

Romans 12:17-21

In Response to Evil

1. 12:16 – “Be not wise in your own conceits.”

- a. Condescend ~def. Willingly put aside superiority to assume equality with one inferior.
- b. Don't boast in your standing or state. Grace is an undeserved gift - 1 Cor 4:7-10
- c. “*be not wise in your own conceits*” – When in high places the tendency is to look down.
- d. Meaning: Be not arrogant, conceited, disdainful, haughty, lofty, self-righteous, smug.
- e. *Rom 11:25 toward Israel, 12:3 toward other members, 12:16 toward all men.*
- f. Humility taught throughout the Bible - Prov 8:13, 16:18-19, 26:12,16, Psa 138:6, Isa 57:15
- g. Want humility? Learn, listen, praise, serve, help, and acknowledge God's mercy and grace.

2. 12:17 – Honest Response to Evil

- a. Recompense ~def. Pay back, reward. Don't respond in kind, respond in grace. Prov 26:4-5
- b. “*no man evil for evil*” - This not “turn the other cheek” (Matt 5:38-48) but close. Pro 24:29
 - i. Evil for evil is evil. Justice is not evil. Forgiveness is good. Matt 6:14 vs. Eph 4:32
 - ii. Any good thing you have to recompense evil comes from God in Christ - 1Thes 5:15
- c. “*Provide things honest*” - We are not ministers of evil, but of truth, grace, reconciliation.
- d. Respect, responsibility, duty, honor are roads most people don't travel. 1Th 4:12, 2Co 8:21
- e. “*in the sight of all men*” - Men see your good response, but not all men know why.

3. 12:18 – Live in Peace

- a. “*If it be possible*” - What makes it impossible? Truth and evil men - 2 Tim 2:8, 3:10-14
- b. “*as much as lieth in you*” - Of God's unspeakable gift, grace, mercies, and forgiveness.
- c. “*live peaceably with all men*” - Sometimes by separation, boundaries, silence, step away.
 - i. Peace can also look like a robust justice system built on Biblical justice.
 - ii. Peace can also be made by reconciliation, wise words, reconciliation, forgiveness.
 - iii. Keeping peace doesn't mean compromising/sacrificing sound doctrine - 2Th 3:12-16
 - iv. Eph 4:3 – The bond of peace is that by which we have peace with God (not men)

4. 12:19 – Vengeance and Enemies

- a. “*avenge not yourselves*” – Let a judge take care of it, sooner or later - 2 Tim 4:1, 1Th 4:6
 - i. This principle of justice requires proof, innocence, removes bias/conflict of interest.
 - ii. Unrighteous judgment, partiality, respect of persons all can occur when you avenge
- b. “*give place unto wrath*” – Wrath will happen, but in its time and place (not now, by you)
 - i. Paul speaking of wrath – Rom 1:18, 3:8, 2 Thess 1:4-9, Eph 5:6 (not today)
- c. “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay*” – saith the Lord in Deu 32:35-41, not in this dispensation.

5. 12:20-21 – Overcome Evil with Good

- a. “*feed him... give him drink*” - Our enemies are shown grace as they are in Prov 25:21-22
- b. “*heap coals of fire on his head*” – What the coals mean does not change what you do.
 - i. Coals as a cultural kindness/mercy to neighbors in desperate need of fire. (Wuest)
 - ii. Coals as God's judgment (if they resist His goodness) - Psa 140:9-10, Rom 2:4-5
 - iii. Coals as God's purging/purifying fire (if receiving His goodness) - Mal 3:2-3, 4:1
 - iv. Enemy is the rock, your grace the hot coals, remorse/repent the intended result.
 - v. In context, you do not repay; show grace not wrath. Repay evil with good.
- c. “*overcome evil with good*” – Good comes from God's grace, all men can be saved.
 - i. The reason God dispensed his grace. How to live with and respond to evil.