ROMANS 12:17-21
11/4/90

INTRODUCTION:

Satan is influencing (especially via music) our society toward "war" and "rebellion"

The believer who lives for God will eventually have enemies. Friction will inevitably come as you go across the grain of the world.

--Jesus had enemies

--Paul had enemies

--Stephen had enemies (Acts 7)

"Jesus warned His disciples that their worst enemies might be those of their own household" (Matt. 10:36) (Wiersbe, p. 556)

Make sure, however, that if you have enemies it is because of the "offense of the cross" (Gal. 5:11; 6:12-15) and not because you are an offensive Christian.

***Paying back evil with evil is wrong on three counts:**

I. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is Saying that <u>SIN JUSTIFIES SIN</u> (v. 17-18)

V. 17

The world's way of dealing with people is returning "evil for evil" and "good for good". . . "you stab me, I stab you" . . . "You tip me, I tip you."

In NYC, however, it goes: "You tip me, I still stab you."

"Recompense" = to pay back, give back, return.

"To no man" - regardless of who they are, or what they have done.

"Evil for evil" - the word "for" ("anti") means "in the place of."

We are not to return evil to replace the evil that someone else gave to us.

Those who fight evil with evil are saying: "You sin gives me a right to sin" (one wrong deserves another).

Of all sinful tendencies, this one is the easiest to give in to, and justify.

We think: "He stabbed me, I'll stab him. He gossiped about me . . . robbed . . . cheated . . . slandered . . . spoke against my child . . . I will do the same to him. He didn't give to me, I won't give to him."

EX: Divorce - "You committed adultery . . . I'm going for a divorce."

EX: Lawsuits - "You ruined my reputation (injured my character),etc., so I am going to sue you!"

EX: Cheating an employer - "He doesn't pay me or treat me like he should, so I'm not going to do my best on the job."

However, no doctor would fight poison with poison! Or disease with disease. That is not a cure.

[NOTE: a vaccine when you are well is given so that you will build up antibodies; no one gives a vaccine to someone who has the virus already. You give an anti-biotic - the opposite of the virus.]

Rather than seeking to justify evil for evil:

A. Seek to show SINCERE GOODNESS toward your enemies (v. 17b)

I Thes. 5:15 - "See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men."

"Provide things honest" -

"Provide" = to plan in advance; to think previously as to what you will do for those who did you wrong.

"Honest" = ethical goodness; intrinsic genuine goodness with no cover up.

Even though they may have treated us with unfairness, deceitfulness,

maliciousness, we are to return their evil with honest-goodness.

EX: If someone does you "dirty" or "stabs you in the back," you don't invite them over for dinner and then slip some arsenic in the food.

We are not to have any pretentiousness or false motives (of revenge) behind our good treatment of others.

"In the sight of all men" - what they see is what they get. We are not to get revenge by covering up our hidden feelings and acting like all is OK, when really we are seeking occasion to "move in for the kill."

B. Seek to live PEACEABLY with your enemies (v. 18)

"If it be possible" - if you are able, do what is in your power to maintain peaceful relations with others.

"As much as lieth in you" = from your standpoint, seek to be peaceful.

We cannot control whether or not someone else will be peaceful but we can control the peace from our end, from our side of the problem.

Too often you worry about the other side of the problem; you are concerned about their attitude and action toward you, and fail to remember you will not answer to God for them, but for you. Pay attention to how well you are doing to promote a peaceful relationship.

"Live peaceably with all men" -

Do your best to be what you should be to promote harmony and tranquility with:

1) your spouse
2) your employer
3) your neighbors
4) your in-laws and relatives
5) those who "hate your guts"

Some might say: "I can be nice to some enemies, some of the time; but certainly God does not expect me to be nice to all enemies, all of the time, does he?"

ANSWER: There are no exceptions.

Note - "no man" (v. 17a); "all men" (v. 17b); "all men" (v. 18). This includes saved and lost (cp. I Th. 5:15)

V. 18

You cannot influence anyone for righteousness unless they can feel at rest (at ease) in your presence.

James 3:18 - "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Mark 9:50 - "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another."

II. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is <u>Taking God's PREROGATIVES</u> in their own hands (v. 19)

"Dearly beloved" - It is God who loves us; therefore, He will see that we are vindicated. Because God loves me, He will fight my battles. He will right all wrongs done to His beloved.

"Avenge" - lit. to "take out justice"; to seek to make a matter <u>right</u> by taking out revenge toward someone. To take <u>justice</u> into your own hands.

Some wrong thing that doing evil toward others is <u>justified</u> because of what they did to you.

"Give place unto wrath" - it is not "our place" to vent anger; it is God's place; it is His prerogative.

When we seek to make right a wrong done to us by retaliating, we have entered into God's place as judge and executioner.

[NOTE: Government does have the right as "the minister of God" to judge and pay back evil doers - See following context, especially v. 4b. But we are not to take the law into our own hands.]

Why should we "give place to wrath"?

Answer: Because the Bible says so!

"For [because] <u>it has been written</u>: Vengeance belongs to Me, I will pay back," says the LORD. Paul is citing Deut. 32:35.

Don't be quick to defend yourself. If you do, then the Lord can't defend you. God does a better job at being a prosecuting attorney anyway.

Just as we would be fools to go to the court of law to defend ourselves without a lawyer, so is the Christian who attempts to defend himself.

David said, "Please mu cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me." Ps. 35:1

(Cp. the LORD's future defense of Israel - Isa. 49:25-26)

Remember, if God commands us <u>not</u> to "get even," then just the <u>thought</u> or <u>desire</u> to "get even" is wrong (sinful).

III. Someone who "pays back" evil with evil is Not practicing the <u>LAW OF LOVE</u> (v. 20-21)

Note the balance in the context between the negative prohibition and the positive injunction.

God says, "Recompense to no man for evil" (v. 170, "avenge not yourselves (v. 19); "be not overcome (v. 21).

Then in each case, He balances it out by commanding something we are to do. We are not merely to stop the <u>negative</u> (not give evil for evil) but we are to go a giant step further and replace it by doing the <u>positive</u> ("provide" [v. 17], "live peaceably" [v. 18], "feed him" [v. 20], "overcome evil with good" [v. 21]).

According to verse 19, to leave the retribution up to God requires <u>faith</u>. Faith in the fact that God will make right all wrongs.

According to verse 20, to return blessing to those who gave you misery, requires <u>love</u>. A love for their soul and their relationship to God.

Jesus taught against retaliation (SEE Mt. 5:38-48)

EX: How Elisha treated his enemies (a whole host of Syrian soldiers who had come to take Elisha captive

(II Ki. 6:22, 23).

EX: Joseph's response to his brothers.

"Heap coals" = to pile up fiery coals of conviction.

Each good deed is another coal, a re-confirmation of the inexcusability of your enemy's behavior and attitude toward you.

When you do good in return for the bad that someone else did to you, you cause the other person to be ashamed or embarrassed because of their wickedness. Such shame, brings conviction, and conviction, if responded to correctly, will bring about repentance!

Observe how God treated us when we were enemies (Rom. 5:6-10; Eph. 2:3-4).

The goodness of God has as its goal to bring man to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

Paul is quoting a Proverb (a portion of true wisdom) - Prov. 25:21-22 - "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Doing good to an enemy will not only have an effect on your enemy, but will have a benefit for you.

Prov. 25:22 adds this phrase: "...and the LORD shall reward thee."

I Peter 3:9 - "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise, blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

God sees how you treat those who are your enemies. Though your enemies may never repay you, God will!

Jesus promised in Matt. 6:4 that our Father who sees our alms (righteous deeds) [though they are done in secret, with no one else knowing] "shall reward thee openly."

"Will they take advantage of us? Will they hate us more?"

Only the Lord knows. Our task is not to protect ourselves but to obey the Lord and leave the results to Him." (Wiersbe, p. 556).

What if they don't change at all? What if our efforts of love don't convert them? In such cases, "we have still experienced the love of God in our own hearts and have grown in grace" (Wiersbe, p. 556).

V. 21

How do you "win a fight" as a Christian?

"Be not overcome of evil" = do not be conquered by evil.

The implication is that evil--if returned for evil--makes you the loser, the victim, the casualty.

Sin conquers you every time you choose to lower yourself and yield to it. (Rom. 6:16).

"Overcome evil with good" - the secret to conquering evil (on a personal level) is with good.

Showers of goodness quench the flames of evil. This is lifestyle of one living on a higher plane.

"Overcome evil with good" - the way to fight fire is not with more fire.

You don't quench fire with fire. But with the opposite of fire.

The best way to fight fire is not to add fuel to the fire, but to pour on that which robs the fire of its fuel.

CONCLUSION:

Doing good to those who do evil to you does not come natural.

But whoever said, we as Christians were to do what comes natural?
We are to live above the world, according to supernatural (Holy Spirit) promptings and impulses, not according to the flesh.

This is life on the higher plane!

Who is it that has done you wrong. Call that individual (or individuals) to mind.

Determine in your heart, right now, what good thing you are going to do for them. Maybe write a card, letter, mail a gift, invite them over for dinner, etc. Pray for them also.

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