

Comments About Romans 12:20

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BIG SANDY, Texas—Recently, I began a discussion about the words of the apostle Paul found in Romans 12. It is my perspective that Paul's writings in chapters 1-11 could be classified more as comments about doctrine and spiritual concepts, whereas the words in chapter 12 can be viewed more as Christian-living topics.

Last week, we discussed Romans 12:19. This article will discuss Romans 12:20.

Positive words

Notice what Paul wrote in Romans 12:20.

Romans 12:20—"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

Paul was quoting Proverbs 25:21-22.

Proverbs 25:21-22—"If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you."

Recognize, but willing to feed

Notice that Paul taught it is wise to recognize the malicious deeds of an enemy.

2 Timothy 4:14-15—"Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works. You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words."

Notice that Paul also taught that disciples look for opportunities to do good—to serve needs.

Galatians 6:10—"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith."

Heaping coals on their heads

Let's talk about the phrase ("heaping coals on their heads") mentioned in Proverbs 25 and Romans 12.

Does that phrase (“heaping coals on their heads”) mean that disciples should have the motivation of seeking to place coals on the heads of their enemies?

It is natural for a disciple to have inner feelings of revenge toward an enemy. But the Son of God taught that inner feelings should also be godly.

■ Matthew 5:21-26—Murder begins in the heart.

■ Matthew 5:27-30—Adultery occurs in the heart.

Notice a scripture in Proverbs that mentions that a disciple should not feel inner joy when an enemy stumbles.

Proverbs 24:17—“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles.”

Seeking relief, fasted for them

There are various examples in the Bible about people discussing their trials with God. There are a number of psalms where David pleaded his case with God for justice and deliverance.

One such example is Psalm 35:1-28. Please take the time to read David’s heartfelt appeal to God for His intervention and relief.

In this psalm David was dealing with tremendous suffering from his enemies, yet he did not want to take vengeance into his own hands. In fact, he said he fasted for them when they were sick (Psalm 35:13-14).

The Lord will reward you

Notice a positive statement about how the Lord will reward kindness—which includes serving the needs of enemies.

Hebrews 6:10—“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”