



# Loving Enemies

Goodness and honesty are universally recognized character traits

**Romans 12:17 - Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

## What does it mean to repay evil for evil?

To hurt someone who hurts you. To take revenge for an evil done to you.

## How does not repaying evil for evil contrast with the world's view?

It is opposed to the attitude, "don't get mad, get even."

## Why is it wrong to take revenge?

God said it is wrong. It puts you in the place of God...

Rom 12:19 - Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

- We should trust in the Lord to make sure justice is done because He knows all things and we can be clouded with our limited perspective.
- Showing restraint to trust in God and not take things into our own hands pleases Him and make it possible for Him to reward us for our obedience.

## But doesn't the Old Testament teach that we should take revenge? Doesn't it say, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"?

Lev 24:19-20 - 'If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him-- 'fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man, so shall it be done to him.

This is the Law that God gave the nation Israel to maintain order. God ordained governments to act on His behalf so there is not personal vengeance that is being taken, it is God's vengeance using the instrument of government and the authority God has delegated to it. We need to distinguish between the authority God has give governments versus personal behavior. Jesus addressed this in Hs Sermon on the Mount...

Matt 5:38-46

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also.

41 "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

## What is Jesus saying when He says "whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also"?

Show kindness unilaterally, love your enemies (v. 44), be proactive in your love for others.

## Why would Jesus say this, doesn't this conflict with passages such as: James 4:7 - "Resist the devil and he will flee from you."?

- Resisting is not attacking. Eph 6:11 - "*Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" We are not to be the aggressor which is what vengeance is doing.
- Even popular culture recognizes the moral superiority of not being the aggressor... note that in Westerns, the good guy never draws first.

## Is Jesus saying that to love your enemy you need to be passive and let them have their way with you? have to let them walk all over you?

- Doing what is in the other person's best interest is not always letting the other person's will prevail. Tough love is about turning them over to God and the natural consequences that result from sin.
- Paul certainly expressed this in Romans 12:18...  
Rom 12:17-18 - Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

It is not always possible to live in peace with all men, but if the peace is broken we should not be the ones to break it, we should not be the aggressors. Instead, we should be the initiators of peace, to turn the other cheek and take more than

our share of punishment in order to preserve or restore the peace...

Matt 5:9 - Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

There are times it is necessary to engage in the inevitable combat in order to restore the peace.

### **How did Jesus set the standard as a peacemaker?**

Jesus took on more than His share of punishment when He died in our place on the cross. Jesus initiated the peace between God and men

### **How are we imitating God when we turn the other cheek?**

- Overlooking wrongs committed against us is what God does to those with whom He has a relationship: forgiving their sin.
- We are doing what God does, making the *"sun rise on the evil and on the good"*

### **Why does God make *"His sun rise on the evil and on the good"*? Why doesn't He make it more obvious that the evil are acting outside Almighty God's will?**

God is a gentleman and will not force anyone into a relationship with Him. He has made us in His image so we have the free will to respond to Him or continue to reject Him...

Rev 3:20 – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

This is why Jesus spoke in parables, so that those who truly responded to Him would understand but those who rejected Him would remain in darkness...

Matt 13:10-13

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?"

11 He answered and said to them, "Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.

12 "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

Paul put it this way...

2 Cor 5:7 - For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Life is a test to see who will respond to the Lord by faith. The sun rises on the evil as well as the good to make it a level playing field.

### **How does Paul recommend in Romans 12:20 that you deal with people who would do your harm?**

Care for their needs.

### **How is this counter to the world's view?**

God invites us to identify our enemies weakest point where a counterattack of revenge might be most effective and show them mercy by meeting their need.

### **Does helping an enemy excuse his misdeeds?**

No, grace is undeserved favor... we are recognizing him, forgiving him, and loving him in spite of his sins, just as Christ did for us. For example, Jesus said to the woman caught in adultery:

John 8:11 - "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

### **How does the practice of rendering aid to your enemy represent the core of Christian living?**

We should love people in the world as Christ does. If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to others.

### **What does it mean "in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head"?**

This statement comes from Proverbs 25:21-22:

Prov 25:21-22 - If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

- It may refer to an Egyptian tradition of carrying a pan of burning charcoal on one's head as a public act of repentance... thus we should treat our enemies with kindness so that they will become ashamed and turn away from their sins.
- It also occurred to me that if our enemies do not respond to the act of kindness we show them that their judgment for their sin will be more severe.

### **Back to Romans 12:17...**

**Romans 12:17 - Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.**

### **What does it mean to "have regard for good things in the sight of all men"?**

To do what is right, to be honest, noble, honorable, fair worthy and right. These are things all men recognize as being good. As genuine truth is universal, so is goodness.

### **Are these good things that all men consider good? Is Paul calling for a consensus about what is good?**

- Paul's standard for behavior was not common consensus but godliness. The point being made here is that the behavior of believers must be such that no one can rightfully make a claim of wrongdoing. To commit the same evil that was committed against us makes us indistinguishable from the original offenders (two wrongs do not make a right).

- Since truth is universal, people will be forced to recognize that the good you do is indeed good.

### **What should be our motivation to "have regard for good things in the sight of all men"?**

Recognize that this pleases God and that He may use this witness to His kingdom. These are things that glorify God:

1 Pet 2:12 - having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

### **Let's take honesty for example... How is honesty a good thing?**

Honesty is a godly characteristic... God Himself is honest. God does not lie to us, He personifies the Truth...

John 14:6 - Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Throughout Scripture, we are commanded to be honest...

Lev 19:35-36 - 'You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or volume. You shall have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

### **What to the honest scales refer to?**

Not deceiving others into thinking you are trading them more than you are.

### **What is an application of this today, how do people cheat others?**

By not reporting all your income on your tax return.

By not putting in a full day of work.

By doing things that you'd rather your boss didn't know about...

Col 3:22 - Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

### **What is the importance of living honestly? What difference does it make?**

- God commanded it.
- A dishonest word always leads to more dishonest words or actions
- Being dishonest is sin which always has consequences whether they are realized in this world or the next.

### **Why should we act the same whether we are being watched or not?**

- Because God is watching and He has a way of causing our dishonesty to become known to teach us a lesson.
- We are not as clever as we think we are and there are many ways people can find out about what we are doing that we do not know about.

### **What does God think of honesty?**

He delights in it...

Prov 11:1 - Dishonest scales are an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is His delight.

Note that the opposite of honesty is to lie, this is listed as the first and is 3 out of 6 things that God hates...

Proverbs 6:16-19

16 These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

17 A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil,

19 A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

### **How may we make sure we only "have regard for good things in the sight of all men"?**

Have the right mind-set. Think on good things...

Phil 4:8 - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.