

In returning to Romans 12—I think it's important to notice that vv17-21 form an intimate unite with a recurring theme—our treatment of those who mistreat us—be they within or without the church—that is—if they're professing Christians are not—now that these verses form a single unit is evident in the repetition of words and concepts—v17—"repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things...v19 Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord...do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"—that is—what we're told in vv17-18, we're retold in vv19-20 (though he adds a sober motive)—and it's all summarized in v21—"do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good..."

Thus—we could outline this passage as follows—[1] the principle stated (vv17-18), [2] the principle expanded (vv19-20), and [3] the principle summarized (v21)—thus—I want to consider the first this morning (vv17-18), the second this evening (vv19-20), and the third (v21), I will be forced to examine both this morning and evening—and thus likely will not need to return to it next week—but for now, I want to leave that as a possibility...

- I. The Principle Stated
- II. The principle Applied

- I. The Principle Stated

- A. Negatively—v17a

1. The first word that needs explaining is "repay"—the word simply means—to recompense, pay-back, or return...
2. It's closely connected to vengeance as we'll see tonight in v19—"do not avenge yourselves...for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord..."
3. Thus—when Paul tells us in v17—"do not repay evil with evil"—he means—do not seek your own revenge...
4. Do not treat people the same way they treat you—do not get even with them—do not pay them back in turn...
5. Now—perhaps the biggest question that needs answering is—who is Paul assuming we'll receive evil from...
6. Well—obvious from the context and he's referring to "those who persecute us" (v14), and "our enemies" (v15)...
7. But—I want to suggest—that he intends this principle to go far beyond "our persecutors" and "our enemies..."
8. Notice the words—"repay NO ONE evil for evil"—regardless who they are, or the degree of evil they show you...
9. That is—while this principle has first application to those without the church—it also applies to those within the church...
10. In fact—I suggest it has a very broad application—and includes everyone who mistreats us—without exception...
11. Now—before I leave the first part of v17—I want to offer a clarification—that Paul is referring to personal revenge...
12. That is—the command—"repay no on evil for evil"—does not entail—that we remove the criminal justice system...
13. For as we shall see in the next chapter (13)—the magistrate has been given authority from God—to punish evildoers...
14. But—what Paul is addressing here is—a personal response—that would assume that authority to ourselves....
15. In other words—he's forbidding all vigilante activity—leave God to punish the evildoer in ways He seems fit...

16. John Murray—"Misunderstanding of these admonitions arises from failure to see that they are concerned with our private, individual, personal relations to one another and not with magisterial and judicial administration...It is necessary, therefore, to appreciate the difference between what belongs to political jurisprudence and that which is proper in private relationships with our fellow-men..."

B. Positively—v17b,18

1. The apostle Paul isn't content with the negative—but also supplies a positive—Repay no one evil for evil...have regard for good things...
2. In other words—it's not enough to merely refrain from repaying them with evil—but we are to go behind this...
3. He then specifies two things we're to positively do—[1] have regard for good things, [2] live peaceably with all men...
4. [1] Have regard for good things, v17b—"have regard for good things in the sight of all men"—or, take thought for good things [2Cor.8:20-21]..."
5. That is—instead of repaying evil for evil—look purposefully and intentionally—for practical ways to show love...
6. Matt.5:38-42—"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..."
7. Matt.5:43-44—"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..."
8. Before coming to v18—notice those final words of v17—"have regard for good things in the sight of all men..."
9. That is—be conscious of the fact—that the world is watching—let them see how radically different you are...
10. Matt.5:16—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven..."
11. Here I want to briefly deal with an apparent contradiction—doesn't these contradict Jesus' words in Matt.6:1...
12. Matt.6:1—"take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven..."
13. Well—here our Savior's referring to an attitude that acts merely to be seen—it simply desires praise from men...
14. In Matt.5:16, our Savior's referring to an attitude that ultimately wants the glory to be given to God and not them...
15. Thus the apostle isn't telling us to do good to our enemies—with the purpose that our good deeds will be praised...
16. But he is telling us—to do good to our enemies—conscious of the fact—that our behavior is being watched...
17. [2] Live peaceably with all men, v18—"if it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men..."
18. Notice he clarifies—"if it is possible, as much as depends on you"—that is—do all within your ability and power...
19. The point being—Paul recognizes that sometimes, for all your effort—peace is simply unattainable and impossible...
20. Sometimes—you do all that's within your power to bring peace—but the other person—refuses to receive it...
21. Obviously—you can't control them—all you can control is, by the grace of God, your own actions and behavior...

22. John Stott—"Sometimes other people either are not willing to live at peace with us, or [they] lay down a condition for reconciliation which would involve an unacceptable moral compromise..."
23. For example—let's say a professing Christian began to deny a major tenet of the Christ faith—Jesus' deity...
24. Let's say he gets a following and the church splits—he then turns to Rom.12:18 and says—Let's live in peace...
25. No—there can be no peace until he repents of his errors—in this sense—Christ came not to bring peace but a sword...

II. The Principle Applied

A. Who are its recipients?

1. Here—I simply want to in a more focused way—suggest a few things that I've already suggested in passing...
2. This principle—that we are not to repay evil with evil, but with good and peace—has very wide recipients...
3. V17—"repay NO ONE evil for evil...have regard for good things in the sight of ALL MEN...if possible...live peaceably with ALL MEN..."
4. In other words—I want to suggest that this principle ought to be applied in the widest possible manner or way...
5. [1] Family members—that is—within our homes—we need to pursue peace among siblings and among spouses...
6. I think I can speak for most parents in saying—fewer things discourage us more—than sibling fighting and rivalry...
7. But—I want you children to think how this principle has direct application to your interactions with your siblings...
8. For example—you ask your sister to borrow her skirt—she says no—the next day she asks to borrow your shirt...
9. What do you say—do you repay her unkindness with unkindness—or—do you have regard for good things...
10. Or else—let's say your younger brother (or sister) is being annoying and starting all sorts of conflict and strife...
11. Do you demand your rights and fight back—or, do you attempt, as much as depends on you, to live peaceably...
12. Dear brethren—how happy is that home where this principle is practiced—a house filled with peacemakers...
13. Prov.17:1—"Better *is* a dry morsel with peace, than a house full of feasting *with* strife"—a house lacking this principle...
14. [2] Church members—that is—members of the church—professing Christians—those we love and see often...
15. 1Thess.5:13—"be at peace among yourselves"—that is—seek peace among yourselves as a local assembly...
16. [3] Outsiders—that is—those without the church—who mistreat us and persecute us because we're Christians...
17. For example—let's say those at work or at school—mock or ridicule us for our Christian beliefs and practices...
18. Far from repaying evil with evil—we have regard for good things in the sight of all men—and pursue peace...

B. What are its hindrances?

1. Here—I want to rather briefly suggest three common hindrances—that keep us from complying with this principle...

2. [1] A proud spirit—that is—we demands our rights and refuse to be mistreated—because we are proud creatures...
3. [2] An unloving spirit—what is the essence of the law—love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself...
4. [3] An unbelieving spirit—by this I mean—we simply fail to believe that God is watching and knows all things...
5. Oh dear brethren—do you want an accurate self-examination—to determine your present spiritual health...
6. Ask yourself this question—how do I respond to others—when they mistreat me and show evil towards me...
7. How easily can I refrain from repaying evil for evil—and instead, pursue peace and have regard for good things...
8. This question will provide us with an accurate indication of how much pride and unbelief remains within us...

C. What are its motivations?

1. Let me remind you on the front end—that these practical directives throughout this chapter—are Christian duties...
2. That is—we must practice this principle—in light of Christian motives—using Christian recourses and provision...
3. Simply put—no one can really or rightly fulfill this commands—except they be indwelt with the Spirit of Christ...
4. Now—to such who have the Spirit of Christ—I want to suggest three related motives to assist you to this end...
5. [1] Peacemakers imitate God, Matt.5:9—"Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God..."
6. That is—those who pursue after peace are demonstrating that they bear the divine image—they are God's sons...
7. Why—because this is how God acts—He is the ultimate and perfect peacemaker—not repaying evil with evil...
8. Thus—twice within this letter, God is referred to God as "the God of peace" Rom.15:33—"now the God of peace *be* with you all..."
9. Thus—the first motive for you and I to pursue peace—even with those who mistreat us—is God's treatment of us...
10. Think dear brethren—of the GREAT lengths God went through—to live peaceably with His beloved people...
11. Think dear brethren—of the GREAT lengths the Son went through—to live peaceably with His beloved bride...
12. From man's perspective—there were several obstacles—that needed removing—if peace was to be obtained...
13. [a] God's wrath needed appeasing—if God would have peace with man—His wrath needed to be satisfied...
14. In the gospel of Jesus Christ—God is willing to live peaceably with all men—but not at ANY or ALL cost...
15. He is NOT willing to make peace with man at the expense of His righteousness—this was in NO way an option...
16. Thus—He sent His only Son—to become a man—and bear the guilt and the punishment—our sins deserved...
17. He endured the abuse of evil men—bore the shame and pain of the cross—and satisfied God's righteous wrath...
18. [b] Man's heart needed changing—the problem was not merely with God—but the problem's also with man...
19. By nature we are all born with an evil heart that's at enmity with God and refuses to make peace with God...

20. Thus—it would not have been enough to merely satisfy God's wrath without removing our hatred for God...
21. Rom.5:6-11—"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation..."
22. [2] Peacemakers glorify God—that is—when we IMITATE God we GLORIFY God—before the eyes of men...
23. I think it's very important to notice—how powerful and influential this principle can be outside the church...
24. Oh brethren—Christians are very unlike this world—they alone refuse to repay evil with evil—but with good...
25. How or why do Christians act this way?—but because they bare the divine image and possess the Holy Spirit...
26. 1Pet.4:12-14—"Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed *are you*, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified..."
27. 1Pet.2:11-12—"Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 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 [3:13-17]..."
28. Many of you know—that First Peter was largely written to assist Christians with dealing with mistreatment...
29. They were enduring reproach mockery, false accusations and suffering—for the sake of righteousness and Christ...
30. Throughout the letter—Peter exhorts them to refrain from retaliation—but to trust a just and wise Creator...
31. He largely provides a fourfold motive—[a] you used to live just like them, [b] you are now a royal priesthood, [c] Christ suffered for you, and [d] enduring suffering rightly, may influence your enemy and glorify God...
32. This phrase—"the day of visitation"—has been understood in one of two ways—conversion or consummation...
33. That is—as they observe you refusing to repay evil with evil—this may be a means to bring them to repentance...
34. Or—to bring them to "glory God"—either when He visits them in conversion, or else, at the consummation...
35. [3] Peacemakers live with God—that is—no one goes to heaven—but those who are generally peacemakers...
36. Heb.12:14—"pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord"—that is—see God in heaven...
37. Nobody goes to heaven because they pursue peace or holiness—but nobody ever goes to heaven without them...
38. But this is my point—those who are pursuing peace with all men and holiness—will see the Lord in heaven...
39. Oh brethren—who cares how we're treated in this life—we don't live for this world—we have a higher hope...
40. For those who by grace—suffer for the Lord Jesus now—will rejoice with Him forever—in the New Jerusalem...