

The WildBranch Ministry

...thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Romans 11:18

Be Ye Transformed 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 YHVH. 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.

Paul quotes quite extensively from the New Testament dictionary here in the middle of his discussion concerning the behavior of the brethren and leadership within the body of Messiah as well. As we are well aware of, the chapter divisions are not made in the original text. The theme of Paul's teaching continues in chapter thirteen. The phrase 'rendering evil for evil' is based upon a fundamental biblical principle given from the beginning. The principle of like kind producing like kind. God knows from the beginning that evil is designed to produce evil. This truth is taught in the command given to man to stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life produces life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will only produce and multiply the knowledge of good and evil.

When our fallen nature responds to another man's fallen nature, then that fallen nature is all that will result. Sha'ul's counsel in these verses is based upon the writings of the prophets of old.

Mishlei 20:22

"Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on YHVH, and He shall save thee."

Mishlei 25:21-22

"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 YHVH shall reward thee."

D'varim 32:35-36

"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. 36 For YHVH shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left."

According to Hebrew thinking (Rabbinic commentary, specifically Rabbi Yehudah), 'their foot shall slide' refers to those who decide to walk another way. Eventually, that other way will reap it's own reward. When the scriptures use terms like 'God will do this or do that' or 'God will repay', many times this is referring to the fulfillment of His Words. God has, from the beginning, placed physical and spiritual truths into their place in the creation. One of those truths is that evil behavior or attitudes will produce evil. We are commanded by our God not to respond our 'own' way. In our adamic nature, when someone kicks us in the chin, our natural response is to kick them back in the chin. When evil is spoken against us, our natural response is to speak evil back. This is the kind of attitude that Paul is addressing, using Torah as his basis.

"VENGEANCE IS MINE" saith Adonay. So why is God asking us not to do something that He is quite ready to do? The answer to this can be found in the etymology and biblical use of the word 'vengeance'. The Hebrew word here is *naqam*. This word means to 're-establish justice'. When evil is perpetrated, then an injustice has been done. God, knowing His creation inside and out, knows full well that our earthly nature will respond, just as Eve did in the pattern of deception and disobedience in the garden. We, as children of the Most High, are to let YHVH respond and pay back. So, does this mean that we just ignore the evil that has come our way? Absolutely not! Through the dynamics of the Hebrew language and style we often see YHVH acting upon and interceding into the affairs of mankind. But as I said previously, it is actually the Word of the Lord that is fulfilling what it or He was sent to accomplish. As His children, all of

our actions and reactions are to be based upon His precepts, ordinances, and statutes. This is taught by our Creator from the beginning. When we respond to evil with His precepts and ordinances then, and only then, can justice be re-established. The idea is to correct the offense, and not to 'pay back'. It is my opinion that God is more interested in our actions rather than our reactions. Many times our reactions are either overstated or they just continue to produce like kind. How many times have we been told by our children that 'he did it to me first'. Instead of responding to someone's evil deeds or words, it would behoove us to perform a kind action to that person or persons. The bottom line is that when we respond to evil with an action based upon the Word of God, we are indeed letting God have the vengeance.

A basis for this reasoning from God is perhaps rooted in the biblical truth of double jeopardy or 'a person cannot be tried twice for the same crime'. Our Deliverer tells us that if we respond to evil with an action of a good deed, then He will heap coals of fire upon the head of the source of evil. Many times God's hands are tied, so to speak, because we have already taken it upon ourselves to try, convict, and execute punishment upon our enemy. Let us keep in mind that we are not talking about a time of war or battle. There are separate commandments dealing with wartime issues. God will not be able to intercede and heap coals of fire, i.e. absolute justice, if that person has already paid for the crime, so to speak. Let me use a real illustration from my early parenting days. My oldest son was playing near the trampoline with a few of his friends. My son kept hogging the trampoline, which irritated one friend in particular. After putting up with it for awhile, my son picked up a rock and hit him with it. The friend responded with a rock to my son's head as well. After about 30 seconds of loud crying, I went out to see what was wrong. My son's friend approached me first and told me that he hurled a rock at my son because my son had hurled a rock at him first. With blood running down his head, he asked me what I was going to do about my son's initial evil deed. I asked him what he wanted me to do. He said that I should spank him and ground him from the trampoline. I proceeded to tell the little tyke that this is what I had planned to do had he come and told me that my son hurled a rock at him. But since he had already taken it upon himself to hit him back with a rock, I did not see the justice in my son being punished twice.

This is an important concept of God's ways, because this is the basis for the Messiah's crucifixion. This is the reason why a believer and follower of the Messiah will not stand before the white throne of God's judgment in the *olam haba*. When the Messiah gave His life for us, He paid the penalty for all of our sins. ALL of our sins He took upon Himself. So we have been tried, judged, convicted and have paid the penalty already through the atonement of the Messiah. We cannot be tried twice for the same crime. What is the crime? ALL OF OUR SINS. We have to rely upon the complete work of the Messiah in paying for our sins, for in our own attempt to pay for them, we all are overcome by the enormity of them. Those who overcome their sins are those who do what is good and righteous by trusting in the work of the Messiah. It is these who overcome the second death. Those who overcome in this life are those who respond to evil with what is good and righteous, as well. Goodness and righteousness are only found in Messiah, and Messiah is the WORD of God made flesh.

Shalom Alecheim!

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