

Romans 12:21—Part 2

This article is from the "Among Friends" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's website, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of March 18, 2017.

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Last week, I mentioned that I wanted to use last week's article and this week's article to discuss Romans 12:21.

Romans 12:21—"Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

This week, we will look at the second part of that verse—overcome evil with good.

As I also mentioned last week, I want this material to be more than a philosophical discussion. I know sincere people who abuse alcohol, use drugs, commit adultery and do other unsavory deeds. I hope last week's article and this article will help sincere people to find help—by overcoming evil with good.

Dealing with our nature

The apostle Paul understood the contrast between the spiritual law and his carnal nature.

Romans 7:14—"For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin."

He proceeded to explain what he meant in verses 15-25.

Romans 7:15, 19—"For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do . . . For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

At this time, I want to review four reminders about how we can overcome evil with good.

Accept God's grace

Here is the first concept—accept God's grace.

We understand that Paul loved God's law.

Romans 6:1-2—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

Romans 7:7-8—"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead."

Romans 7:12—“Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”

But Paul’s writing revealed that there was a necessary ingredient that was more important than the law. Notice a verse in chapter 8.

Romans 8:3—“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.”

Let’s take another look at that verse.

- The law could not do an important aspect.
- The law had a weakness.
- The weakness of the law had to do with dealing with the fleshly people.
- To compensate for that weakness, God sent His own Son.

Hebrews 2:9—“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.”

It is important that disciples accept God’s grace.

Obedience brings blessings

Here is the second concept—accept God’s instructions, because they produce blessings for you.

Many religious people have an erroneous idea about obedience. They mistakenly think that accepting God’s instructions makes them better than other people.

In the parable about the publican and the tax-collector (Luke 18:9-14), Christ illustrated the mistake very clearly.

A disciple should follow God’s instructions for the correct reason. Obedience is not about being better than other people. Obedience is about being wise enough to accept God’s blessings.

Here are some Old Testament scriptures that show God’s desire for people to make a correct decision for their own benefit.

- Deuteronomy 30:15-20.
- Psalm 119:105.
- Proverbs 1:10-19.
- Proverbs 2:1-5.
- Proverbs 3:1-6.
- Proverbs 4:1-4.

Someone could ask: Are you guaranteeing that my accepting God’s instructions in this life will automatically bring blessings upon me every time in this life?

My answer: No, I cannot make that guarantee.

At one occurrence, Christ told an audience that some blessings will come at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 14:12-14—“Then He also said to him who invited Him, ‘When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.’ ”

At another time, He explained to His disciples that some blessings would come in this life and that other blessings would come in the afterlife.

Mark 10:28-30—“Then Peter began to say to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You.’ So Jesus answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life.’ ”

Blessing to others

Here is the third concept—accept God’s instructions to glorify our heavenly Father and to be a blessing to other people.

Have you ever noticed that accepting God’s instructions is a proper reaction to receiving God’s grace?

Let’s notice two famous sections of Scripture in the Bible that clearly mention being saved by God’s grace. In both cases, notice the verse that comes directly after the truth about grace.

Here is what Paul wrote to the congregation at Ephesus.

Ephesians 2:8-9—“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

And he continued.

Ephesians 2:10—“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

Here is what Paul wrote to Titus.

Titus 3:4-7—“But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, [which] He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

And then he added.

Titus 3:8—“This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.”

When God blesses people with His grace, He wants to bless other people through those he initially blessed.

And when disciples are tools to bless other people, they have the opportunity to be a tool that glorifies our Heavenly Father.

- Matthew 5:14-16.
- John 15:8.
- 2 Timothy 2:21.
- 1 Peter 2:11-12.

Accept God’s grace

Here is the fourth concept—accept God’s grace.

Notice another verse in Romans.

Romans 5:8—“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Did you catch that?

- He died for us, knowing full well that we were going to become sinners.
- He died for us, knowing full well that we are sinners.
- Do you suppose that Christ would say the following—“I know that I died for you when I knew that you were going to be a sinner in the future, but now I am going to abandon you every time you sin in this present life”?

Let’s read some extremely encouraging words that Christ told to His disciples.

John 10:25-30—“Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.’ ”

It is possible to overcome evil with good.

It is probable to overcome evil with good.

Considering that the first and fourth reminders in this article were the same, you can see that I believe that this life begins and ends with God’s grace.