

Title: A Portrait of a Genuine Christian (Part 3)

Text: Romans 12:19–21

Taking Revenge against Porch Pirates...

In 2018, the former NASA engineer published his first [glitter bomb video](#) on YouTube. Months earlier, someone had stolen a package from his front porch. Armed with surveillance footage of the thief in action, Rober went to the police but they were too busy to help.

Rather than carry on with life, he made it his life's mission to take a stand against "dishonest punks." Hence, version one of the glitter bomb was conceived.

The glitter bomb is a [booby-trapped bait package](#) loaded full of glitter (and sometimes other surprises). It's also armed with multiple cameras that capture a thief's response when they open the unsuspecting box and get bombarded with an instant mess.

In a nutshell: Mark Rober's annual glitter bomb videos are becoming a bit of a holiday tradition. The fourth-gen glitter bomb features several new surprises including a redesigned, multi-stage glitter cup, a car horn and an onboard microphone. There's also 20 percent more fart spray on board, because of course there is.

Ah! The sweet taste of revenge!!! There is something viscerally satisfying about it!

But are we to be people of revenge?

As Christians, we are called to love and serve others, even those who mistreat us.

In Romans 12:14-18, Paul gives practical instructions on how to respond to evil with love.

In Romans 12: 19-21, Paul instructs the church at Rome to trust a good God with the evil around them and instead of railing against the evil, confront it with good actions.

Romans 12:19-21 teaches the importance of overcoming evil with good, forgiving those who wrong us, and not taking revenge, but rather leaving justice to God.

Main Idea: Defend Yourself Less and Do More Good!

Why? Well, this is what a genuine Christian is like. Their focus isn't on themselves as much as it is on God and others.

The verses we will cover today will turn our thinking on its head because we are, from the womb, taught to defend ourselves. However, Paul has a different philosophy for Christians.

Take a look at his first point...

1. Relax : God Will Make All Things Right (v. 19)

Romans 12:19 ESV

¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Explanation - Paul loved the church in Rome and he wanted them to live within the benefit of Christlikeness.

He has walked through what it means to be a follower of Christ

Romans 12:9–18 ESV

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

And now he finishes this passage with some poignant thoughts.

“Never avenge yourselves...” – Friends, that is a mouthful. What does Paul mean by such a statement? Is it wrong to take a self-defense class to protect oneself? I don’t think that is the point of this passage. He is talking about revenge for being wronged...

Listen to what John Stott says...

The Epistle to the Romans C. The Christian Attitude to Non-Christians, 12:17–21

The passage makes it clear that God has taken to himself the task of avenging those wronged. They are not to take things into their own hands, but leave it to him. In the light of 13:4, it is possible that on occasion this may take place through the secular power, but Paul will not be thinking of that exclusively or even mainly. The eschatological wrath of God is that which in the end will punish all evildoers. The translation of NEB, “Justice is mine”, reminds us that we should not think of God as vindictive. Whenever his wrath is seen in punishment, this is an activity in which justice is done.

By the way, in chapter 13 of Romans, we will see that God uses the government to “bear the sword” to care for those that are defenseless. For example, the Police are to serve and protect on behalf of God (even if they don’t realize they are God’s servants).

Paul is actually quoting the Old Testament in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 32:35 ESV

³⁵ Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly.’

The point? God, in the end, will care for His people. Therefore, vengeance belongs to God alone.

Overall, Paul is emphasizing the importance of not seeking revenge and instead relying on God's justice and mercy. He is calling on Christians to respond to those who wrong them with forgiveness and love, rather than retaliation or vengeance.

Do you know what this verse is really about? TRUST!

When we are wronged, we feel a visceral need to ensure there is justice. Things need to be made right!

Is that true? Yes, of course.

But the real question is, who will make all things right?

This is where the trust piece comes in. If God is asking me to let Him take care of the justice part, then I need to REST in His promise and TRUST that He will do what He says He will do.

Who is our God?

Titus 1:2 ESV

² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began

God never lies and, therefore can be trusted, and He can be trusted with the fact that He will make all things right. It may not be in our time, but it will happen just as He said.

Imagine you're walking down the street and someone suddenly shoves you from behind. You turn around, ready to defend yourself, but you see that the person who pushed you is blind. You realize that they didn't mean to hurt you, and you don't need to retaliate. Instead, you can choose to forgive them and move on.

Likewise, in our lives, there may be situations where we feel wronged by someone or a group of people. Our instinct might be to seek revenge, but as Christians, we are called to a higher standard. We are called to trust in God's justice and leave the matter in His hands.

This doesn't mean that we should be passive or allow ourselves to be taken advantage of, but it means that we should approach conflict resolution with a heart of forgiveness and love. As we seek to follow Christ's example, let us remember that vengeance is not ours to take, but belongs to the Lord.

So, has someone harmed you? Do you have a visceral desire to get them back? Don't do it! Hand it over to the Lord and trust Him with the details!

Here are some practical ways to accomplish this...

1. **Forgive** those who have wronged us: Instead of seeking revenge, we can choose to forgive those who have hurt us. This can be a difficult process, but through prayer and relying on God's strength, we can let go of our anger and bitterness towards the person who has wronged us.
2. **Love** our enemies: Jesus tells us in [Matthew 5:44](#) to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This doesn't mean we condone their actions or approve of their behavior, but it means that we choose to show them kindness and compassion, even when it's difficult.

3. **Seek** reconciliation: If possible, we should seek to reconcile with those who have wronged us. This can involve having a difficult conversation or apologizing for our own mistakes. By seeking reconciliation, we can demonstrate Christ's love and work towards healing broken relationships.

Review - Defend Yourself Less and Do More Good!

Relax: God Will Make All Things Right

But what should I do?

2. Do Good : You Must Live Right (v. 20)

Romans 12:20 ESV

²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."

Here again, we see Paul use the "put off, put on" principle we find in his writings.

He is challenging the Roman Christians to **put off** seeking revenge, but instead **put on** some very powerful actions that will demonstrate their Christlikeness and also cause others to possibly repent.

What are these powerful actions? They are acts of kindness and compassion.

Paul is instructing believers to not seek revenge but to instead treat their enemies with grace!

Paul is actually quoting an Old Testament idea...

Proverbs 25:21–22 ESV

²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, ²² for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.

In other words, take care of their basic needs of food and water. I don't think this is the only thing believers can do for their enemies - this is not an exhaustive list because there are other things we can do. Clothing, shelter, comfort, and encouragement.

Look at what Jesus has to say about this...

Luke 6:27–36 ESV

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. ³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. ³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good,

and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

This is the Kingdom ethic. This is the character of Jesus. This is the goal of His Followers.

But what is up with this *"heap burning coals on his head?"*

Paul's use of the phrase "heap burning coals on his head" has been interpreted in various ways, but it is generally understood to mean that by responding to one's enemy with kindness and compassion, the enemy will be shamed or convicted of their wrongdoing. The phrase may also suggest that the act of kindness will lead to the enemy's repentance or reconciliation.

Overall, Paul is emphasizing the importance of responding to one's enemies with love and compassion, rather than seeking revenge or holding onto bitterness.

He is calling on Christians to model the character of Christ, who demonstrated love and forgiveness even in the face of persecution and injustice.

One example from history of someone returning good for evil is the story of Maria Goretti.

Goretti was an Italian teenage girl who was brutally attacked and killed in 1902 by a neighbor, Alessandro Serenelli, who had been making sexual advances towards her. Despite her injuries, Goretti refused to give in to Serenelli's demands and fought back, screaming that it was a sin. In a fit of rage, Serenelli stabbed her 14 times.

As Goretti lay dying, she forgave her attacker and prayed for his salvation. Serenelli was later arrested and sentenced to 30 years in prison. While in prison, he experienced a powerful conversion, inspired by the forgiveness and love shown to him by Goretti. He eventually repented of his actions and became a devout follower of Christ and lived a life of service to others.

After his release from prison, Serenelli sought out Goretti's mother to ask for her forgiveness. He knelt before her and begged for her mercy, offering to do anything he could to make amends for what he had done. Moved by his contrition, Goretti's mother forgave him.

The story of Maria Goretti and Alessandro Serenelli is a powerful example of returning good for evil, as Goretti chose to forgive her attacker and pray for his salvation, even as he was taking her life. In turn, Serenelli experienced a profound transformation and turned his life around, inspired by the love and forgiveness shown to him by Goretti and her family.

Friends in a day where people are hyper-offended about anything and everything - be the opposite!

Have you considered how you can intentionally bless someone when they are rude, mean, and offensive to you?

Feed them? Refresh them? Say encouraging words to them?

Review - Defend Yourself Less and Do More Good!

Relax: God Will Make All Things Right

Do Good: You Must Live Right

3. Remember : Good is More Powerful Than Evil (v. 21)

Romans 12:21 ESV

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Do you feel overwhelmed and even angry these days as we face so much evil?

I mean, it's not just evil, but weird evil

Drag queens reading to kids? Weird evil.

Drag queens promoting the military? Weird evil

Biological men promoting feminine hygiene products? Weird evil.

"Why are we only applauding masculinity in women and villainizing it in men? And why are we only applauding femininity in men and debasing it in women?" - Evangeline Lilly

I don't preach about politics. But this is beyond politics and is a direct attack by the world and the evil one toward the creative genius of our God.

Genesis 1:26–28 ESV

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This is God's world - He created it and therefore has authority over it. He creates and declares the distinction of who is male and who is female. That's it.

He is the only one with the right and authority to do this.

But we think differently. Nobody tells me what to do! "I am the captain of my fate and the master of my soul."

2 Peter 3:1–3 ESV

¹ This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, ² that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, ³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires.

2 Timothy 3:1–5 ESV

¹ But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.

And you know what? This stuff can really make me angry! Does it make you angry?

And what are we supposed to do about it?

Fight fire with fire? Yell them down in a screaming match? Physically assault them?

What did Christ do when they abused Him?

Matthew 27:24–31 ESV

²⁴ So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." ²⁵ And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified. ²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸ And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹ and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

And they crucified Him.

What was His response to such treatment?

"Do you have any idea who you are dealing with? I AM God!"

"You are all cursed to Hell for treating Me, your Creator, in such a way!"

"Your father Adam blew it and now you too are blowing it! There is NO HOPE FOR YOU!"

No, that is not how Jesus responded when He was abused. Instead, He prayed for those that were killing Him...

Luke 23:34 ESV

³⁴ And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Jesus overcame their evil actions of murder with a prayer of good.

This is what Paul would have us do when we are mistreated and maligned - especially for issues regarding our faith.

Evil is overwhelming and can easily overtake us. We need to be careful to not allow this.

The Evil One has no power over us.

James 4:7 ESV

⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

He has no power over you if you are in Christ.

What recourse do you have?

Overcome evil with Good.

Purpose to be a doer of Good to those who don't deserve it.

This is the gospel! Share the gospel....

Listen to the story of Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who helped to hide Jews from the Nazis during World War II.

Ten Boom and her family were devout Christians who believed that it was their duty to help those in need, regardless of their race or religion. During the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, they began to secretly shelter Jews in their home, risking their own lives to protect them from persecution.

In 1944, however, the ten Boom family was betrayed by a neighbor and arrested by the Gestapo. Corrie and her sister Betsie were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp, where they endured terrible conditions and brutality at the hands of their captors.

Despite the suffering and injustice she experienced, Corrie ten Boom remained committed to her faith and her belief in the power of love and forgiveness. She even forgave her former neighbor who had betrayed her family, saying, "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness."

Ten Boom's unwavering commitment to forgiveness and love in the face of evil serves as a powerful example of the principle taught in [Romans 12:21](#). By choosing to overcome evil with good and respond to hatred and injustice with love and forgiveness, ten Boom demonstrated the transformative power of grace and the possibility of redemption, even in the darkest of circumstances.

We are moving into a spiritually dark time in our Nation's history. We are becoming more and more divided about so many things and it is easy for us Christians to get caught up in the fomentation.

We CANNOT allow this!

AMERICA IS NOT YOUR KINGDOM, CHRISTIAN - You belong to another Kingdom and this increasingly evil time is a time for you to shine brighter and brighter.

How can you shine brighter and brighter?

Overcome evil with good!

Do nice things for people who do not deserve it because God has done the ultimate nice thing for you - who did not deserve it!

Application -

1. **Respond to hate with kindness:** When we encounter people who are rude, disrespectful, or even hateful towards us, our natural inclination may be to respond in kind. However, as followers of Christ, we are called to respond to hate with kindness. This can involve extending forgiveness, showing empathy, or simply choosing to be polite and respectful even when it's difficult.
2. **Be a peacemaker:** One of the ways we can overcome evil with good is by being peacemakers in our relationships and communities. This can involve actively seeking reconciliation with others, deescalating conflicts, and working towards understanding and unity.
3. **Practice self-control:** Overcoming evil with good also involves practicing self-control in our own lives. This can involve resisting the urge to give into anger, greed, or other sinful desires, and instead choosing to act with humility, generosity, and love.
4. **Share the Gospel:** Ultimately, the greatest good we can do in the world is to share the Gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ. By sharing the hope and love of Christ with others, we can overcome evil with the greatest good of all.

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Relax: God Will Make All Things Right

Do Good: You Must Live Right

Remember: Good is More Powerful Than Evil

Conclusion

One of John Wesley's famous quotes on doing good is:

"Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can." - John Wesley

What if this church was known by Wesley's quote?

What if we spent our time as individuals and a corporate body "doing all the good we can, by all the means we can, in all the ways we can, in all the places we can, at all the times we can, to all the people we can, as long as ever we can?"

What would happen if this was our culture? What if people knew in our community that we not only were people who love God and His Word, but also we love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

By the way, to love someone doesn't mean you have to agree with them on everything.

When we are a people that resist revenge and instead do good to everyone, even the ones who harm us, we are most like Christ.

after all,

Acts 10:38– ESV

³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Responding to evil with love is not easy, but it is what we are called to do as followers of Christ.

By blessing, empathizing, living in harmony, and seeking peace, we can show the love of Christ to others.

Let us trust in God's justice and overcome evil with good.

Connection Group Reflection Questions

1. Is it wrong to defend oneself? How should we understand verse 19?
2. How do you understand God making all things write?
3. What are some good things you can do for people you don't agree with?
4. What should be your motivation for doing good?
5. Why is good more powerful than evil? How can we leverage this reality for the gospel?