

Title: OVERCOME EVIL, ROMANS 12:14-21
(Chatham, NJ; 08/31/14, AM) [Pc – Exegesis]

Theme: The Bible takes an aggressive stance in destroying the world's evil by teaching Christ's followers that they are to overcome evil by actively doing good.

Purpose: To explain how to overcome evil and to exhort everyone to put it into daily practice.

Introduction:

1. This is more of the hard work of Christianity; this is the detail work of dealing with evil.
2. Being baptized and having our sins washed away is the beginning of overcoming evil; we overcome evil in many concrete ways.
3. We must replace the unclean spirits once they've been vanquished, Mt. 12:43-45.
4. Our role in overcoming the evil in the world is not passive: "Do unto others, etc." is more active than Confucius' "Don't do unto others, etc."
5. Too often we react to what others do, but our behavior comes from within us and does not depend on what everyone else does.
6. Thus it is that Paul can say, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."
7. We are not passive victims of Satan, others, or of society. The Gospel gives us a center of gravity.
8. We'll work back from verse 21 to understand the details of what we can do to overcome evil in our lives.

I. Repay No One Evil for Evil, 17

- A. Abhor evil, 9
 1. We must hate what God hates
 2. Complacency is the result of tolerance taken to the extreme
 3. God had to take Ezekiel from Babylon back to the Temple to see what Israel was doing to provoke His wrath
 4. Psalm 26:5 says, "I hate the assembly of evildoers, and I will not sit with the wicked."
- B. Live at peace as much as it depends on you, 18
 1. Blessed are the peacemakers
 2. Strive your best
 3. Leave others their responsibility
 4. You can only do your part
 5. No matter how much others seek to blame you, they are also responsible
- C. Never avenge yourselves, 19
 1. Leave room for God's wrath
 2. Let God do his part – your role ends here
 3. When, in Jeremiah 15:15, the prophet asks for God's vengeance against his persecutors, he is giving his impulse for vengeance over to God
 4. Praying for our enemies goes hand in hand with doing good to them and heaping burning coals on their heads, 20

II. Live in Harmony, 16

- A. Begins with a change in each of us
 1. Do not be haughty or conceited
 2. Associate with the lowly
 3. Ephesians 4:2 – we are called to bear with one another in love
 4. Our inner stability comes from our calling: we are children of God, chosen and forgiven

- B. Making the effort
 - 1. Don't take everything personally
 - 2. Give others the benefit of the doubt
 - 3. Seek to have more friends than enemies

III. Bless Those Who Persecute You, 14

- A. Do not curse them
 - 1. Consistent with verse 17 – do not repay evil for evil
 - 2. This one has the verbal component
 - 3. We may not curse them to their face but to others

- B. 1 Peter 3:8-12 elaborates on the same theme
 - 1. Begins with unity, brotherly love, and humility (see also Romans 12:9-13)
 - 2. Verse 9 repeats Romans 12:14
 - 3. This is our calling
 - 4. Peter cites Psalm 34
 - 5. Keep tongue from evil
 - 6. Turn from evil and do good
 - 7. Seek peace and pursue it

Conclusions:

- 1. To overcome evil: don't repay people with evil, don't curse even when cursed, bless instead, and live in harmony as much as it depends on you.
- 2. Simply put, ask this question: "What good can I do here?"
- 3. Or "How can I turn a bad thing into a good one."
- 4. You have it within you to do this.
- 5. You don't need to wait for others to do the right thing; you can do right because God lives in you and you have been called to this life.
- 6. Overcome evil with good.
- 7. Go out today, and live this way.