

Coach House Church BEACONS

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD

29TH SEPTEMBER 2021

I was reading my bible the other day and a few verses really stood out to me. They are from Romans 12:17-21. It says "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 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. 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." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. This was something that my dad repeated to my brother, sister and me often when we were kids. Life brings lots of opportunities to create enemies. Whether it be because someone has outright offended us or just because they have annoyed us in some way. Maybe they were a bit too careless, or just got in the way at some point. People can range from being a little bit annoying to hurting us repeatedly and on purpose.

Living peaceably with people can be so hard and can seem impossible. Sometimes we just want to try and take control. We want to try and stop someone hurting us or at least hurt them back so we feel that we're not alone.

It might be that someone at work has really annoyed us. This is likely to happen because often we have no control over who we work with but they have the power to make our lives easier or harder. I am a maths teacher, so I have other teachers that I work with but another big part of the job is working with the children. They come from all walks of life and come into school with all sorts of baggage. They aren't always easy to deal with. It has taken me a few years to understand how to deal with them but I am sure that they work better when I am kinder to them. It isn't

a perfect solution and they sometimes still behave poorly but they respond better when I speak gently to them and when I offer to help them.

I think this is also true of others. If there is someone that really bothers you be nice to them. Speak gently to them and offer them every kindness. Then, eventually, they could become your friend. This verse doesn't say always live at peace with everyone, but as far as it depends on you. Do everything you can and don't worry about it if they still don't like you.

Even if we still have someone that hates us, it is good to live peaceably as it brings God's kingdom on earth and shows other people we are different. Living peaceably is not easy and will be a struggle, so if we keep going with it, people will see that there's something different about us. If we forgive offences and make friends with those others struggle with, it will be noticed and others will wonder how we do it.

This is not an easy thing to do and it's something I am definitely still learning. It is hard when someone repeatedly and purposefully hurts us. It can be so easy to want to take revenge but the next part of the passage answers that. It says that vengeance is God's job. We don't need to get involved or get our hands dirty because God will do it. God is the ultimate judge and we needn't try to make sure all wrongs are repaid in this life. God has it in hand and ultimate justice will be done in the end.

The quote in the passage that says "It is mine to avenge; I will repay" is also in Hebrews and Deuteronomy. This was part of a poem that Moses recited shortly before he died. It was about how God will avenge His people Israel. In Hebrews, this quote was used to show that there will be justice for those that crucified Christ. God cares about His people, He loves His children. He cares about those that have chosen to live His way and He will ensure that, in the end, there is no injustice against any of His children. It is hard to be patient but we need to remember that it isn't our job to avenge ourselves.

This can give us such freedom. We don't have to hold on to the hurt that we've experienced. We can let go and be free to trust people. We can believe the best in people because we don't have to hold on to bitterness from the past. We can start over.

We need to let go of revenge to make sure that we don't become a slave to anything. 1 Corinthians 6:12 says "You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything."

We, as humans, are so easily enslaved. But, if we have given our lives to Christ, that must be our first priority. We need to not let ourselves get distracted. That is the problem with holding on to hurt or being zealous about our rights or looking for revenge. It can so easily consume us when it shouldn't. We can waste time and energy that could be used so much better elsewhere. If we let other things consume us, they become our priority and our God without us even realising it until we just let go of faith altogether. We can be overcome by evil.

I'm sure we can all think of people that are zealous about their rights. They refuse to be injured and if you insult or hurt them in some way you are out of their lives. The problem is these people end up lonely because it is almost impossible to go through life without hurting others at all. We all have times where we are careless and do things we shouldn't. We need to remember that when others hurt us. If we remember how much we have been forgiven, it is easier to forgive.

The end of this passage says overcome evil with good. This reminds me of John 1:5 where it says "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it". This is always such an encouragement to me. It can feel like it is dark around us. It can feel like the world is so crushingly and depressingly dark. It can feel like the gospel hasn't yet reached certain places. But this passage reminds us that the light cannot be overcome by the darkness. Goodness cannot be overcome by evil but evil can be overcome by good. We need to not let ourselves be overcome by evil but we need to let the fruits of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control, grow in our lives. We need to battle evil and overcome it with good.

So, we need to live peaceably with others. We need to forgive constantly, even and maybe especially when it's hard. This is not an easy journey but it will be best for us and it's what God has called us to do. We need to hold on to God and let go of our need for control or revenge. Fortunately, we aren't called to do this alone. We have the Holy Spirit living in us. It takes a long time for us to change, it might even take a whole life time. But it will happen step by step. We also have the people around us, our Christian brothers and sisters, to encourage us and keep us

going. They can help us let go and forgive. Together, with the strength of God, we can use goodness to overcome evil.



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