

Living Sacrifice 4

Overcome Evil With Good

Romans 12:14-21

Memory Verses: Romans 12:21

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

(Carrying Tennis Ball), "I'm literally going to chuck this tennis ball as hard as I can at one of you this morning... it's going to happen!" Live in fear! No, but for real, check this out! When I throw this ball against the wall... the wall returns it to me! Why? Cause as Newton's third law of motion states, class: "every action has an equal and opposite reaction." It's like a reflex. I throw the ball at the wall and the wall throws it back! And I bet... if I threw this ball at one of you and you weren't expecting it and it hit you in the face and hurt you that you would feel a certain way about it and maybe you would want to throw it back at me and hurt me the way I hurt you? It's natural! Something hits you, you hit it back! Someone insults you, you insult them back! They gossip about you, you gossip about them. They exclude you, you exclude them. You get it right? Something hits you and you send it right back!

But Romans 12 says that followers of Jesus are called to develop a completely unnatural and different reflex. Look at what Paul says in **Romans 12:14-21**. Don't repay evil with evil but overcome evil with good! Don't seek revenge, don't do what they did to you... put an end to it with grace and forgiveness and love! In short... don't become what hurt you!

For the past three weeks we've been learning what it means to be a living sacrifice. To be dead to this world and our sin but completely alive to Christ and his commands! We are some kind of zombie moving through this world with one objective... declare the glory of Jesus. Nothing can stop us... why? Cause we have already died! Now we live for one thing and one thing only! Jesus! We are living sacrifices, body and mind, church and talents, who resist every temptation to simply take it easy and exist. Nope... we are on mission! We leverage our lives for the Gospel no matter what it takes! We've put down the bat... we've put down the lawn chair... and today we put down the ball!

Why? Because we can't live sacrificially if we are living with anger, bitterness, and vengeance in our hearts. We must do things radically different than what our flesh desires and what this world expects. When someone hurts us, betrays us, lies about us, excludes us, takes advantage of us, we can't respond the way everyone else does. **As living sacrifices we must learn to respond differently to evil.**

Think about it like this... if they hurt us and we in return hurt them back then their sin has not won once but now twice! Evil wins twice when

it hurts you and then turns you into the person who hurt you. But if you learn to not let their evil and sin destroy you... then their sin hasn't even won once. Good has overcome evil! The bottom line today is this... if Christ lives in you and you are a living sacrifice... **Don't become what hurt you.** Today we are going to see three ways to overcome evil with good!

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

First... **We Overcome Evil With Good When We Feel With Them.** Look again with me at **vs12-16**. Empathy is powerful! When we try to walk in other's shoes and gain their perspective it can change everything! Notice Paul is talking about people who have hurt us but almost immediately says... don't focus on your pain... focus on theirs! Why? Because **hurting people hurt people!** This is so true! Healthy, loved, cared for, put together people do not bully others or find joy in hurting others. Only those who have had it hard, like to push that hurt on others.

Paul wants us to stop thinking about ourselves because we, to a certain degree don't exist anymore. We are dead. We are living sacrifices, right? So we aren't all that important! But the lost, the hurting in the world... they are! They need Christ and the way we respond to them makes a huge difference! But there is a problem. Pain has a way of shrinking our world. When someone hurts you, suddenly everything becomes about you. They hurt ME, embarrassed ME, betrayed ME! How do we get beyond ourselves when we are hurt? We have to think about them...not us! And man, this is counterintuitive and completely counter culture! No one does this... do they?

For example, have you ever been stuck in traffic and you're already late and then someone cuts you off. Your immediate reaction is, Seriously are you kidding me? And suddenly this person becomes one of the worst humans who have ever lived. You don't know anything about them but all you can think is about how they just wronged you. They may be a jerk, they may be texting.... Or they may be driving their wife to the hospital for a medical emergency, Or maybe they just had the worst day at work and they are about to lose their last nerve. Or maybe they are also late to work but this time they might get fired and they will not be able to feed their children dinner. The point is... you don't know. But instead of thinking the worst possible thing about them... what if we thought the best possible thing about them and empathized with them and prayed for them.

We are such experts and judging people's behavior while knowing almost nothing about their story. But just for kicks... what's if we rejoiced with those who hurt us? What if we wept for those who caused us pain? Cause maybe, just maybe they didn't mean to. Or maybe they did but they need our prayers, rejoicing, and tears more than they know. The point is... **It's very hard to love people when you've already decided that you know their whole story.** We are called to **1 Corinthians 13:7**. We are called to **Matthew 7:1-2**. Maybe before you judge, listen. Maybe before you react,

learn. Maybe before you assume or condemn, pray for them. Living sacrifices don't let their pain make them blind to people! They overcome evil with good. **Don't become what hurt you.**

Second... **We Overcome Evil With Good When We Refuse Revenge.** Look again with me at **vs17-19**. Notice Paul moves from the heart to the head. We don't simply rejoice and weep with those who hurt us... we actually repay their evil with... contemplation and pause. We don't just feel with them... we forgive them. We don't just empathize with them... we empty ourselves of vengeance for them. We never avenge ourselves.

Why? First, because vengeance is evil! We don't repay evil with evil. We don't do evil... because we are living sacrifices for Christ! Evil isn't our default... goodness is our tool now. And... God will take care of it. If there is wrath needed... God will shield you from that evil and take it upon himself. He is the only one qualified to judge them. He is the only one qualified to punish them. **You don't have to get even when you trust God to make things right.**

Secondly, revenge is the opposite of forgiveness. Imagine that every hurt is another strike you record on a scoreboard that you carry with you wherever you go. Dad plus 1, the Ex plus 7, the Boss, plus 3, Church person plus 11. The scores keep accumulating. Everytime you see them... you know the score. Here's the problem... they don't know the score. They've moved on. They don't know nor do they care about what happened. They are free of the pain. You however are carrying around a big bulky scoreboard wherever you go. It's uncomfortable and inconvenient. You're the one carrying all the pain. The person who hurt you may have moved on, but you're still letting them cause you pain by carrying the pain with you wherever you go. God says, let me close the wound. Vengeance and unforgiveness keep the wound fresh. **Unforgiveness is drinking poison and hoping the other person gets sick.**

Corrie Ten Boom was imprisoned in Ravensbruck concentration camp where she almost died and her sister Betsie did die. One day in 1947 after speaking in a church in Munich, she saw a man walking toward her. He was one of the guards at the camp. Overcome with grief he approached her to beg for forgiveness. She did. But later she confessed, she naturally didn't want to... but she had to be obedient to Christ and show him mercy. That's Romans 12. She didn't say, what happened wasn't evil. It was very evil. She wasn't saying, it didn't hurt... it hurt a lot on multiple levels. What she was saying was... I refuse to allow what you did to me to determine who I become! She overcame evil with good... and you can too. **Don't become what hurt you.**

Third... **We Overcome Evil With Good When We Bless Them Instead.** Look again with me at **vs20-21**. Paul moves from the heart (feel for them) to the head (forgive them) to the hand (feed them). We don't hurt our enemy.... that's the way of the world. Instead, to the contrary, we are called to bless them. We turn their cursings into blessings by feeding them, giving them something to drink, and generally caring for them.

This is what we are commanded to do. But let's be honest, how many people have actually done this? How many of you have had someone hurt you and do something to you that you hated and in return you blessed them and cared for them, even served them? This is not how we operate! It's just not! So we may be saying to Paul, bro... get real! This isn't real! Stop! That's exactly what being a living sacrifice is! We are dead to the old way of life. So what we couldn't do before... is exactly what we are capable of doing now! A living sacrifice can do very hard and impossible tasks... because they do it for the Lord.

Think about your neighbor. Maybe they hate you. Maybe they complain about your dog or your music or your company. Maybe they have done things to you or said things about you. But one day you notice that their trash can blew over. Your first reaction is "not my problem." But a living sacrifice says... I'm dead to that. Instead you go and pick it up. Can you imagine their reaction? Why did you do that for me? And you say, because Jesus has been good to me... and I want to be good to you. Of course they don't deserve that... but you've changed. You are different. You've replaced revenge with random acts of kindness. You have overcome evil with good. **Don't become what hurt you.**

Application

Three movements. We feel with them. We forgive them. We feed them. We empathize, refuse revenge, and bless them. We don't know who they are or why they did what they did. God is better at justice than we are. And blessings can go a long long way. So how as living sacrifices can we do this? Because the Gospel makes this possible. Jesus said in Matthew 5:44, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Jesus did it first! Look at the cross, they mocked him, but he prayed for them. They beat him, but he looked on them with love. They nailed him to a cross, but he said, "Father, forgive them." Jesus didn't become what hurt him... he overcame it with the goodness of godliness. 1 Peter 2:23 says, "when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Conclusion

So, if I take this tennis ball and throw it against the wall what will happen? Chris Phillips will be mad at me and.... the ball will bounce back. Equal and opposite reaction. Its the same if I yell hello into a canyon. The echo will yell back at me. If I yell Hate, the echo comes back... hate hate hate! If I yell Anger, I hear back... anger anger anger. You know where most people are living... the tennis court or the canyon. Someone gives them hate they give it back. Someone gives them hurt they give it back. Jesus says, change the echo! Change the rhythm. Change the reflex. Interrupt the cycle! People sometimes are mean and hateful... don't let them determine who you become. Jesus died for you, bought you, saved you... he alone gets to determine who you are!

So hate? Don't be overcome by it. And don't become it. **Don't become what hurt you.** Become who Jesus is making you into as a living sacrifice.