

RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL

Ed Dye

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Bible has so much to say about good and evil, praising and commanding the one, and condemning the other in all of its forms. Take note of a few examples:
 - a. Psa.38:20: "They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is."
 - b. Psa.52:3: "Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak rightness."
 - c. Prov.17:13: "Whoso rewardeth evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house."
 - d. Mk.7:20-23: "And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within , and defile the man."
 - e. Lk.6:45: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."
 - f. Jno.3:19,20: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."
 - g. Rom.2:6-11-----
 - h. 1Th.5:22: "Abstain from all appearance (forms) of evil."
 - i. 2Tim.3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."
 - j. 1Jno.3:12: "Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous."
 - k. 1Cor.13:4,5: "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil."
2. Is it any wonder then that the Bible teaches us to always return good for evil? Again, let us note how often it does so and the manner in which it does it: Mt.5:38-44; Rom.12:14,17-21; 1Th.5:15; 1Pet.3:8-12; 3Jno.11.
3. Since God condemns the one and commands the other; and since God never requires anything of us that it is impossible for us to do; we know then that we can refrain from evil; that we can do good; that we can even return good for evil!
4. To further encourage us in the doing of it, let us observe some Bible examples of men and women returning good for evil.

II. DISCUSSION

A. 1ST, THE EXAMPLE OF JOSEPH WHO BLESSED HIS BRETHREN IN RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL DONE TO HIM.

1. Joseph was evilly treated by his own brothers in the flesh:
 - a. Gen.37:4,5: “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him. And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren: and they hated him yet the more.”
 - b. Gen.37:8: “And his brethren said to him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? Or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.”
 - c. Gen.37:11: “And his brethren envied him”
 - d. Gen.37:18-36 -----
2. Joseph, in spite of this evil treatment by his brother, returned good for evil; he comforted them, and spoke kindly to them, Gen.45:1-15; 50:15-21.

B. ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THAT OF DAVID WHO SPARED KING SAUL.

1. Saul repeatedly sought to slay David and became his enemy continually, 1Sam.18:5-11,24b,28,29; 19:8-11; 20:30-33.
 - a. On one occasion Saul even sought to justify his actions by claiming that “God hath delivered him into mine hand,” 1Sam.23:7.
2. In spite of such repeated evil attempts on David’s life, when David was presented with the occasion to take vengeance on Saul and slay him, he spared him instead – thus returning good for evil, 1Sam.24:1-13,16-20.
3. Even after this Saul didn’t cease to pursue David seeking his life, 1Sam.26:1-4.
4. Once again David was presented with the opportunity to take vengeance on Saul; once again he refused to do so – thus returning good for evil, 1Sam.26:5-12.

C. A THIRD EXAMPLE OF RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL IS THAT OF THE HEBREW MAID WHO BLESSED HER CAPTOR WITH A DEED OF KINDNESS.

1. She had been taken captive by the Syrians against her will, but instead of seeking revenge or manifesting any ill will of any kind against them, she returned good for evil, 2Kgs.5:1-4.

D. STEPHEN IS A FOURTH EXAMPLE OF ONE RETURNING GOOD FOR EVIL.

1. By the unbelieving Jews, whom he was making an effort to teach the truth concerning Jesus Christ and the gospel of Christ, Stephen's efforts were rejected; he himself was falsely accused, battered and badly bruised, Ac.6:9-14; 7:54-59.
2. Instead of reacting in kind, Stephen, in his dying breath, petitioned the Lord on their behalf saying, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," V.60.
 - a. He died with these words on his lips!

E. FINALLY, THERE IS THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST WHO PRAYED FOR AND DIED EVEN FOR HIS ENEMIES.

1. The very One who teaches us to return good for evil practiced what he preached. Cf. Ac.1:1; Jno.13:12-17; 1Pet.2:21-23.
2. Observe just one of many occasions where Jesus suffered evil treatment at the hands of his enemies when they demanded that he be crucified, Mt.27:19-44. Cf. Ac.2:22,23.
3. Yet he prayed for them, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," Lk.23:34. Cf. Ac.3:17.
4. Jesus "by the grace of God" voluntarily died for every man, Heb.2:9 – for his enemies as well as those who believed on him. Cf. Rom.5:6-10.

III. CONCLUSION

1. If Joseph, David, the Hebrew maid, and Stephen, all mere human beings, as we are, could suffer evil at the hands of other human beings and return good for evil, and they could and did, so can we. If not, why not? Cf. 1Cor.10:13.
 - a. The Lord teaches in his word how to face temptations, bear them and overcome them; he shows how to do it by the example of others who did it before us. Cf. Jas.1:12.
 - b. Then by his own personal example he teaches us how to do it by word and deed!
2. Let us by this means learn how to do it and then practice it with the Lord's blessings and our own physical, mental and spiritual benefit!
3. To do otherwise will destroy us mentally and spiritually!