

RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL UNDER DIVINE MANDATE

Rom.12:17-21

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Often when men are elected to a high political office by an overwhelming or even a large majority of the votes cast in an election they will claim they have received a mandate from the people for their administration in serving the people whom they are to represent.
2. We as servants of God always operate under a divine mandate to return good for evil with dire consequences if we reverse the procedure.
3. What God requires of us we can do! What is wrong or sinful for us to do, we can refrain from doing!
4. To return evil for good is a form of seeking revenge or vengeance.
 - a. Which means “to inflict harm or injury in return for; to exact satisfaction for; to vindicate y avenging.”
 - b. Which is always condemned; an action forbidden to man with serious and even eternal consequences!
5. To return evil for good is the opposite of that which the Lord requires of us. See Mt.5:38-48; Rom.12:17-21; 1Pet.3:8-12; 2:18-23.
6. When men seek vengeance there is always an element of evil involved. It is never a matter of seeking justice, simply seeking to right a wrong, or returning good for evil!

II. DISCUSSION

A. VENGEANCE IS A PRINCIPLE THAT RIGHTFULLY BELONGS TO GOD, NEVER TO MAN, BOTH O.T. AND N.T. PASSAGES ATTEST.

1. O.T. passages.
 - a. Deut.32:35: “To me belongeth vengeance, and recompense...”
 - b. Psa.94:1: “O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself (shine forth).”
 - c. Nahum 1:2: “God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for hhis enemies.”
2. N.T. passages.

- a. Lk.18:7,8a: “And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily...” Cf. Rev.6:10: 20:4.
 - b. Rom.12:19: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” (Deut.32:35)
 - c. At the 2nd Coming of the Lord he will take “vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 2Th.1:6-10.
 - d. The writer of Hebrews referred to this principle in quoting from the O.T., “For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people,” Heb.10:30. (Deut.32:35; Psa.50:4)
 - e. The Apostle Paul asked the question to the Romans, “...Is God unrighteous who taketh Vengeance? (I speak as a man). God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?” Rom.3:5,6.
3. God’s seeking vengeance is always a matter of seeking justice, or meeting out justice, with no evil involved as in the case of men seeking revenge or vengeance, which always involves evil of some kind!

B. THE VERY HEART OF THE TEACHING AND THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY ARE OPPOSED TO THE CHRISTIAN HAVING A SPIRIT OF REVENGE.

1. Vengeance involves ill will toward one’s enemies BUT JESUS TAUGHT that we are to love our enemies, that we might be children of our Father who is in heaven, Mt.5:43-48.
2. Vengeance involves returning evil for evil BUT JESUS TAUGHT turn the other cheek, Mt.5:38-42; Rom.12:17-19.
3. Vengeance involves treating people as you have been treated in an unrighteous or evil manner BUT JESUS TAUGHT ‘whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...,’ Mt.7:12.
4. Vengeance involves a worldly, evil disposition BUT JESUS TAUGHT we are to be followers of him (Mt.16:24). He certainly didn’t take vengeance, and requires us to follow his example (1Pet.2:21-23).
5. How can we seek revenge and follow Jesus as our example?

C. VARIOUS BIBLE EXAMPLES OF RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL PROVE WE TOO NOT ONLY MUST BUT CAN ALSO DO IT!

1. Joseph who blessed his brothers is an example.
 - a. Joseph was evilly treated by his brothers, Gen.37:15-18-28.
 - b. In spite of this evil treatment, Joseph returned good for evil to his brothers, Gen.45:1-15; 50:14-21.

2. The captive Hebrew maid who blessed Naaman, her captor, is another example.
 - a. 2Kgs.5:1-4 contains the record of it.
 - b. Instead of seeking revenge of any kind for being made a captive, she returned good for evil.

3. David spared Saul's life is still another O.T. example of returning good for evil.
 - a. Saul became jealous of David and with an evil spirit set about to kill David, having become his enemy continually, 1Sam.18:5-12,29; 19:1,2; 23:7.
 - b. In spite of all of this evil action on Saul's part, when given opportunity by the Lord to slay Saul, David spared him, 1Sam. 24:1-19.

4. Stephen praying for his murderers is a N.T. example of a follower of Jesus Christ returning good for evil.
 - a. Stephen was falsely accused, battered and bruised, Ac.6:9-14; 7:54-59.
 - b. With his dying breath, Stephen petitioned the Lord on behalf of his murderers with these words: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," 7:60.

5. Jesus Christ himself as our great example prayed and died for his enemies, which included all sinners, even you and me.
 - a. Observe the evil treatment Jesus suffered at the hands of his enemies on the cross, Mt.27:20-44.
 - b. Yet ye prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Lk.23:34.
 - c. Jesus voluntarily laid down his life even for his enemies, for all sinners, which he did by the grace of God, Jno.3:14-18; Jno.10:11-18; 1Cor.15:3; Gal.1:4; Rom.5:6-10.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Let us remember, never forget:
 - a. That we are living under divine mandate to return good for evil.
 - b. That vengeance is a principle that belongs to God, never to man.
 - c. That the very heart of the teaching and the principles of Christianity are opposed to the Christian having a spirit of revenge.
 - d. That both the O.T. and the N.T. contain various examples of God's servants returning good for evil, even under extreme circumstances, which serve to prove that we not only must but can also do it!
 - e. That Jesus Christ, who is our example, also did it, and calls upon us to follow his example.
2. We are thusly challenged to overcome evil with good in our ives.
3. We close this lesson by inviting you to overcome sin by:
 - a. Coming to Jesus, the Savior, Mt.11:28-30.
 - b. Believing on him, Jno.8:24.
 - c. Repenting of your sins, Lk.13:3.
 - d. Confessing you faith in him as the Son of God, Ac.8:35-37.
 - e. Being baptized into him for the remission of sins, Gal.3:26,27; Rom.6:3-6; Ac.2:36-38.
4. Then we urge you to remember that you must continue in faith to serve the Lord, Rev.2:10; Heb.5:8,9; Mt.7:21-23; Lk.6:46.