

Romans 12:21—Part 1

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BIG SANDY, Texas—In the articles for this week and next week, I want 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 first part of that verse—do not be overcome by evil.

As I begin this article, I want to mention that I may ask some questions that could be an interesting topic for a philosophical discussion. But I don’t view this article as discussing philosophy.

I know sincere people who abuse alcohol, use drugs, commit adultery and do other unsavory deeds. I hope this article (and next week’s article) will help sincere people to find help—by avoiding being overcome by evil.

Inherently evil?

Here is a question to consider—Are people inherently good or evil?

For the record, I do not believe that people are inherently evil—although I recognize scriptures that reveal the history of evil deeds done by people.

Before I give my opinion about “why” I don’t believe that people are inherently evil, I want to share a few scriptures that clearly demonstrate that people regularly perform evil deeds.

- Genesis 6:5.
- Jeremiah 17:9.
- Romans 3:10-18.
- Romans 8:7.

Creation was good

My perspective goes back to the first three chapters in the book of Genesis. My perspective goes back to the creation and to the words in Genesis 1:31.

Genesis 1:31—“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.”

- I am among the many people who have difficulty believing that God made mankind evil.

- Sure, the scriptures and history show that mankind performed much evil.
- But I am among the many people who believe that God made mankind good—with the susceptibility to do evil.
- Some people like to say that God made mankind “neutral” to accept the evil influences.
- Bible students like myself (who believe that mankind was either created good or neutral) avoid the theory that God made mankind evil. Rather, we believe that human beings do evil deeds.

How quickly?

How quickly does the process of doing evil occur?

When the Bible quotes God’s words after the Flood, we receive a clue to how quickly the process occurs.

Genesis 8:21—“Then the LORD said in His heart, ‘I will never again curse the ground for man’s sake, although the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ ”

Names of tempter

There are many scriptures in the Bible that describe an evil source that influences people to sin. He is called by many names. Here are a few of his names.

- Genesis 3:1—cunning serpent
- Matthew 4:1—the devil who tempted Christ
- Revelation 12:9—great dragon, serpent of old, devil, Satan
- Revelation 20:2—the dragon, serpent of old, devil, Satan

History of influencing

Let’s notice some scriptures that give a brief history of the devil’s involvement in negatively influencing mankind.

- Genesis 3:1-6.
- Job 1:11-12.
- Job 2:4-6.
- John 8:44.
- John 13:27.
- 2 Corinthians 11:14.
- Ephesians 2:2-3
- Revelation 12:12.

- Revelation 13:4.
- Revelation 13:11.

Can disciples still sin?

As we begin to transition toward next week's article, I would like to ask the question—Can people who have a personal relationship with God still sin?

My answer is yes.

But I know people who quote a verse to me in the defense of their view that disciples who have a personal relationship with God today cannot sin. They quote 1 John 3:9.

I believe that it is important to read 1 John 3:9 in conjunction with Romans 7:14-25.

Realistic application

While it can be interesting to discuss 1 John 3:9 and Romans 7:14-25 in a philosophical manner, I am more interested in viewing it in a practical manner.

As stated in the beginning, the purpose of this article is to look at the phrase—do not be overcome by evil.

- I believe that it is possible for disciples to sin.
- I believe that it is likely that disciples will sin.
- As I mentioned at the beginning, this article is about helping sincere people find help—to avoid being overcome by evil.
- And I hope that next week's article will help people to overcome evil with good.