



Pt 8- **Being Composed** “Responding to evil with good.”

Romans 12:17-21 (nkjv)

The twelfth chapter of Romans has much to say about what is expected of authentic Christ followers...

1. In General Terms (12:1-2)

- a) They are to present themselves as living sacrifices to God.
- b) They are not to be conformed to this world.
- c) They are to be transformed by the renewing of their minds.
- d) They are to prove what is God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will.

2. In More Specific Terms (12:3-16)

- They are to fulfil their function in the body of Christ. (12:3-8)
- They are to love without hypocrisy, abhorring what is evil. (12:9)
- They are to love other Christians and to esteem one another highly. (12:10)
- They are to serve the Lord diligently, with fervency of spirit. (12:1)
- They are to rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and be steadfast in prayer. (12:12)
- They are to share in the needs of other Christians and to pursue hospitality toward strangers. (12:13)
- They are to bless those who persecute them. (12:14)
- They are to rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. (12:15)
- They are to be of the same mind, with humility and lowliness of mind. (12:16)

Such behaviour is certainly an indication of a transformation!

But perhaps one of the greatest signs of a transformation...

- Is how one responds to evil.
- Is how one treats their enemy.

Human nature responds to evil done against them with an attitude of vengeance. But is this how authentic Christ followers are to respond?

Romans 12:17-21 is probably one of the most difficult teachings from the Scriptures – no doubt about it.

So...how are we to respond to evil?

1. Repay no one evil for evil.

Thus Paul writes in **Romans 12:17a**

Note also **1 Thessalonians 5:15**

Paul is not alone in his thoughts here note also;

- a. Solomon's counsel in Proverbs - **Proverbs 20:22**
- b. Jesus' teaching in the sermon on the mount - **Matthew 5:39**
- c. Peter's writing in his epistle - **1 Peter 3:9**

Thus we are prohibited against responding to evil with evil.

2. We are to reply to evil with good.

Note first what our concern is to be - **Romans 12:17b-18**

- a. To have regard for the good things in others.
- b. To live peaceably with others if at all possible.

Therefore, our response to evil is to reply with good - **Romans 12:20**

- a. As the Law of Moses instructed - **Exodus 23:4-5**
- b. As David exemplified in his dealings with King Saul - **1 Samuel 24:17**
- c. As Solomon counselled, and Paul quoted - **Proverbs 25:21-22**
- d. As Jesus taught in His sermon on the mount - **Matthew 5:38-44**

We need to carefully that the response is to be one of aggressive good will and kindness not retaliation.

People normally respond differently, depending upon their ability.

(*e.g., vengeance, self-defence, passive resistance, running away*).

Yet authentic Christ followers are taught to respond with love.

So... why are we to respond with good?

1. Vengeance belongs to God.

- a. **Vengeance is God's prerogative - Romans 12:19**

God certainly possesses the ability to administer it justly - **Nahum 1:1-8**

He is slow to anger and He knows the hearts of men.

It is a mistake to presume that every example of Divine conduct means we can do the same!

2. Victory over evil is more likely if...

Our goal is to overcome evil - **Romans 12:21**

How can we best hope to overcome evil and change the evil person?

The most likely way to both overcome evil and change the evil person is by reacting with active good will!

- a. Is this not how God sought to change the world?
Romans 5:8; John 3:16; Romans 2:4
- b. Is this not how Jesus sought to change the world? **1 Peter 2:21-25**

Certainly Jesus' example demonstrates a better way to handle conflict and evil.

- a. His humility and sacrificial love has motivated many to turn from sin.
- b. And we are called to walk in His steps!

Those who do follow Jesus' example often make a powerful impact on others:

Kim Joon-gon has seen 2,000 out of 20,000 people on Chunnam Island murdered by the Communists. They dragged his family to a spot where 160 people from two villages had gathered to beat the Christians. There Kim's father and wife were beaten to death and Kim was left for dead. When he revived and sought safety at an acquaintance's house, he was turned over to the Communists. Only the sudden appearance of an American ship off the island coast saved him this time, for the Communist soldiers hurried away to battle.

He hid out in the countryside until the South Korean army captured the island. The Communists who had killed his wife and father were arrested. Because it was wartime, the police chief had authority to execute without trial. But as the chief prepared to kill the men, Kim pleaded, *“Spare them. They were forced to kill.”* The police chief showed great surprise. *“It was your family they killed! Why do you now ask for their lives?”* Kim replied quietly, *“Because the Lord, whose I am and whom I serve, would have me show mercy to them.”*

The Communists were spared execution because of Kim’s plea. News of his action spread among other Communist supporters in the area. When Kim later ascended a mountain to preach to Communists hiding out, he was not killed. Many of the Communists became Christians, and when Kim finally left the island there was a flourishing church of 108 members.

Conclusion

We may never be called upon to respond to evil with good in such a remarkable way as Kim Joon-gon but we can begin by how we respond to personal insults, offences and abuses we often receive from others.

Reacting to evil with good will does not always convert the evildoer...

- a. Jesus was crucified on the cross, enduring hostility by sinners.
Hebrews 12:2-3
- b. In such cases we must commit our cause to God, as did Jesus.
1 Peter 2:21-23; 4:19

But there other reasons for responding to evil with good...

- a. To be different than sinners - **Luke 6:32-34**
- b. To be like our Heavenly Father - **Luke 6:35-36**
- c. To receive a blessing (*more likely to love life and see good days*)
1 Peter 3:9-12