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The Sonship Life Study Guide

Romans Education, Part Three Student Edition: Book 1

Developing the Sonship Skill of
GODLY JUSTICE

ROMANS 12:17-13:10

Welcome to The Sonship Life study guide. This book is designed to coincide with the PowerPoint presentation and video lessons.

The video lessons are found on Vimeo.

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GODLY JUSTICE
Romans Education, Part 3: Session One
Notetaker

Fig. 1: Divine Institutions

A divine institution is any entity established by God for _____
_____ with a view toward the
accomplishment of His _____.

Fig. 2: Major Sections of Justice

Section One: _____

Section Two: _____

Fig. 3: Define the Terms

Evil: _____

Recompense: _____

Student Notes

Session 1: Romans 12:17

Having finished the first section of godly wisdom, we now begin the section which concerns godly justice. When we talk about justice we are talking about what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of some kind of authority. In this case, the authority is our heavenly Father.

In Romans 12:17-13:10, we are going to be taught how to make wise decisions in a number of areas such as the society and culture we live in, and the various levels of government which make and enforce the laws.

Human government is a divine institution, just like creation, free will, the church, marriage and family.

A divine institution is any entity, established by God, for the orderly arrangement and regulation of people with a view toward the accomplishment of His eternal purpose.

When God established the nations He also ordained for a civil society within each nation. The divine institutions of marriage and family (for example) are meant to operate within a civil society and influence it, affect it and preserve it. He also provided for a divine structure of authority (government) to provide for a system of right and wrong and the power to enforce its norms and standards on its citizenry.

So why are we getting instruction in justice here in Romans 12? We are being instructed as to our responsibilities in relation to our Father's norms and standards. We are being taught how to view these divine institutions properly and not to look at or respond to them like the unsaved world. In other words, we are being taught to look at those things which God ordained and brought into being for a purpose, so that we might respond to them in a godly fashion and by so doing, facilitate their purpose under God.

Normally, outlines help us get a grasp of the information before us. But this time, the way we outline godly justice is important to properly understanding the passage. The whole of godly justice is contained in Romans 12:17-13:10. In those verses, there are two major sections.

The first major section is Romans 12:17-21. This first section pertains to Personal Justice. By this I mean how you should be thinking about yourself with regard to the society you live in and the people you come into contact with.

The second major section is Romans 13:1-7. Romans 13:1-7 deals with Governmental Justice. Governmental justice refers to the various institutions of civil law and order.

So, let us start off by reading the verses pertaining to the first major section, Romans 12:17-21.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.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.²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.²¹ Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Verses 17-21 are a package of doctrine that makes a full circle. It starts off with “recompense to no man evil for evil” and it ends with “be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” The passage starts off with what not to do, and ends with what to do.

Looking at this first major section, we are going to lump vv. 17 & 18 together, for they are primarily talking about getting along with other people. There is a sense in which these represent the godly thinking part of the doctrine, especially in the first phrase of vs. 17.

Verses 19-20 are primarily talking about our response to wrongs committed against us and the surety of God’s justice in the world. There is also a sense in which these verses constitute the godly living aspect of the doctrine.

Vs. 21 is the first godly labor of justice. We will see more issues of godly labor as we progress through the verses that pertain to godly justice.

Now, let’s look at vv. 17-18.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Verse 18 is the goal that vs. 17 is attempting to accomplish; live peaceably with all men. There is a way to do that; do not dish out evil for evil. There is an attitude, a certain kind of thinking, behind rendering evil for evil. It says if you do something to me, I am going to do it to you.

This kind of thinking has been prevalent in the world since the beginning.

It is common in this world, and has been from the beginning, to think that evil for evil is the way to go. Let me give you an idea of just how prevalent the idea is.

This was the royal arms of the Stuart Dynasty of Scotland from the reign of James VI, when it appeared on minted coins in 1578.

Nemo me impune lacesset

That same motto is posted above the entrance to Edinburgh Castle, the 1100 year old castle in Edinburgh, Scotland, which served as the residence for the Scottish royal family for centuries. In 2014 it was recognized as the most besieged place in Great Britain and one of the most attacked in the world, withstanding 26 sieges.

Nemo me impune lacesset – the royal arms of Scotland. It means: “No one provokes me with impunity,” or “no one can harm me unpunished.” It is another way of saying: “I will render evil for evil to every man.” It is not just in Scotland. It was adopted by various military units in England, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, India, South Africa and Canada.

It is the motto of the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines of the U.S.M.C. Not only that, but the motto also appears (with the verb in the future tense) above an American Timber Rattlesnake on a 1778 \$20 bill. It was also a funeral badge worn by police officers.

Nemo me impune lacescit is the motto of Dartmouth College's independent conservative newspaper, *The Dartmouth Review*.

And it showed up in “the Cask of Amontillado” a short story by Edgar Allan Poe.

And what is this motto about? It is about justice, which happens to be what we are studying in Romans 12:17. Justice in the military says “If you attack us, we will

attack you.” Justice in the police says, “If you injure someone, it will not go unpunished.” Justice in a civil society says you cannot harm another person and get away with it. There is a price for crime.

Justice, when it concerns government, is an issue of law. Therefore, it should come as no surprise to us that an equivalent of that motto was set forth in the Law of Moses for the nation of Israel.

The OT law set forth this idea of recompensing evil for evil.

Exodus 21:23 ...then thou shalt give life for life,²⁴ Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁵ Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

This was the enforceable law for Israel. And we like this for several reasons: 1) because it seems fair; 2) it gives the wronged some “satisfaction” and 3) it is a deterrent to crime.

So, was there something wrong with the Law of Moses? Was it evil? The answer is “no.” The law rightfully provided for penalties that were meant to keep men from committing violence and crimes against each other. It was part of a system of justice.

If, in a fit of rage, a man put out another man’s eye, he knew there would be penalty; it was going to cost him an eye. That served as a deterrent. And it was supposed to. No, it did not totally eliminate crime, but it reduced it. It kept society from devolving into total chaos and violence.

If you post a speed limit, but there is no one enforcing the speed limit and no penalty if you exceed it, how will people drive? Answer: any way they like. A highway with no laws is a dangerous road.

The point here is that the law is needed and penalties for violating the law are necessary. But when Jesus shows up, he asks the members of the believing remnant to go beyond the law.

As you know, we are not under the Law of Moses. But even in this DoGG, we have laws which are meant to protect the citizenry from criminals and law breakers. Civil and criminal law today provides for restitution in many forms for those who have been wronged.

But, vs. 17 is not talking about legal redress for loss of property and crime. How do we know that? Because later on, as we move to the next major section of godly justice, we are going to see that God put human government into place for just such circumstances. Speaking of ministers of human government, Paul says:

Romans 13:4 For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: **for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.**

Romans 13:4 is not talking about your own personal avenging for wrongs, it is talking about the lawful system of justice and the role of government to perform that justice.

But Romans 12:17 is not about civil magistrates, it is talking about us personally taking matters into our own hands to exact justice for some wrong done to us.

Generally speaking, “evil” is some form of harm, injury or wrongful action done to us by another person or persons. The harm is not limited to physical harm, but can include things like mental, economic, and emotional harm as well.

Recompense is “payback.” If someone does something to you which turns out to be injurious or offensive in a particular way, Paul tells us not to “get even.” There is a reason for asking us to behave this way and we will discuss it.

Now let’s talk about why our outline of the instruction to godly justice is important. In each of the three major sections, Paul is giving us instructions that, at first glance, may appear contradictory. They are not contradictory, as you will see. The contradiction lies in the misunderstanding of the doctrine.

Just reading through the passage, it may seem like vs. 19 is a repeat of vs. 17; don’t take justice into your own hands. But a closer reading will reveal that even though they are connected, there is a distinction.

In vs. 17, Paul is talking about our attitude of behavior toward someone who has done “evil” to us. This “evil” encompasses any kind of harm, injury, insult, or wrong.

The instruction not to render evil for evil applies to all kinds of offences against us from mild to severe; but the primary application is to our normal, everyday

relationships and our attitude toward those who are “evil,” but not criminal, in their treatment of us.

The instruction does extend to greater offences, but in these first two verses, the issue is about living peaceably with all men; getting along with everyone.

Let’s talk about the various levels of offence and how vs. 17 applies.

If someone commits a felony crime against you, there is a recourse through the criminal justice system and we do not render evil for evil. If a man steals our car, we don’t run him over in the street or go burn his house down.

If someone commits a misdemeanor crime against you, there is still recourse within the justice system and we do not render evil for evil. If someone assaults you and takes your purse, you don’t find a way to poison them.

It is true that vs. 17 extends to these offences, but again, primarily vv. 17-18 are in the context of trying to live peaceably with all men, and that is slightly outside the purview of criminal offences.

If someone treats you wrongfully and mistreats you in a way that is not a criminal offence, we still do not render evil for evil. Verse 17 is producing a mindset in us; an attitude that will govern our behavioral response to the evils done to us.

So then, what is the “evil” spoken of in Romans 12:17? The “evil” in this passage refers to things people do to you because, for some reason, they do not like you. Romans 12:17 primarily is not talking about crimes committed against you, such as robbery or murder. The evil in this passage are those things which are hurtful, and may even be emotionally injurious, which are directed against you but are not criminal.

The “evil” of vs. 17 may be the way they talk about you. It may be that they snub you. It may consist of catty remarks about you in front of others. It may be publicly ostracizing you, as in not inviting you (or your kids) to their kids’ birthday parties. It is the various ways in which they are unkind, critical, mean, unfriendly, condescending, demeaning and unpleasant. It may be in their refusal to be a good neighbor, or to help when you obviously need help.

These kinds of actions do not necessarily stem from the fact that you are a believer in Jesus Christ, but they can. They do not have to be the result of your sonship life, but they might.

It may be just differences in personality. It may be these are not just good people. It may be that for some reason they have decided they just do not like you. Perhaps jealousy is the motive, as you have a nicer house or car than they do. Or maybe it is just their pride. But this is the kind of people we are talking about which is why Paul writes what he does in vs. 18 about living peaceably with all men.

As soon as Paul says do not recompense evil for evil with these people, he says:

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Why does Paul say, “if it be possible?” Because sometimes it won’t be possible. But Paul says to make sure that the problem is not with us. We are to do everything we can to ensure that we live peaceably with all men; even the grouchy old soreheads and the cantankerous, ill-tempered people who do not like us.

Summary

A divine institution is any entity, established by God, for the orderly arrangement and regulation of people with a view toward the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. Human government is a divine institution, just like creation, free will, the church, marriage and family.

When we talk about justice we are talking about what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of some kind of authority. Justice, when it concerns government, is an issue of law and penalties for violating the law are necessary as a deterrent.

In the case of, Personal Justice, the authority is our heavenly Father.

The whole of godly justice is contained in Romans 12:17-13:10, and can be broken down into three major sections.

The first major section, Romans 12:17-21, pertain to Personal Justice; the second major section, Romans 13:1-7, deals with Governmental Justice and, the third major section, Romans 13:8-10, pertains to our Just Treatment of Others.

The verses in Romans 12:17-21 pertains to Personal Justice and in these verses we can see the three aspects of godliness: Think, Live and Labor.

In vs. 17, Paul is talking about our attitude of behavior toward someone who has done “evil” to us. This “evil” encompasses any kind of harm, injury, insult, or wrong. Verse 17 is producing a **mindset** in us; an attitude that will govern our behavioral response to the evils done to us

Although rendering evil for evil is a common reaction in this world, and has been from the beginning, our heavenly Father wants us to **not** render evil for evil.

Evil applies to all kinds of offences against us from mild to severe; but the **primary application** is to our normal, everyday relationships and our attitude toward those who are “evil,” but not criminal, in their treatment of us. The instruction does extend to greater offences, but in these first two verses, the issue is about **living peaceably with all men; getting along with everyone.**

As sons and daughters, we are being instructed as to our responsibilities in relation to our Father’s norms and standards. We are being taught how to view the divine institutions properly and not to look at or respond to them like the unsaved world.

Self-Test

1. A divine institution is any entity, established by God, for the orderly arrangement and regulation of people with a view toward the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. (True / False)
2. When we talk about justice we are talking about what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of the offended. (True / False)
3. The instruction not to render evil for evil applies only to severe offences against us. (True / False)
4. Romans 12:17-21 - Personal Justice: Identifies how you should be thinking about yourself with regard to the society you live in and the people you come into contact with. (True / False)
5. The verses in Romans 12:17-21 pertain to Personal Justice and in these verses we can see the three aspects of godliness: _____, _____, and _____.
6. We are being instructed as to our responsibilities in relation to our Father's _____ and _____.
7. We are being taught to view divine institutions properly and not to look at or respond to them like the _____.
8. We should look at those things which God ordained and brought into being for a purpose, so that we might respond to them in a _____ and by so doing, _____ under God.
9. The whole of godly justice is contained in _____.
10. Romans 12:17-21 pertains to _____.
11. Romans 13:1-7 deals with _____.

Romans 13:8-10 pertains to our Just _____.

Prayer – Personal Justice

Prayer for a lesson like this one involves constantly talking to your Father about putting the doctrine into practice and making decisions out of the doctrine.

This is a conversation you are having with God about learning to constantly recall the doctrine and make as many decisions out of that doctrine as you can.

The more you talk to God about the issue, the more it will be on your mind. The more it is in your thinking, the more times you will remember to do it. The more you do it, the more you are living out of the doctrine.

Your conversation with God could also cover how during your day, you did not respond to your situation out of the doctrine. This is a form of self-evaluation.

Talk about how your response was not out of the doctrine because either: 1) You did not think about it; or 2) you thought about it but you did not know how to apply the doctrine to your decision.

Right now, you may not always see how to apply the doctrine to every decision, but the further you go into your education, the more these kinds of decisions can come out of the doctrine.

The important thing is to be talking to your Father about all of these things so that they are in your mind more often as time goes by.

Edification Evaluation

When it comes to obeying the doctrine, it helps to rehearse certain scenarios in our mind and plan our godly response ahead of time.

One example might be when we have a disagreement with our spouse. While there are lots of things that need to come into play in this circumstance, let's focus on how not to render "evil for evil."

One of the most important skills a couple can learn is how to handle disagreements and conflict. It helps to focus on the problem and not on the person and direct our comments accordingly. In the end, it is not about *who* is right, but *what* is right.

Still, sometimes when couples disagree, one or the other will make a hurtful comment, a disparaging statement, or an exaggeration in order to "win the argument." If you resort to foul language, yelling and shouting, criticisms and threats in order to win your argument, you may win the argument but you are losing your marriage.

So, think to yourself, how do we usually handle conflicts as a couple? And if you know that your spouse really knows how to "push your buttons" then stop right there, and think about how you can reign in your tendency to render evil for evil.

Think: What can you say that will defuse the anger/hurt and lower the tension?

Think: What is the godly response?

Think: Are the words coming out of my mouth honoring my Savior? Are they beneficial to my spouse? Are they resolving the problem? Am I putting the doctrine to work in this situation?

If the answer to any of the questions is "no", then you have work to do.

You cannot control what is said to you, but you have absolute control over how you respond to it. Do not allow yourself to return evil for evil, hurt for hurt, criticism for criticism, shouting for shouting, accusation for accusation.

One of the big problems is that we establish patterns of thinking and behavior as we are engaged in conflict. And when someone commits evil (injustice) against us, we are instantly in conflict mode. And the way we instantly react to it is

something we have learned over time by doing the same things over and over until our response is ingrained within us. Unfortunately, those are usually the wrong habits and they need to be replaced with godly habits that will resolve conflict and build the relationship.

In a near-future lesson, I am going to teach us how to replace the old patterns of behavior with new, godly patterns by employing a mechanism which will help us create new habits and patterns of behavior.

For now, pre-determine your godly response to the various situations and circumstances you may encounter again. Think about what you will say, no matter what your emotions are feeling. Think about how you will act so that godliness is put on display.

You can evaluate just how your edification is going by how well you resist the urge to render evil for evil. If you have made some progress, great! Keep it up. Keep working at it on purpose.

If you have not made progress, then you need to make this a project for the next two weeks. Go over the lesson, spend time in prayer talking to God about this issue that is holding up your sonship life, pre-determine your godly responses to the situations you can anticipate, and find a way to hold yourself accountable. You can do this through grace because the life of Christ is available to be lived in you! Manifest the mystery of godliness in every area of your life!

Self-Test Answers

1. A divine institution is any entity, established by God, for the orderly arrangement and regulation of people with a view toward the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. (**True**)
2. When we talk about justice we are talking about what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of the offended. (**False**)
3. The instruction not to render evil for evil applies only to severe offences against us. (**False**)
4. Romans 12:17-21 - Personal Justice: Identifies how you should be thinking about yourself with regard to the society you live in and the people you come into contact with. (**True**)
5. The verses in Romans 12:17-21 pertains to Personal Justice and in these verses we can see the three aspects of godliness: **Think, Live, and Labor**.
6. We are being instructed as to our responsibilities in relation to our Father's **norms and standards**.
7. We are being taught to view divine institutions properly and not to look at or respond to them like the **unsaved world**.
8. We should look at those things which God ordained and brought into being for a purpose, so that we might respond to them in a **godly fashion** and by so doing, **facilitate their purpose** under God.
9. The whole of godly justice is contained in **Romans 12:17-13:10**
10. Romans 12:17-21 pertains to **Personal Justice**.
11. Romans 13:1-7 deals with **Governmental Justice**.
12. Romans 13:8-10 pertains to our Just **Treatment of Others**.

Romans Education, Part 3: Session Two
Interactive Notetaker

Fig. 1: Three Legal Matters of Matthew 5:38-41

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Fig. 2: Defining the Knowledge

The Knowledge of the truth is: _____
_____, _____; _____.

Student Notes

Session 2: Romans 12:17

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Normally, when people read “evil for evil” in this passage, their mind goes to something the Lord Jesus taught to His little flock in His Sermon on the Mount. They think Romans 12 to be a very similar thing to Matthew 5.

We are going to spend some time on this because I think the Matthew passage is very misunderstood. This sermon is corrective doctrine being taught to members of the little flock.

Matthew 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, **An eye for eye, and a tooth for a tooth:**

An “eye for an eye” is from the Law of Moses; it was the punishment for a crime committed against someone. That is the context for what is to follow. Take a look at the Law of Moses concerning an eye for an eye.

Exodus 21:22 If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay **as the judges determine.** ²³ And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give **life for life,** ²⁴ **Eye for eye, tooth for tooth,** hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

The point I am making here is that an eye for an eye was part of the justice system. Judges got involved and it was Israel’s law.

Leviticus 24:19 And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; ²⁰ **Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth:** as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again.* ²¹ And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death. ²² **Ye shall have one manner of law**, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I *am* the LORD your God.

What I am showing you is that in Matthew 5 Jesus is making a reference to the legal system, the law; the system of justice in Israel.

Actually Jesus is correcting the perverted teachings of the Pharisees and the other religious leaders in Israel who had corrupted the Law of Moses.

Now think about it; why do we have laws and penalties for violating those laws? To control the population and tamp down violence; penalties for breaking the law are meant to be a deterrent, first of all. Secondly, they are meant to provide just recompense.

If a man were to injure someone else so that they lost a hand, then the Law of Moses required a just recompense; “a hand for a hand.” This is the legal principle which was put into place to control violence. (Things were different if injury was the result of an accident.) Laws without penalty have no power to restrain evil. If a man in Israel thought to do harm to another, the thought of the same being done to him was meant to make him think twice before injuring another.

Even though Jesus is correcting the corruption of the religious leaders and exposing Israel’s Vain Religious System (VRS), the point here is that Matthew 5:38-41 is about the behavior of the members of the little flock with regard to three legal matters; 1) when an offence is committed against them, 2) when they have committed an offence, and 3) in connection with the established law of the land.

Continue to read the passage and you will see that this is the context.

In verse 39, the issue is when some member of the little flock has been injured in some way; someone doing something to you. The example Jesus uses is if one “smites thee on the cheek.”

Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

There are a couple of phrases here that I think are widely misunderstood. First, “resist not evil.” Let’s define the “evil.” This is not referring to any sort of evil. This is not the evil of sin, or the evil of false doctrine, or the evil of Satan (which is to be resisted!), but the evil here refers to some bad thing which has been done to us by another. The evil here is some injury to us, physical or otherwise, perpetrated by someone else.

So the “evil” of Matthew 5:39 is not a circumstance (like the injury of you falling off a ladder and breaking your arm), but an injury inflicted by another; the “eye for an eye” kind.

Some have taken the phrase “resist not evil” to mean that we cannot defend ourselves. The idea is: If someone attacks you in some way, you must not only take it, but you must enable them to attack you again by turning to them the other cheek also. In this way, verse 39 is viewed as promoting a pacifist mentality as it is understood today in our society.

But instead, I understand “resist not evil” to be the #2 definition in the OED, which is to “strive or take hostile action against.”

OED: resist

2. Of persons: ...to strive against b) an attack, invasion, blow or hostile action of any kind

So, I see two things here. Jesus is saying to His little flock, if someone smites you on the right cheek...the word “smite” was used to describe blows of the hand or with a stick, and for such blows fines from a shekel upwards were imposed by Jewish courts...Jesus is saying do not strive against them to attack and deal blows back to them.

This was nothing new, really. Sitting back in Israel’s education as sons, in the book of Proverbs, this issue was already laid out.

Proverbs 20:22 **Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but** wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

Proverbs 24:29 **Say not, I will do so to him** as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work.

As you can see, the idea was long in play of not doing to someone what they have done to you. So, the first thing is for the little flock not to take justice into their own hands. Jesus was doing exactly what the prophets said He would do; He was restoring the law from the corruption of the VRS.

Isaiah 8:16 Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.¹⁷ And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.¹⁸ Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given

me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

Secondly, Jesus is also saying to His little flock, you do not have to take every single evil to the magistrates and exact justice.

“Resist not evil” is not saying a member of the little flock could not move their face from being hit, or fend off the blow. It is saying not to respond in kind and not everything needs legal action.

That is what the Pharisees were promoting and even linked such litigious actions with righteousness.

In a nutshell, and we will see this more completely in the rest of the passage, Jesus is saying to His little flock, if someone does something to you, do not respond in kind, but love those who are your enemies, and do good to those who hate you and persecute you (which happens to be the next subject matter in Mt. 5:43-48). Why? Because their conduct is meant to make an impact on unbelieving Israel which may result in their conversion. Their conduct was supposed to stand out in bold relief against the “norms” of the day. And their behavior, born out of love for their unconverted brethren, was meant to amplify their message; Jesus of Nazareth is the prophesied Christ of Israel and the kingdom is at hand!

There was a purpose behind the actions! Jesus is not promoting a pacifist lifestyle, He is asking them to forbear and endure for the purpose of bringing Israel to change their mind about Jesus. When the law called for justice (an eye for an eye) it was not unrighteous; it was just. But Jesus is asking them to go beyond their right to justice for the purpose of converting their brethren.

Jesus is saying, when you have been wronged, think first of laboring with me to save them before you think of holding them to account.

In verse 40, the roles are switched but the context of the legal system is still the context.

Matthew 5:40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also.

What is happening here? Jesus is speaking to the members of His little flock about how to further separate themselves from Israel’s VRS (vain religious system).

When someone sues you, it means legal recourse is being sought for something YOU have done to them, not something they have done to you. (That is the very opposite of Romans 12:17-21, which is about what someone has done to you, not something you have done to them.)

In this case, the “damages” are that a man has been sued and his coat has been awarded to the plaintiff (the person with a complaint). We are not told what the man has done, but Jesus’ instruction is in the context of it having been determined in a court of law that restitution must be made, and the price is his coat.

So, Jesus says, if you are found to be in that position, “let him have thy cloak also.” Why? To ensure that the debt owed is paid beyond what the law required. That is the whole idea Jesus is teaching to the little flock throughout the chapter. The law is the minimum; go beyond the law and do more than required. And again, another vital difference is that these have to do with something a member of the little flock has done which, in some way, has injured another. This is not about being injured, but the legal recourse for injuring another.

Therefore, this is all in the context of a legal matter. This is not about personal retribution. Look at verse 41.

Matthew 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

The context here is this: In order that royal communications are delivered with dispatch throughout the empire, royal messengers were permitted to compel any person, to press into service any horse, commandeer any boat or other vehicle they might need for the quick transmission of the king’s commandments or to assist in the transport of royal luggage.

It may be that a messenger’s horse was spent. He could legally take your horse, your wagon or your boat to continue his journey. It may also be that a person could be pressed into service to carry some item for the messenger or assist him in some way to the accomplishment of his task. The law required assistance for one mile. It is to this custom Matthew 4:41 refers to when Jesus says not to resist a public authority who requires your attendance and aid for a certain distance, but to go peaceably, twice the distance as required by law.

Again, he is teaching them that the law is the minimum and the righteousness He wants to produce in them goes beyond the law. Jesus knows that one day (under the New Covenant) the righteousness of the little flock will fulfill the righteousness of the law without the law; it will supersede the Law of Moses. It will be the very righteousness of God in them.

Again, the point in Matthew 5:40, is about going beyond the law when it comes to making restitution for injuring someone else. This is not about bad things happening to innocent people. The “evil” that is being described in Matthew is the punishment for injuring another in some way.

This is not a new concept. Take a look.

Jeremiah 36:31 And **I will punish him** and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; **and I will bring upon them**, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, **all the evil** that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

What is the “evil?” In this case, the “evil” is God’s punishment.

Jeremiah 44:29 And this *shall be* a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that **I will punish you** in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you **for evil**:

Again, the words of evil that God speaks against them is a punishment.

That is why, in vs. 39, Jesus says not to resist the evil (the punishment for causing some injury to someone else.) In fact, He not only says don’t try to get out of paying for what you did wrong, but make more restitution than the law requires you to make.

Matthew 5:39 But I say unto you, **That ye resist not evil...**

In other words, do not try to escape the penalties for your actions, but offer more than required.

In the context of Matthew 5:38-41, the members of the little flock are the perpetrators, not the victims. Jesus is talking to them about how to make restitution.

The “eye for an eye” issue of vs. 38 is not talking about the same kind of evil that Romans 12 is talking about. The evil in Matthew 5:38 is the punishment for wrongdoing. So, get it out of your thinking that Matthew 5 is referring to the same thing which Romans 12:17-21 is talking about.

So then, what is the “evil” spoken of in Romans 12:17? The “evil” in this passage refers to things people do to you because, for some reason, they do not like you.

Do not be that person who says I am going to treat him like he treats me.

Did you notice that Paul has to tell us not to recompense evil for evil? Do you know why? Because evil for evil is our natural reaction when we believe we have been wronged. It is in our nature to “get even.” You can see it in children and you did not have to teach them about it.

Getting even is very much a part of our culture. For example, almost every action movie is based on the theme of payback or revenge and we sit on the edge of our seat rooting for the guy who was wronged to get his revenge.

What we have in Romans 12:17 is a change from the natural mindset, one of returning evil for evil, to a mindset that refuses to engage in the same behavior.

Now back to the text which is written to us as members of the body of Christ.

Romans 12:17 Recompense **to no man evil for evil.** Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Now let’s look at this from another angle. Suppose that someone has committed a criminal offense against you. The instruction from Paul is for us not to take the matter into our own hands. It is not up to us to replace the criminal justice system. That would lead to anarchy, chaos and the destruction of civilization.

There is a recourse for those who steal or destroy our property, or injure us in some way, but it is not a matter of us taking the law into our own hands. Your heavenly Father has something else in mind and He thinks that for a reason that is in line with what He is doing right now, in the world, in this DoGG.

But the real issue is to understand why God is asking us not to recompense evil for evil to those who wrong us. For when we obey the fullness of what is in Romans

12:17-21, we are laboring with our Father to accomplish something He wants to do in this world; we are furthering His purpose and will.

As adopted sons and daughters of our heavenly Father, we should desire to carry out our Father's will, even when He calls us to do that which is not natural to do. It is natural for men to hate those who wrong them, to desire to get even, to speak ill of their enemies, and to despise them and desire ill to fall upon them. Some may even go beyond desiring for bad things to happen, to facilitating some of those bad things. We are being plainly told not to engage in that kind of behavior.

But we are being asked to do the very opposite of what we naturally would think and do. And we are not left to do this in the energy of our flesh.

For us to labor with God in this area of personal justice, we need to understand 1) what God is asking us to do, and 2) why He is asking us to do it. Once we get the "why" down, it works in our inner man to produce the godly desire to obey the instructions given to us in Romans 12:17-21. Understanding what God is doing and why He is doing it provides the power to obey this instruction in the Spirit and not in our flesh.

Or, to say it another way, once we know the "what" and the "why" of what is behind vv. 17-21, we have a real opportunity to labor with our Father in perfect accordance in what He is doing in this DoGG. And before we get out of these verses, we will know exactly what God is doing and why He is doing it. And then His instructions to us will make perfect sense.

Firstly, what is God doing in this DoGG? We know that God wants to accomplish two main things: 1) He wants men to be saved, and 2) He wants those who are saved to come to the knowledge of the truth.

1 Timothy 2:3 For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; ⁴**Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.**

The "knowledge of the truth" for people saved during this DoGG would encompass all the doctrinal instruction in Paul's epistles. Romans-Philemon. (*And we know that covers a lot of subjects and numerous forms of doctrine.*)

So, to put it in a nutshell, God wants men to be saved and then to be edified unto godliness (by the effectual working of Romans-Philemon in their inner man.)

God wants us to think and behave in such a way that we can live peaceably with all men. Beyond the obvious advantages of that, not returning evil for evil is the best way to get a hearing to win men to Christ. It is also the best environment to lead them to the knowledge of the truth.

In other words, God has ministry in mind. This goes beyond simply getting along. We are His ambassadors, which means we are here to carry on His business. That means that everything we do impacts our ability to win the lost to Christ and lead the saints to be edified in accordance with the mystery of Christ taught by Paul.

Our Father understands that during this DoGG, there is a way that optimizes the accomplishment of His will (saving the lost and edifying the saints), and that rests partially on our treatment of those who commit evil against us.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

I am going to say it this way because keeping to the context, this is what is being said: Put your godly response to the evil done to you on display for all to see in your actions and to hear in your conversations so that godliness makes an impact upon everyone who is aware of the “evil” that is being done to you. Now, that is a long way of saying “Put your godly response on display.”

We are not just seeking to influence the one doing evil to us, but also those who are onlookers to what is happening. Let them see the difference between us and them; let them see Christ in you. Allow the world to take notice of godliness at work in us that we do not retaliate in kind. Let that attitude and behavior impact them.

The words we speak reveal what is in our hearts and minds. The way to make sure our words are right is to make sure our thinking is right. If our mind is right, our heart will be right. If our heart is right, then we do not have to guard our words, they will reflect the selfless, lovingkindness we genuinely have toward others.

Now that we have covered these verses, let us back up for a moment and look at a couple of ways in which this can be applied. Usually these verses are looked at in

the context of someone we are not friendly toward. But these verses have application even within our own families.

For example, when spouses disagree, and it becomes an argument, and it may escalate to become heated, and things get said which injure the other person, do not return evil for evil. When a family member abuses you by their words, do not return the same kind of words. When a co-worker does something against you, do not return in kind.

Before this study is over, we are going to discuss a simple mechanism to help keep these kinds of things from taking over your thoughts and behaviors. But first, we will work through the passage so we understand the doctrine that needs to be working in us.

Summary

Normally, when people read Romans 12: 17, “evil for evil” their mind goes to something the Lord Jesus taught to His little flock in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38-41). An “eye for an eye” is from the Law of Moses; it was the punishment for a crime committed against someone.

We have laws and penalties for violating those laws. Laws are made to control the population and tamp down violence, and penalties for breaking the law are meant to be a deterrent, first of all. Secondly, they are meant to provide just recompense.

Evil applies to all kinds of offences against us from mild to severe; but the primary application is to our normal, everyday relationships and our attitude toward those who are “evil,” but not criminal, in their treatment of us.

The instruction does extend to greater offences, but in Romans 12: 17-18, these first two verses address living peaceably with all men; getting along with everyone.

Rendering evil for evil is a common reaction in this world, and has been from the beginning. However, just as Jesus taught the members of the little flock, we are also being taught not to render evil for evil.

In this DoGG, we know that God wants men to be saved and then to be edified unto godliness. Our treatment of those who commit evil against us impacts how we labor with God in accomplishing what He is doing in this dispensation.

To labor with God in this area of personal justice, we need to understand 1) what God is asking us to do, and 2) why He is asking us to do it. Once we get the “why” down, it works in our inner man to produce the godly desire to obey the instructions given to us in Romans 12:17-21. When we understand the “what” and the “why” of what is behind vv. 17-21, we have a real opportunity to labor with our Father in perfect accordance in what He is doing in this DoGG.

Everything we do impacts our ability to win the lost to Christ and lead the saints to be edified in accordance with the mystery of Christ taught by Paul. Put your godly response to the evil done to you on display for all to see in your actions and to hear in your conversations so that godliness makes an impact upon everyone who is aware of the “evil” that is being done to you.

Self-Test

1. The sermon in Matthew 5:38-41 is corrective doctrine being taught to _____.
2. Laws are made to _____ the population and tamp down _____.
3. In this DoGG, we know that God wants men to be _____ and then to be _____ unto _____.
4. To labor with God in this area of personal justice, we need to understand
 - 1) _____, and
 - 2) _____.
5. Romans 12: 17-18, addresses living peaceably with _____; getting along with _____.

Self-Test Answers

1. The sermon in Matthew 5:38-41 is corrective doctrine being taught to members of the little flock.
2. Laws are made to control the population and tamp down violence
3. In this DoGG, we know that God wants men to be saved and then to be edified unto godliness.
4. To labor with God in this area of personal justice, we need to understand
 - 1) what God is asking us to do, and 2) why He is asking us to do it.
5. Romans 12: 17-18, addresses living peaceably with all men; getting along with everyone.

Romans Education, Part 3: Godly Justice

Session Three

NOTETAKER

Fig. 1: Defining the Terms

Provide: _____

Things: _____

Honest: _____

Fig. 2: Results of Providing Things Honest

1) _____

2) _____

Fig. 3: The Implications of Rm. 12:18

1) _____ to preserve peace and to
appease the anger and malice of others

2) We are not the one to _____

3) If a quarrel commences, we do not do anything

Fig. 4: “Things” which Provoke Conflict:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____

Fig. 5: Times When We Cannot Live Peaceably

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Student Notes

Session 3: Romans 12:17-18

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. **Provide things honest in the sight of all men.**

At first glance, the last half of vs. 17 may seem difficult to understand. The difficult part is the first part of the phrase, “Provide things honest.” The “sight of all men” is obvious; Paul is referring to what is seen by others.

OED: Provide

- 1) To supply or furnish something for a certain purpose

When someone has committed an “evil” against us, instead of others seeing us recompensing “evil for evil,” we are going to do something else; we are going to “provide things honest.” And we are going to do that “in the sight of all men.”

So, what are the “things” we are supposed to provide? Think about the context: do not recompense evil; what is that? What is “recompensing evil for evil?” It is a visible response to the evil done to us; it is a behavior. Paul says not to display a behavior which returns evil for evil, but rather a behavior that “provides things honest.”

So, the first thing we know about this is that Paul is referring to our visible response to the evil done to us; our behavior, conduct and actions. Therefore, the “things” we are providing are our “responses” to the evil done to us; our behaviors.

Romans 12:17 ...Provide **things** honest in the sight of all men.

That is to say, our response to evil should produce the very opposite effect. If their actions toward us were evil (hurtful, injurious, malicious, bad, harmful, causing discomfort, pain, trouble, etc.), then the “things we provide” (our actions) toward them should produce the opposite effect.

So, the opposite of evil is good; the opposite of rendering evil for evil is to render benefice for evil. Evil is detrimental (in some way), therefore we are to do the opposite which is to treat them in a way that is beneficial to them.

That is what a benefice is? It is a beneficial action toward the one who provided evil against us.

OED: Benefice

- 1) A good deed, kindness, favor, a grace or indulgence

So, the things we are to provide (the actions we are to take, the responses we are to make) are to be good, kind and gracious.

The reason there are “things” plural is because there are many beneficial behaviors we may exhibit toward those who have done evil to us.

As an example, let’s say a co-worker criticizes you to a third party at your job. When that person comes to you and tells you about the “evil” that was said about you, instead of doing the same thing (which would be recompensing evil for evil), you would say or do something kind or beneficial.

This is what Paul is talking about; instead of being affected by the evil done to us, we gladly put godliness on display by not giving in to the impulse to do the same to them, but to actually have their best interest in mind in our response.

I am going to say it this way because keeping to the context, this is what is being said: Put your godly response to the evil done to you on display for all to see in your actions and to hear in your conversations so that godliness makes an impact upon everyone who is aware of the “evil” that is being done to you and for those who are not aware, you will not be perceived as doing evil to another. That is a long way of saying “Recompense good for evil” but it contains some important details.

We are not just seeking to influence the one doing evil to us, but also those who are onlookers to what is happening. Let them see the difference between us and them; let them see Christ in us. Allow the world to take notice of godliness working in us that we do not retaliate in kind. Let that attitude and behavior impact them.

Now we need to look at the “honest” component.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things **honest** in the sight of all men.

We understand what the “things” are that we are to provide, but what does it mean when it says to provide those things “honest?”

Because of the placement of the word “honest” I think there is a nuance to how we are supposed to understand the word. Normally, if the word “honest” was being used as an adjective, it would precede the noun (things). This is the case with 2 Corinthians 8:21.

2 Corinthians 8:21 **Providing for honest things**, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

In this case, the “honest” is describing the “things.” Honest is describing the behaviors or actions.

But the word “honest” follows the noun, which would usually indicate that it is an adverb, describing how we are providing, as in Romans 13:13.

Romans 13:13 **Let us walk honestly**, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

The “ly” suffix changes “honest” from an adjective to an adverb, meaning the modifying is on the verb and not the noun. But in Romans 12:17, there is no “ly” suffix.

The placement of “honest” says adverb, while the spelling says adjective. Therefore, I think Paul has both in mind.

Firstly, as an adjective, the “honest” defines the kinds of actions we are supposed to take in response to evil done to us. The kinds of things that we are to provide (the behaviors we are supposed to manifest) are to be “honest.” In this case, “honest” things are those responses which benefit and help (godliness) instead of recompensing evil things which hurt and hinder (fleshly).

The honest things are a product of godliness. The honest things are the result of Christ living His life in us. The honest things are the product of selfless lovingkindness at work in every area of our life.

Secondly, the “honest” defines how we are supposed to provide those beneficial behaviors. In this sense, “honest” would carry the meaning of “genuine, true, authentic, unpretentious, sincere.”

In other words, the dual application of the word “honest” not only means that we do the right thing, but that our actions are sincere and a result of godly lovingkindness.

Just as in Romans 12:9, our love is to be “without dissimulation,” here in vs. 17, our behavior needs to be “honest.” That is to say, we are not just going through the motions in the sense of it just being an outward show, but our good response to evil needs to be genuine and from the heart.

As we have seen in previous sessions, let our response be “not with eyeservice as menpleasers” but as unto Christ.

Ephesians 6:6 Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; ⁷ With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

The word “honest,” is prescribing good behaviors toward those who perform evil against us.

To put it together, Paul is saying that we should do the “honest things” and we should do them “honestly.” It is true that we can do the right thing, but not for the right reason. We can do the right thing and still not do it properly. When that is the case, we are being hypocritical; our actions do not match what we really want.

In both programs, God wants “honest” actions, genuine behaviors, godly responses, not just the outward obedience, but inward too.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.*

It is for this reason that Paul writes that same principle into his epistles.

Ephesians 6:6 **Not with eyeservice**, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, **doing the will of God from the heart**;

Colossians 3:22 Servants, obey in all things *your* masters according to the flesh; **not with eyeservice**, as menpleasers; but **in singleness of heart**, fearing God:

This was the problem of the Pharisees, the outside looked good, but inwardly, they were rotten. Their outward show of piety may have checked all the boxes, but there was no honesty of heart in them.

Now, let's look at the last verse in the first part of this first major section of justice.

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. ¹⁸ **If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.**

There are two results of not recompensing evil for evil. 1) It has an effect of putting godliness on display, and 2) It has an effect promoting the ability to live peaceably with all men.

Our Father wants both of these; godliness and peace. Why isn't putting godliness on display enough? Because the work that God wants to do with men is best accomplished in an atmosphere of peace. It is difficult to bring a lost man to Christ when he is at odds with us. It is also difficult to teach men the truths concerning the mystery of Christ when they are actively opposed to us.

Romans 12:18 **If it be possible**, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Paul does understand that there are situations and people who just will not, no matter how hard you try, allow you to live peaceably with them. This is why Paul says "if it be possible." Sometimes, it may not be possible.

But if that is the case, then Paul's instruction to us is clear: Make every effort to live peaceably with all men. If peace is not going to exist between us and someone else, do not let it be because of us.

"As much as lieth in you" is a way of saying that living peaceably with all men should be our desire and we should do what it takes to obtain it. This is true of our actions with believers and non-believers alike, of our actions with our neighbors, co-workers and members of our own family.

This implies several things:

- 1) We give our best effort to preserve peace and to appease the anger and malice of others
- 2) We are not the one to provoke a quarrel

3) If a quarrel commences, we do not do anything to prolong it

Others may persecute us, hate our faith, slander, revile or injure us, but we are not responsible to their assaults, but for our conduct toward them.

Let us take a moment and talk about the things which provoke conflict:

- 1) Offensive language. What we say and how we say it is important.
- 2) Provoking carriage. By this is meant “non-verbal” communication. These are a visible, if not audible, reflection of our attitude toward someone.
- 3) Prideful conduct. Humility is not just a duty of our private life, but our public life as well.
- 4) Selfishness. Selfishness breeds jealousies and envies in every relationship.
- 5) Untrained jocularity. Teasing, jesting and such like, when indulged at another’s expense, the Bible says it is “inconvenient” and foolish. There is a teasing which is pleasant and by which no one suffers, but there is also teasing which makes others feel uncomfortable, and that is the kind we are referring to.
- 6) The habit of contradiction and argument. This is particularly true of a bully and it does not have to just be physical in nature. There are “logical bullies.” If you say anything, they dispute it.
- 7) Fault-finding. Some have an intuition for discovering faults in others and they tell of them everywhere they go. These tale bearers create ill-will, even if what they say is true. Unless there is a benevolent purpose, we have no right to give an evil report of another, even if it is true.
- 8) Indiscreet Frankness. Telling other unpleasant truths about themselves or what other people have said about them, this is unwise and ungodly. Blurtng out the truth to people to their face is impolite at best. There are those who think that because a thing is true, they can “let it fly” without concern for the consequences. Truth, like a medicine, is to be administered with care and discretion.

There are times in which we could “live peaceably” with others, but it would require us to sin before God, violate our own consciences, or to allow the injury of another.

When Paul says that we are to do everything in our power to live peaceably with all men, he does not mean that we are to disregard doctrine, commit sin or violate our conscience. Let's go over some examples.

Times in which we cannot live peaceably:

- 1) When the interests of others push us to commit evil.
- 2) Christian virtue sometimes stands in the way of other men's pleasure.
- 3) Teaching unwelcome truths may offend others and violate the peace. Jesus taught the truth with love and compassion for His people, yet many were offended in Him. That does not mean that we should not have discretion about teaching doctrine we know people have no foundation for. It also means knowing when to correct something and when not to.
- 4) Opposing the course of this world and Satan's PoE may rouse up immense amounts of anger.

When we stand for the things mentioned above and they cause a conflict because of our refusal to compromise, that is not a violation of Paul's instructions. Paul is not asking us to "go along" in order to "get along."

Romans 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.¹⁸ If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

So let us look at one more aspect of the doctrine. What if, after we have refused to render evil for evil and after we have made every effort to establish a peaceful relationship with the other person, they are still unwilling to live peaceably? How long should we continue to respond to them out of this doctrine? We should always live out of this doctrine. There is no time limit on godly behavior.

We will need to have godly patience to deal with these kinds of people on a continual basis. But remember, they are not the only ones we are hoping to minister to; we are hoping to minister to all those who are watching our response to the injustice against us.

If the life of Christ is truly being formed in us, then the question is not how long do I have to do this. The doctrine is not just something we do while we wish we didn't have to, but it transforms us so that His response is our response.

Let me pull back the curtain just a bit to give us an idea of how we ought to be thinking about all this. We are living during the Dispensation of Gentile Grace. Does God have us living under a performance system? Is God dealing with us on our individual merits? He is not. We live under grace, not the Law.

So, is God doing things to evil people today? Is He punishing them for their wickedness? Is He taking away their health, their money and possessions? Is He judging them in this life? The answer is “no.” That is what grace is about. In the same way, the governmental system of justice notwithstanding, we should be extending mercy, longsuffering and grace just like our Father.

Does the world take God’s name in vain? Do they curse Him and even hate Him? Do they work against what He is doing in this world? Do they falsely accuse Him? Do they undermine His word and pervert His truth? Do they mock the good things that God has done for them? The answer to all of these questions is “Yes.” But still, how does God deal with them? While they are yet sinners, God proved His love toward them in sending His Son. Even now, God is withholding His wrath and giving them space to be saved.

And what about those believers who despise Right Division? What about those believers who refuse Paul’s doctrine and run back to Israel’s program? Is God hating them and judging them? No, but patiently He works to bring them to the knowledge of the truth and that work is done...guess what...by us!

2 Timothy 2:24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all *men*, apt to teach, patient,²⁵ In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;²⁶ And *that* they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Summary

Romans 12:17 instructs us to provide things honest in the sight of all men. We may believe we truly understand what *provide things honest in the sight of all men* really means, but we must also understand why.

When someone has committed an “evil” against us, instead of others seeing us recompensing “evil for evil,” we are to respond in a way that our behavior, conduct and actions benefit those who see us. Evil is detrimental (in some way), therefore we are to do the opposite which is to treat them in a way that is beneficial to them.

We are not just seeking to influence the one doing evil to us, but also those who are onlookers to what is happening. Let them see the difference between us and them; let them see Christ in us.

Self-Test

1. In response to the “evil” done to us, we are instructed to provide things _____ in the sight of all men.
2. There are many beneficial _____ we may exhibit toward those who have done _____ to us.
3. We are to put _____ responses to the _____ done to us on display for all to see.
4. The opposite of rendering evil for evil is to render _____ for evil.
5. Allow the world to see godliness working in us that we do not _____ in kind.

Edification Evaluation

Recompense good for evil. There is no time limit on godly behavior; always live out of the doctrine. We are instructed to put godly responses to the evil done to us on display for all to see in our actions and to hear in our conversations so that godliness makes an impact upon everyone who is aware of the “evil” that is being done to us and for those who are not aware, we will not be perceived as doing evil to another.

It is difficult to bring a lost man to Christ when he is at odds with us. It is also difficult to teach men the truths concerning the mystery of Christ when they are actively opposed to us. Our Father wants both godliness and peace to be put on display because the work that God wants to do with men is best accomplished in an atmosphere of peace. When we do not recompensing evil for evil, we put godliness on display, and promote the ability to live peaceably with all men.

“As much as lieth in you” is a way of saying that living peaceably with all men (believers and non-believers) should be our desire and we should do what it takes to obtain it.

Instead of being affected by the evil done to us, we should gladly put godliness on display by not giving in to the impulse to do the same to them; but to actually have their best interest in mind in our response. Allow the world to see godliness working in us that we do not retaliate in kind. The things we are to provide (the actions we are to take, the responses we are to make) are to be good, kind and gracious.

However, we should not disregard doctrine, commit sin or violate our conscience: in that instance, these are the times in which we cannot live peaceably.

Self-Test Answers

1. In response to the “evil” done to us, we are instructed to provide things **honest** in the sight of all men.
2. There are many beneficial **behaviors** we may exhibit toward those who have done **evil** to us.
3. We are to gladly put **godly** responses to the **evil** done to us on display for all to see.
4. The opposite of rendering evil for evil is to render **benefice** for evil.
5. Allow the world to see godliness working in us that we do not **retaliate** in kind.

Romans Education, Part 3 Godly Justice
Session Four

NOTETAKER

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Justice

First Major Section of Justice: Romans 12:17-21

Part One: Romans 12:17-18

Part Two: _____

Student Notes

Session 4: Romans 12:19-20

Having completed the first part (Rm. 12:17-18) of the first major section of godly justice (Rm. 12:17-21), we now move to the second part; verses 19-20.

Romans 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.
²⁰ Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Paul starts off vs. 19 by saying we are not to “avenge ourselves.” That is pretty simple. If you think about getting even, don’t do it.

Instead, “give place unto wrath.” So what does that mean? And what does that have to do with not taking vengeance into our own hands?

You have heard the saying, “A place for everything and everything in its place.” Well, think of that as you read “give place unto wrath.” The wrath we are to “give place to” is God’s wrath, not ours.

So, what does it mean to “give place unto wrath?” It means to allow God’s wrath to be set in the place of our vengeance. Verse 19 tells us, rather than avenging ourselves, leave it to God to execute His wrath on injustice and exact vengeance. In other words, replace our vengeance with God’s wrath.

Some of the main reasons we want to execute vengeance for some wrong done to us are:

- We are hurt or angry and our instinct is to retaliate
- The nature of the offence allows no other recourse

That is to say, the offence against us cannot be judged by the justice system because it is not punishable by law.

- We think, if there is no other recourse, then there will be no justice and the wrong committed against us will go unpunished, and therefore our vengeance is appropriate.

Here is what we need to know: Verses 19-20 are telling us there is justice and all things will be set right. Maybe not in the way we thought or the way we hoped, but all offences will be punished.

What we want is for God to reach out and do something to our offender to punish them for what they have done and make them sorry for doing it. But that is not how God is dealing with people in this DoGG. We are not under the law, so God's dealings with us are not according to our performance of good or evil.

So how in the world are these wrongs going to be put right?

Either "thine enemy" will pay his debt in hell where he will carry the weight of his own sins...

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

...or, our enemy will have his sin debt paid on the Cross of Christ because he has trusted in the all-sufficient redemption of Jesus. In that case, the wrath of God's punishment for the offence against you will have been poured out on Jesus Christ.

Romans 4:7 *Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*⁸ *Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Now that may be disappointing to some because they were wanting more. But God is not going to intervene to bring about some adverse circumstance as punishment for what was wrongly done to us. Just because they stole from us does not mean God will arrange for someone to steal from them or give them a flat tire, or any such thing. We are living in a dispensation of Gentile...what? Grace.

Grace is not a performance system where we get blessings because we did good and curses because we did evil. I know why people feel like either they should be allowed to avenge themselves or God should do something to them to pay them back. But under grace, God is not imputing men's sins unto them.

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, **not imputing their trespasses unto them**; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

But if they reject God's provision for reconciliation, they will remain unrighteous and they will continue to be enemies of God.

Those are the two methods by which sin will be punished. God sent His Son into the world in order to make a way for punishment to happen, but not to you. Everyone deserves hell, and will go into everlasting destruction, bearing the burden of God's righteous vengeance against them, or they can trust in the Cross of Christ where God poured out His wrath against sin on His Son.

Take a look at the last half of vs. 19.

Romans 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.

God says vengeance belongs to Him. He will see to it that justice will be done. Punishment will be meted out. Wrongs will be addressed. Vengeance will come.

This is a quote from Deuteronomy 32.

Deuteronomy 32:35 **To me belongeth vengeance**, and recompence; their foot shall slide in *due* time: for the day of their calamity *is* at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.

There is only one being to whom belongs the right of vengeance; the Lord God. There is only one being to whom all punishment belongs, and none of us are him. Only one has the ultimate right to punish...and...anyone to whom He appoints that right.

Take a look with me at Romans 13 where God talks about those in positions of governmental power being His ministers, to whom He has appointed the right to be an Avenger on His behalf.

Romans 13:4 For **he is the minister of God** to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: **for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath** upon him that doeth evil.

While we will cover this in more detail when we get over there, I bring it up now to answer this question, “If God is the only one who has the right of enforcing justice, does He believe in justice on this earth?” Romans 13:4 indicates that He does.

But getting back to 12:19, God says that vengeance is His alone. I want to talk to you about what that means.

It means that woven into the very fabric of all that exists, there is a divine commitment to justice, a justice which will always be done with no exceptions. If that was not the case then there would be no need of either hell or the Cross of Christ. God would never have put His own Son to death unless it was absolutely necessary. Why was the Cross necessary? Because God is just and because vengeance belongs to the Lord.

So let’s take the first part of that: God is a God of justice and nowhere and at no time will God allow His glory to be challenged or trampled on. All sin is a challenge to the glory of God.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; I used to wonder what Paul meant by “come short of the glory of God.” I was taught that it means that we are not perfect like God. But that is not quite right. Sin, all sin, is a direct attack on the glory of God; something which God cannot allow. So what all is included in “the glory of God?” Answer: Everything that God is, and everything God has done, and all God intends to do.

Because God’s glory includes all that He is, there will be no allowance for the dishonoring of the infinite worth of His name. That is why the commandment is:

Exodus 20:7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Taking the name of the LORD in vain is more than using his name as part of a curse word. And whoever does that, God will not hold him guiltless.

There is no tolerance for an affront to what God has done, for that is part of His glory. For example, let's take the creation itself. It is a manifestation of His glory.

Psalm 19:1 The heavens declare **the glory of God**; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

So, when men began to trample on God's glory in the creation by worshipping the creature and making idols of false gods, God judged them.

Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him **from the creation of the world** are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Romans 1:23 And **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God** into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Romans 1:24 Wherefore God also gave them up...

Romans 1:25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and **worshipped and served the creature** more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

Romans 1:26 For this cause God gave them up...

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over...

And today, when men deny the Creator but point to evolution as the explanation for all that is, they are trampling on the glory of God. That will not go unpunished because God is perfectly just. No wonder Paul wrote that we, as sinners, come short of the glory of God.

Every member of the Godhead is just by nature; the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Justice is largely overlooked by churches today. Preachers are so desperate to give God a makeover so the world will come to our churches that we only focus on the "God is love" part of His nature.

Yes, God is love. And, at the same time, God is just. And as a just God, He has an unswerving commitment to uphold the worth of His glory so that every time we minimize His glory by denying it, or neglecting it, or ignoring it, or blaspheming it,

or disobeying it; any time we bring reproach upon the infinite glory of God, His justice kicks in to say, “That will be punished.”

Do not lose the point being made. God’s glory entails all that He has done and that is not limited to His creation. That was just an example. Because God is perfectly just, He cannot allow His glory to be trampled underfoot. And His glory entails everything, which means nothing can escape His notice and therefore, nothing will go unpunished.

So, the question is how does this work for us to keep us from taking vengeance ourselves? Well, look at the verse.

Romans 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.

The word “for” is one of the motivations for why we cannot return evil-for evil. And the reason it is so hard to leave vengeance to God, is because deep down in our hearts, there is this warranted, justified desire that justice be done. And it does not look like it is going to get done if I just say, “Okay, I won’t think about it anymore, I won’t dwell on it anymore, I won’t hold the grudge anymore. But no one knows but me just how bad that was, how much that hurt.”

And by the way, this is not saying, “If you really want to get your enemy, then let God get them,” all the while rubbing your hands together in delight over the prospect of their punishment.

Everyone has been wronged at some time in life. And many people have been seriously wronged by people who have never apologized, nor made any effort to make it right. And one of the reasons we have such a hard time letting this go is the conviction that justice is not going to be done.

We can’t let the offense go because we think things like: “He’s got everyone fooled. They think he is a good guy when he’s not. He’s getting away with it because no one really knows what he is like.”

We replay the offence in our minds over and over. We dwell on it. If you are carrying a seemingly legitimate grudge, this text is for you. You feel like if you let this go, then there is not going to be justice, or they are going to get away with it.

But Paul writes this so you know that there will be justice. You can quit your anger and bitterness; no one is getting away with anything. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. So if you lay that grudge down, you can have a huge burden lifted off your shoulders.

Think for a moment about the time in which Paul writes this. Is there anyone who hates him? Are there people who want to do him harm? Has Paul ever been wronged?

And what about just being a believer in general. We are going to talk about this in more detail when we get into Chapter 13. When Paul writes the book of Romans, he is writing to people who are living under the rule of Nero; the same Nero who blamed the Christians for the great fire in Rome.

Couple that with the fact that for the first three centuries there were no official protections or recognitions of Christianity. It is at that time that Paul is writing for believers not to avenge themselves.

Now, let's look at vs. 20.

Romans 12:20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: **for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.**

The therefore is in reference to the previous verse; vs. 19. So the therefore is saying: In view of leaving vengeance up to God, if you enemy hungers, then feed him.

The first two phrases of vs. 20 are obvious. I do not think our assistance is restricted to only food and water for our enemy. These are sonship opportunities to minister to an enemy.

But it is the last part of the verse that is more problematic.

There has been a lot speculated about what this phrase is about. The major ideas are:

- 1) Heaping coals of fire on his head is a back-handed way of getting even. This cannot be the case, as it runs in opposition to all the things that are being said to us in this chapter (bless them which persecute you, do not recompense evil for evil, overcome evil with good, not other evil).

- 2) Heaping coals of fire on his head is the intense agony of the pain that results from his shame and remorse of conscience from his bad behavior in light of our good works toward him. Again, this is not about inflicting pain. He may indeed have some conviction of the evil of his own conduct, but the idea of the coals is not about “intense agony of pain.”
- 3) Heaping coals of fire is the metaphor of the smelting of metals. The ore is put into a furnace and the fire put under and over it that the metal be liquefied and leaving the dross, may fall down pure to the bottom of the furnace. As the poet wrote: “So artists melt the sullen ore of lead, by heaping coals of fire upon its head. In the kind warmth the metal learns to glow, and pure from dross the silver runs below.” The heaping coals of fire is the elimination of those things which made him an enemy so that now he may become your friend, as he is “melted down into repentance.”
- 4) When we do good to someone their sinfulness is pointed out to them and they get a small reminder of the lake of fire that awaits them. So they have a chance now to do something about it before the Great White Throne Judgment when it will be too late. This is why doing good is better for our enemy and more powerful than doing evil.
- 5) The last view we will consider centers around the need of fire in ancient times. Heaping coals of fire was the sharing of your coals with your enemy in an act of charity. In the old world, everything was carried “on the head.” In a specially designed basket which was insulated to prevent burns, you would provide coals of fire for your enemy which he would then carry to his home on his head. But in the end, that does not make sense. If this is the view, then here is what Paul is saying, If your enemy is hungry, then feed him, for in so doing you will give him coals to make his own fire at home.

Romans 12:20 turns out to be almost word for word what is written in Proverbs 25:21-22.

Proverbs 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: ²² For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

But as I look at Proverbs, it does not shed any more light than I already had in Romans 12.

In fact, when we run across a phrase we do not understand, there is a process which should be followed. Since we are in Romans 12:20, the next thing to do is to find any other reference in the book of Romans. Then, we should look for a reference in any of Paul's epistles. Next, we should look for a reference in the New Testament. And lastly, look at references in the Old Testament.

When it comes to the exact phrase "coals of fire," it is used 9 times in our Bible; once in Romans 12 and all the other references are in the OT. It is true that some of the references have "coals of fire" as part of the judgments of the day of the Lord.

The phrase of "heaping coals of fire on his head" is either literal or it is a metaphor. If it is literal, then how does giving a thirsty enemy a drink of water produce coals of fire on his head? Does giving an enemy a drink increase a man's punishment in eternity? No.

For those who think the "coals of fire" are judgment (and they think that because most of the references are in that context) they should consider that the verse says by giving our enemy a drink "WE" are heaping coals of fire on their head. Well, we do not execute any of the Lord's judgments. According to the verse, heaping coals of fire on the head of our enemy is something that we accomplish by being kind to our enemies.

Secondly, supposing the coals of fire are the Lord's judgments, what if our enemy is a brother in Christ? He is not going to suffer the judgments of the Lord's Day, so what would we be doing to him by being kind?

If it is a metaphor, the good news is that from the context, we can figure out the meaning without knowing the exact metaphor. And the context is that we are supposed to provide kindness and assistance to our enemies and I believe that conduct is for the purpose of accomplishing God's purposes during this DoGG.

Summary

Everyone has been wronged at some time in life. And many people have been seriously wronged by people who have never apologized, nor made any effort to make it right. And one of the reasons we have such a hard time letting this go is the conviction that justice is not going to be done.

Because God is perfectly just, He cannot allow His glory to be trampled underfoot. And His glory entails everything, which means nothing can escape His notice and therefore, nothing will go unpunished.

God's word instructs us to not avenge ourselves, but give place unto wrath. When we "give place unto wrath" we leave it to God to execute His wrath on injustice and exact vengeance. In other words, we replace our vengeance with God's wrath.

This does not mean that we delight over the prospect of God punishing our enemy. We understand that we are in the dispensation of Gentile Grace, and that God is not dealing with us according to our performance of good or evil.

Our enemy either will have his sin-debt paid on the Cross of Christ (where God poured out His wrath against sin on His Son) because he has trusted the all-sufficient redemption of Jesus Christ, or he will carry the weight of his own sins and pay his debt in hell.

According to the verse, heaping coals of fire on the head of our enemy is something that we accomplish by being kind to our enemy. We are supposed to provide kindness and assistance to our enemies and I believe that conduct is for the purpose of accomplishing God's purposes during this DoGG.

Self-Test

1. One of the reasons we have such a hard time letting go of the wrong done to us is the _____ that _____ is not going to be done.
2. When we give place unto wrath we leave it to _____ to execute _____ wrath on _____ and exact _____.
3. Heaping _____ of _____ on the head of our enemy is something that we accomplish by being _____ to our enemy.
4. We are supposed to provide kindness and assistance to our enemies for the purpose of accomplishing _____ during this DoGG.
5. If you lay that _____ down, you can have a huge _____ lifted off your _____.

Self-Test Answers

1. One of the reasons we have such a hard time letting go of the wrong done to us is the **conviction** that **justice** is not going to be done.
2. When we give place unto wrath we leave it to **God** to execute **His** wrath on **injustice** and exact **vengeance**.
3. Heaping **coals** of **fire** on the head of our enemy is something that we accomplish by being **kind** to our enemy.
4. We are supposed to provide kindness and assistance to our enemies for the purpose of accomplishing **God's purposes** during this DoGG.
5. If you lay that **grudge** down, you can have a huge **burden** lifted off your **shoulders**.

Romans Education, Part Three
Session Five

Interactive Notetaker

Fig. 1: The Knowledge/Action Gap

Fig. 2: The 5-Second Countdown

- _____
- _____
- _____

Fig. 3: When do we employ the 5-Second Countdown?

Pertaining to our Edification:

Pertaining to our Physical life:

Fig. 4: What does the 5-Second Countdown do?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Student Notes

Session 5: The 5-Second Countdown

The emotion that is largely at the root of vengeance is anger. The Bible has a lot of things to say about anger and most of them are not good.

Let's begin by talking about anger, because it is out of anger that we often retaliate against those who wrong us.

Romans 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.

To “give place unto wrath” is a phrase that has many interpretations. If you “give place” to anything, you are putting it where it belongs. Paul is saying to allow wrath its proper place. And where is wrath’s proper place? It is with the Lord, just look at the rest of the verse.

To help you do this, I want to talk to you about what we are going to call the “5-Second Countdown.”

In the strict context of vs. 19, we are talking about the anger that moves us to avenge ourselves of some wrong done to us. But since we are talking about wrath, I want to take the opportunity to enlarge on the subject and make some additional applications.

Firstly, let me set the stage for our lesson. We do things over and over until they become a habit. Habits make us feel comfortable; they are familiar territory and so we default to them all the time. This comfort zone of the old way and the discomfort of something new or different is why people naturally resist change. Discomfort is stress and our minds look for ways to defend against those things which stress us. For example, this is why learning to pray like a son in the DoGG is so difficult; we are uncomfortable with the proper discharge of prayer and our minds go into a defensive mode.

In order to obey the doctrine of Romans 12:17-21, we must learn to do something that is not natural; we must give up avenging ourselves for wrongs done to us. Since “returning tit for tat” is the natural thing for people to do, we must be transformed by this doctrine to the extent that we live out of a new desire, a new identity, a new life; the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

We will talk about this more in detail later, but one of the reasons it is so hard to let go of the wrongs done to us is because within all of us, there is some sense of justice. And this is why God is bringing this up in the section of Romans that pertains to godly justice.

When someone does something to you, (cuts you off in traffic, speaks to you rudely, falsely accuses you, treats you disrespectfully, etc.) an emotion rises up within us, usually anger. Our sense of justice has been violated and we want to right the wrong that is being done to us. When we live out of our emotions, our actions come from deeply ingrained habits which we have formed and reinforced over the years. And habits are hard things to break.

So much so that when we are angry, even when we know the doctrine, even when we know what we ought to do, we will not want to do it.

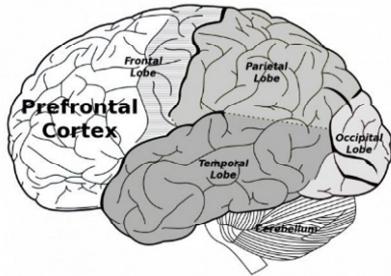
One of the biggest roadblocks to living the doctrine is our emotions. And connected to our emotions are habits of actions.

Part of our brain is called the basal ganglia.

The basal ganglia create “habit loops” that are encoded as “closed loop patterns” in our brains. Know what else is in our basal ganglia? It is where our feelings and emotions reside. Habits and emotions are next door neighbors; they live in the same neighborhood of the brain. So, there is a direct connection between them.

Ever notice we do not have to think about having an emotion? It is always on autopilot, just like our habits. Habits are behaviors we do without having to think about them. As it turns out, the basal ganglia is our autopilot. The problem is the autopilot is not automatically godly.

We don’t want to live out of our basal ganglia, at least not until we have replaced the stuff up there with godly habits and emotions. But even then, it is better to live out of our prefrontal cortex.



So, just a word about our prefrontal cortex: The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that does several things, among which are:

- Decision making
- Controlling emotions and impulses
- Forming new habits

So, the area we want to live out of as we get the doctrine ingrained in us, is the prefrontal cortex.

Now, all this may appear to you to be useless information, but it is not as you will shortly see.

In life, things can happen instantly and that means that much of what we do is on autopilot and guess who runs most of our autopilot? Our flesh.

Ever been talking with your spouse and something hurtful or accusatory is said and almost instantly, you feel yourself getting defensive or angry? In that moment, even when you know the doctrine, your desire is not to obey the doctrine, but your desire is to reply back with something hurtful in return.

So how much more would we feel that way toward someone who is our enemy?

Now, multiply that for all the situations that take place during the day: some incident at work, some jerk on the highway, problems with one of the kids; these are all kinds of situations that we respond to not out of godly love, but the autopilot of our flesh. And when we are in the middle of any stressful situation, we are very likely not going to feel like employing the doctrine. And there it is again; our feelings, our emotions. And those emotions are not tied to godly thinking and actions, they are tied to fleshly thinking and ungodly actions.

Today we are going to cultivate a skill, (and I use that word on purpose) a sonship skill in the area of godly justice, that will transform us and produce the life of Christ in us. This is a sonship skill in which the exercise of it will allow the Lord Jesus Christ to live His life in us and while His life is being manifested outwardly, we are being conformed to His image inwardly.

So, decide today that no longer will your emotions rule you. No longer will you live out of the old habits. Instead, decide right now that you will develop new

skills and habits which come from the doctrine in Paul's epistles. Decide to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. This may be the one decision that you needed to make in order to become a FES/D one day.

But habits are hard things to break, no matter what kind they are, and we cannot break habits on autopilot. Unfortunately, autopilot is the way we fly most of the time. It is difficult to turn off the autopilot and live our life, making conscious decisions about everything we do with godly purpose.

Autopilot is not how you are supposed to live. It is only supposed to help us in an immediate context, but it is not designed to take the place of the pilot.

As the pilot of your own life, do you know what you are supposed to be? What is the purpose of our education/edification? As an adopted son or daughter you are supposed to be...what? In the heavenly places, as part of the body of Christ, we are all supposed to be...what? Let me give you a hint: I have told you from the beginning that wisdom, justice, judgment and equity are skills; skills which equip us to do what? Let me ask it another way: In Romans 12:3-15:7, we are learning four skills; but what kind of skills are they? What have I been calling them for years now?

They are decision-making skills. They are the skills by which you will make decisions about everything you do in this life, and by which you will labor with God in the heavenly places throughout the ages to come. So what is the answer to the first question; as an adopted, educated, edified son or daughter, you are supposed to be what? You are supposed to be a decision-maker. Not a passenger who simply sits in the plane of your life, flying on autopilot, but one who is sitting at the controls of your life, actively making godly decisions.

Today I am going to turn you from being a passenger to being a decision maker. And we are to make decisions out of the skills we are developing from the education.

But therein lies the problem. Most of us know what we ought to do, but what we do not know is how to do it. This is called the "knowledge/action gap."

We know we ought to spend time with the doctrine during the week, but we let our habits dictate how we spend our time.

We know we should not get even with that guy who wronged us, but we still want to. And even if we don't do something to retaliate, it still eats at us and we boil on the inside. We harbor resentment and ill will toward the offender. "They can't get away with treating me like that; I'd like to show them how it feels." So we speak badly about them to others even though our apostle told us "bless them which persecute you; bless and curse not."

We think, "Oh, I'm not going to retaliate, but I'm not going out of my way to be friendly either." It's the same thing. You didn't do it outwardly, but you did it inwardly which violates the very spirit of what godliness is.

I know this is from Israel's program but the principle is the same.

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: ²⁸ But I say unto you, That whosoever **looketh on a woman to lust** after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Here is the principle; failing to act on our ungodly thinking is not what the scripture produces in us. That is what the lost world does. The effectual working of the word changes the way we think (the renewing of our mind) so that we can act on that thinking in a godly way. Lack of a bad action does not constitute godliness.

I am talking about this so we all understand that this is something more than just controlling our flesh; something more than not retaliating.

So, when someone wrongs you, how do we overcome those feelings of anger and the desire to fire back? In the beginning, as we are attempting to establish the doctrine in our souls, it may help us to employ a starting ritual; something that helps us develop a new habit. There are a lot of ways to do this, so let me give you one of them. We are going to call this the "5-Second Countdown."

I know you have some questions.

- What is the 5-Second Countdown?
- When do we employ it?
- How do we employ it?
- What does it do?

Let's answer these one at a time.

In any context, the 5-Second Countdown is a mental mechanism that allows us to break a habit, to interrupt a learned response to a situation, and to control an emotional outburst in order to recall and insert a different way of thinking which leads to a different behavior and the development of a new habit.

To put it in the sonship context, the 5-Second Countdown is a mental mechanism that interrupts our fleshly responses to the various situations of life and allows us to live out of the doctrine instead.

To put in the context of Romans 12:17-21, the 5-Second Countdown is a mental mechanism which helps us replace our natural response of “repaying evil with evil” with the godly response of “giving place unto wrath.”

To put it in the context of edification, the 5-Second Countdown is a mental mechanism which allows us to establish godliness as our autopilot.

Now, the next question: When do we employ the 5-Second Countdown?

There are a couple of ways to answer this question:

- As pertaining to our edification: We use the 5-Second Countdown anytime we are attempting to establish the doctrine in our inner man, especially in the beginning before the doctrine is firmly rooted in us. Once the doctrine is rooted, we no longer need to employ the mechanism. Remember, we are calling this a “starting mechanism” which means it is only an aid to help us “get started,” giving the doctrine a chance to do what God has designed it to do. We use it when we identify a “trouble area” in which we are struggling. We are all different, so what is easy for one person may not be easy for another. If you come upon one that is not easy, a starting mechanism can help.
- As pertaining to our physical life: We use the 5-Second Countdown anytime we are attempting to break an old habit or introduce a new habit. For example, we may want to impact our health by stopping some behaviors (bad foods) and starting new ones (exercise). We may want to impact our marriage, our relationship with our children, our relationship with our parents, our job, etc. by stopping things which are detrimental and introducing things which are beneficial.

While this mechanism will work in any area of life, and while I want you all to be successful in all the areas of your life, I do not want to turn this into some kind of self-improvement lesson. The goal here is to utilize the mechanism for replacing our old thinking with the doctrine.

So, how do we employ the 5-Second Countdown, and how does it work?

We simply do what the name implies, we countdown from 5 backwards, one count per second. Do this mentally whenever you are about to act out of emotion or habit. For example, someone cuts you off in traffic and the kneejerk response is to be angry, maybe even try to cut them off up the road. As soon as you feel that emotion of anger well up inside you, you need to do three things and the 5-Second Countdown enables you to do all three:

- 1) Preemptively interrupt the habit of behavior (Preemptively=before it gets going.)
- 2) Instantly recall the doctrine
- 3) Quickly act on the doctrine

You only have a couple of seconds.

Counting down backwards from 5 allows you to do all of these things. Now this requires a bit of explanation, so stick with me.

Let's take the example of the guy cutting you off in traffic. When that happens, you are on autopilot, just like you are most of the day. That means that you are operating out of the basal ganglia section of your brain. This is how you can drive home and not even recall stopping at the stop sign or looking for cross traffic. You did, you just did it out of reflex. You are operating out of the habit section of your brain. So, when you get cut off, if you do not interrupt your "autopilot," your response is not going to be godly, but it is going to come from an emotion which produced a habit you have developed over the years.

Stopping to countdown from 5 interrupts that "automated" process. So there is the first objective accomplished.

Next, the mere fact of counting reminds you of why you are counting; you want to respond out of the doctrine instead. You want your thinking to be godly and your actions too. When you count, you will not ask yourself why you are counting, it

will be in your memory, and guess where your memory is; it is in your prefrontal cortex. So there is the second thing accomplished. It is a bit like tying a string around your finger. You now recall the doctrine.

So, here is how it works, you get cut off, you feel anger, which is your cue to count, 5-4, and your habit has been interrupted for a moment, 3-2, and now you recall the doctrine.

Now, we come to the third issue, acting on the doctrine. Think of the countdown as the countdown to liftoff; a countdown to action. You are counting down 1-0, and when you hit 0, you need to be putting the doctrine into action in some way, depending on the circumstance. Zero is the prompt that makes you act.

And since you have wakened your prefrontal cortex by counting backwards, guess where the doctrine is sitting? It is sitting in your prefrontal cortex. And by counting down backwards, you have taken an action which has wakened the prefrontal cortex part of your brain – the part of your brain you use to change your behavior and control the emotions, and now you can act on the doctrine!

Let me interject, counting upwards to five does not work because 5 is not the end you can count to. And if you count too long, it won't work. Counting down brings you to an end. Plus, counting backwards requires focus, which is part of what switches you to the prefrontal cortex. You can count forward on autopilot; count backwards.

So what has this mental mechanism done?

- It interrupted the pattern of behavior
- It helped to assert control over your emotion
- It reminded you of the doctrine
- It prompted you to act with a new behavior

So, instead of reacting out of your emotions to the jerk out on the highway, you are now allowing the life of Christ to be made manifest in your mortal body.

Let me give you one more example. You are talking with your spouse and something is said that immediately causes you to get defensive, hurt or angry. Instead of the usual response of yelling, cursing, withdrawing, insulting, ignoring,

etc., employ the 5-Second Countdown. Think of the doctrine and instead of the usual reaction, let them hear a godly response.

So, the rule is, whenever you feel any emotion stirring within you, (anger, pride, jealousy, anxiety, confusion, boredom, disgust, fear, stress, etc.) whenever you hear yourself talking and acting like the world, even if its good things, those are signals that it is time for godliness to replace everything else.

As soon as someone says something that makes you angry, employ the 5-second rule, which means, take a moment to think. And before “firing back” at the one who has attacked you, you need to move from a fleshly autopilot to a godly decision-maker.

If you do this, everything in your life will change. You will be a different husband or wife, a different parent, a different employer or employee, and a different saint.

Summary

One of the reasons it is so hard to let go of the wrongs done to us is because within all of us, there is some sense of justice. When our sense of justice has been violated, we want to right the wrong that has been done to us. The emotion that is largely at the root of vengeance is anger and it is out of anger that we often retaliate against those who wrong us.

Romans 12:19 instructs us to not avenge ourselves but to give place to wrath: to give wrath to the Lord (the Righteous Judge) who will repay.

One of the biggest roadblocks to living the doctrine is our emotions. And connected to our emotions are habits of actions. These habits are normally fueled by the flesh.

Lack of a bad action does not constitute godliness. We must not only physically respond to our situations in a godly manner, but our minds must also think godly. The effectual working of the word changes the way we think (the renewing of our mind) so that we can act on that thinking in a godly way.

The 5-Second Countdown is a mental mechanism which allows us to respond to the evil done to us with a godly response. We can use it when we identify a “trouble” area in which we struggle. Utilizing this mechanism will give us time to 1) Preemptively interrupt the habit of behavior; 2) Instantly recall the doctrine; and, 3) Quickly act on the doctrine.

Once you begin to make conscious choices of replacing your old way of thinking with the doctrine, you are allowing the life of Christ to be made manifest in your mortal body.

Godly justice is one of our decision-making skills that we will be using in the heavenly places. Exercising this sonship skill of godly justice will allow the Lord to live His life in us and while His life is being manifested outwardly, we are being conformed to His image inwardly.

Self-Test

1. One of the biggest roadblocks to living the doctrine is our _____.
2. One of the reasons it is so hard to let go of the _____ done to us is because within all of us, there is some sense of _____.
3. Lack of a bad action does not constitute _____.
4. The 5-Second Countdown is a _____ mechanism which allows us to _____ to the evil done to us with a _____ response.
5. Using the 5-Second Countdown gives us time to:
 - 1) Preemptively _____ the habit of behavior;
 - 2) Instantly _____ the doctrine; and,
 - 3) Quickly _____ on the doctrine.
6. What are the sonship decision-making skills?
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
7. When you replace your old way of _____ with the _____, you are allowing the life of _____ to be made _____ in your mortal body.

Self-Test Answers

1. One of the biggest roadblocks to living the doctrine is our **emotions**.
2. One of the reasons it is so hard to let go of the **wrongs** done to us is because within all of us, there is some sense of **justice**.
3. Lack of a bad action does not constitute **godliness**.
4. The 5-Second Countdown is a **mental** mechanism which allows us to **respond** to the evil done to us with a **godly** response.
5. Using the 5-Second Countdown gives us time to 1) Preemptively **interrupt** the habit of behavior; 2) Instantly **recall** the doctrine; and, 3) Quickly **act** on the doctrine.
6. What are the sonship decision-making skills?
 - Wisdom
 - Justice
 - Judgment
 - Equity
7. When you replace your old way of **thinking** with the **doctrine**, you are allowing the life of **Christ** to be made **manifest** in your mortal body.

Romans Education, Part Three
Godly Justice: Session Six
NOTETAKER

Fig. 1: Breakdown of Godly Justice

First Major Section of Justice: Romans 12:17-21

Part One: Romans 12:17-18

Part Two: Romans 12:19-20

Part Three: _____

Fig. 2: Overcome with Evil

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fig. 3: Step One – The Offence



Fig. 4: Step Two – The Response of the Offended

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Fig. 5: Step Three: The Response of the Assembly (to the Offended)



- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fig. 6: Step Four: The Response of the Assembly (to the Offender)

- _____
- _____

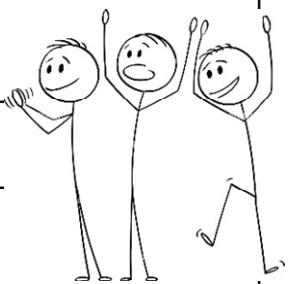


Fig. 7: How we are overcome with evil

We overcome evil with good when we:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fig. 8: Who We Are

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
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- _____
- _____
- _____
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- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Fig. 9: Overcoming Evil with Good

We overcome evil with good when we:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Student Notes

Session 6: Romans 12:21

Once again we look at the breakdown of the first major component of doctrine in Justice. We covered the first two and now we come to third part of this component; Romans 12:21.

Now, drop down to the end of the passage and look at vs. 21.

Romans 12:21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is the summation for everything we have covered from vs. 17 to this point.

Verse 21 ends the passage by saying we are not to be overcome by evil, but we are to overcome evil with good. Let's think about that first part; being overcome of evil. The fact that Paul says for us not to be overcome of evil is evidence that it is possible for evil to negatively impact us.

The first part of verse 21 is another of those negative exhortations, telling us what not to do. There are several ways in which we can be overcome of evil.

Sticking to the context of vv. 17-21, we are being overcome of evil when we nurture hatred in our heart for the one who has wronged us. When we realize that we have hatred in our heart for our enemy; that should sound an alarm in our spirit. Instead of feeding that hatred by talking about it to others and thinking about it in our own minds, we need to purge that out from us. We should do ourselves a service by not feeding hatred and not contributing to our fellow saints doing so either. And that can be done kindly.

So let's walk through the steps to an offence and our response to it.

Step 1: The Offence

Step 2: The Response of the Offended

- I will not recompense evil for evil
- I will put godliness on display
- I determine to live peaceably
- I will not be overcome of evil
- I will overcome evil with good
- I will look for ways to minister to my offender

Step 3: The Response of the Assembly (to the Offended)

We care about the evil that happens to our brethren. We demonstrate that care as we abhor the evil which has happened to them. Be careful not to transfer the hatred for the evil to the offender. In “cleaving to that which is good” we exhibit lovingkindness. This is our godly compassion, encouragement, etc. In our godly compassion, we are working to restore wholeness to the body, so that the offended member can be restored to fullness of function.

Step 4: The Response of the Assembly (to the Offender)

Instead of generating ill will in our hearts on the behalf of our fellow saints, we think of ways to minister to the offender. As those who are watching from the outside, we cannot give in to the evil done by taking up the offence. And when it is done to us, we should not put our fellow saints in such a position as to take up the offence for us.

Ephesians 4:29 Let **no corrupt communication** proceed out of your mouth, **but that which is good to the use of edifying**, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.³⁰ And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.³¹ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

When we dwell on the evil done to us, those thoughts fuel our anger and hinder our sonship life.

We must also remember that Satan is really good at misdirection. When we get to thinking that the real battle is between us and some other guy, Satan has succeeded in getting us to think about our situation the wrong way.

The ability to overcome evil with good, (to not avenge ourselves, to leave wrath to God, to not recompense evil for evil, and to minister to our enemy) starts with the understanding that there are things going on behind the scenes which do not appear to our physical senses. To say no to the natural tendencies of the flesh and steer away from norms of this world means we have to have spiritual insight into the things which happen to us. It means we must desire to put godliness on display more than we want to salvage our pride and the way the world perceives us.

In Ephesians we will learn that the real battle is not against flesh and blood, but there is a much larger battle going on behind the scenes; a spiritual battle.

Ephesians 6:11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

One of Satan's wiles is to get you off track by using some human instrument to do some evil to you and then get you focused on them and on your revenge. All the while, he is disguising the real battle.

Ephesians 6:12 For we **wrestle not against flesh and blood**, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

We need spiritual sight to see the real battle. Satan uses flesh and blood to war against us in much the same way that our Father uses us to war against the darkness of this world.

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The armor is made up of the various doctrines that our apostle has instructed us in. And by the time we get over to Ephesians, we are going to need every part of that armor.

So, the next time you are wronged by someone, do not allow yourself to be overcome of evil by hating the person, but see them for who they are; a victim of Satan's PoE and you should want to see them delivered from Satan's snare. We cannot do that if we harbor ill-will toward them, not honestly.

The next way we are overcome of evil is to let the wrongs done to us define who we are. Do not allow the evil done to you to turn you into a victim, to convince you that you cannot win, to make you throw in the towel on having a godly response to the evil done to you. The doctrine functions as armor to protect us from the "fiery darts" of the wicked. We are in a war and we have a real enemy. And we will not prevail in this war if we war after the flesh.

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

We may not realize it yet, but the doctrine sitting in Romans 12:3-16 constitutes part of the armor of light which we will need when we get to Romans 13. Also, here in Romans 12:17-21 we are given another part of our “doctrinal armor.”

This doctrine is not about keeping an evildoer from getting what he deserves, it is about keeping us from being overcome of evil.

Let's end this point with a question: If we are not going to allow the evil done to us to define who we are, then what should define us? The answer is we should define ourselves by who we are in Christ! Who are we really? We are who we are in connection with our sanctified life, in connection with the doctrine effectually working to produce the life of Christ in us.

We are co-crucified, co-buried and co-resurrected in Christ so that we now walk in newness of life. We are sons of God who are being led by the Spirit of God into a whole new way of living. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. We are a spectacle to the world, to men and to angels. We are made as the filth of this world but that is not who we are. We know the world despises us, so we are not surprised or disheartened. We are not ignorant of Satan's devices. We have God's word that prepares us in advance for the attacks against us; that makes us capable.

We are ambassadors for Christ. We know who we represent, so our behavior reflects that. We are His workmanship. We know what He wants to make us into and it is our desire for that work to be done in us. We are members of His body, which means we understand our role in God's plan and the privilege of it. We are members one of another. We are the beloved of the Lord. We know how our Father feels about us so we never doubt. We are complete in Him. We know our Father's provision lacks nothing which gives us absolute confidence.

This is only a part of who we are. Never forget it. Think about it constantly and add to the few things mentioned here. Talk about these things to your Father in prayer and get these things firmly lodged in your thinking.

Prayer with God should cover so many subjects, just like the conversations you have with your closest friend or your most intimate relationship.

The next time you encounter evil, remember who you have been made to be and determine to allow the life of Christ to respond to that evil through you – to His glory, to the accomplishment of God’s will, and to the display of Christ in you.

We are being overcome of evil when we allow the wrongs done to us to rob us of our peace and joy.

We have access to a peace that passes understanding. We have doctrine which allows us to rejoice in our sufferings.

Even though these are great and precious promises for us as members of the body of Christ, if we choose to live out of our emotions, we can shipwreck our faith. When we receive some injustice of evil, we have a sonship decision to make regarding how we will respond to that evil. The only way evil can rob us of our peace and joy is if we allow it to. By deciding not to put the doctrine into practice, we are allowing ourselves to be overcome of evil.

The next way we are overcome of evil is when we repay evil with evil; get even; avenge ourselves. The next way we are overcome of evil is when we wish or facilitate ill to those who wrong us.

To stay within the strict context, the way to overcome evil with good is to obey the doctrine in vv. 17-20.

Summary

Romans 12:17-21 beautifully addresses the proper mindset we should have when contemplating Personal Justice.

Verse 21 ends the passage by saying we are not to be overcome by evil, but we are to overcome evil with good. The fact that Paul says for us not to be overcome of evil is evidence that it is possible for evil to negatively impact us.

One of Satan's wiles is to get you off track by using some human instrument to do some evil to you and then get you focused on them and on your revenge. When we get to thinking that the real battle is between us and some other guy, Satan has succeeded in getting us to think about our situation the wrong way.

We must not lose sight on the real enemy: Satan. Remember, our war is in the spirit (2 Cor. 10:3-4). So, the next time you are wronged by someone, do not allow yourself to be overcome of evil by hating the person, but see them for who they are; a victim of Satan's Policy of Evil.

We are being overcome of evil when we nurture hatred in our heart for the one who has wronged us. When we realize that we have hatred in our heart for our enemy; that should sound an alarm in our spirit. Instead of feeding that hatred by talking about it to others and thinking about it in our own minds, we need to purge that out from us.

When we receive some injustice of evil, we have a sonship decision to make regarding how we will respond to that evil. When an offence occurs (and it will), the offended person's response should always be godly. Those in the assembly should show godly compassion to the offended member, understanding that we are working to restore wholeness to the body, so that the offended member can be restored to fullness of function. In addition members of the assembly must think of ways to minister to the offender.

When we dwell on the evil done to us, those thoughts fuel our anger and hinder our sonship life. When we define ourselves by who we are in Christ, it will keep us from being overcome of evil. The next time you encounter evil, remember who you have been made to be and determine to allow the life of Christ to respond to that evil through you – to His glory, to the accomplishment of God's will, and to the display of Christ in you.

So you see we will always have something to talk about to our heavenly Father.

Self-Test

1. When we _____ on the evil done to us, those thoughts _____ our anger and _____ our sonship life.
2. We are being _____ of evil when we _____ hatred in our _____ for the one who has wronged us.
3. We are overcome of evil when we let the wrongs done to us _____ who we are.
4. We are overcome of evil when we repay _____ with _____; get even; avenge ourselves
5. We will not prevail in this war if we war after the _____.
6. We need _____ sight to see the real battle.
7. When we understand that we are working to _____ wholeness to the _____, we will show _____ compassion to the offended member and think of ways to _____ to the offender.

Self-Test Answers

1. When we **dwell** on the evil done to us, those thoughts **fuel** our anger and **hinder** our sonship life.
2. We are being **overcome** of evil when we **nurture** hatred in our **heart** for the one who has wronged us.
3. We are overcome of evil when we let the wrongs done to us **define** who we are.
4. We are overcome of evil when we repay **evil** with **evil**; get even; avenge ourselves
5. We will not prevail in this war if we war after the **flesh**.
6. We need **spiritual** sight to see the real battle.
7. When we understand that we are working to **restore** wholeness to the **body**, we will show **godly** compassion to the offended member and think of ways to **minister** to the offender.

ACRONYMS

A.V. – Authorized Version

DoGG – Dispensation of Gentile Grace

FED – Fully Educated Daughter

FES – Fully Educated Son

JUEL – Justified Unto Eternal Life

OED – Oxford English Dictionary

OT – Old Testament

PoE – Policy of Evil

RoK – Reservoir of Knowledge

SoC – Sufferings of Christ

SoPT – Sufferings of this Present Time

VRS – Vain Religious System