeed more than them. It can be hard to love someone who makes more money than you. It can be hard to love someone who got the promotion that you wanted. It can be hard to love someone who got whatever it is that you wanted. It can be hard to love someone who we perceive to be a threat. However, we are all called to share in their triumphs with them. We should be proud of them for their work. We should acknowledge that they worked hard to get it instead of just declaring that it was “handed to them.” “It is far easier to weep with the other person in his troubles, than to rejoice with the person whose successes are greater. To be able to rejoice with and for him is the test of true Christian character.” We are not better than anyone else, so if we are being stubborn or selfish about this concept of success, then we are not acting like a true Christian.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 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,” says the Lord. 20 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. 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. It comes down to this: will you live your life by what feels good or by what God deems good? If you want to have hate for your enemies, then God will

have every right to hate you. We are all enemies of God. We are all involved with the persecution of Jesus and all that He endured. We continue to commit sins today that is just as bad as what He went to the cross for. He died for the sins of the people of His day and any future sins that would commit. He died for all of us. He didn't have to do that. We didn't deserve it. However, because God would not repay evil with evil, He gave us Jesus out of love. Jesus died willingly out of love. He could have come down from the cross if He wanted. He could have called for His angels to murder all who were there laughing at Him and making a spectacle of the crucifixion. Instead, He begged for our forgiveness. He gave His life so that we could have salvation. He rose again to keep His promises to us. He ascended to prepare a place for us. He sent us the Holy Spirit to guide us. We just have to choose that we want to listen. Stop living with the mindset of getting even and instead live with the mindset that God knows better. He will bring out the justice. We just need to bring out the love.