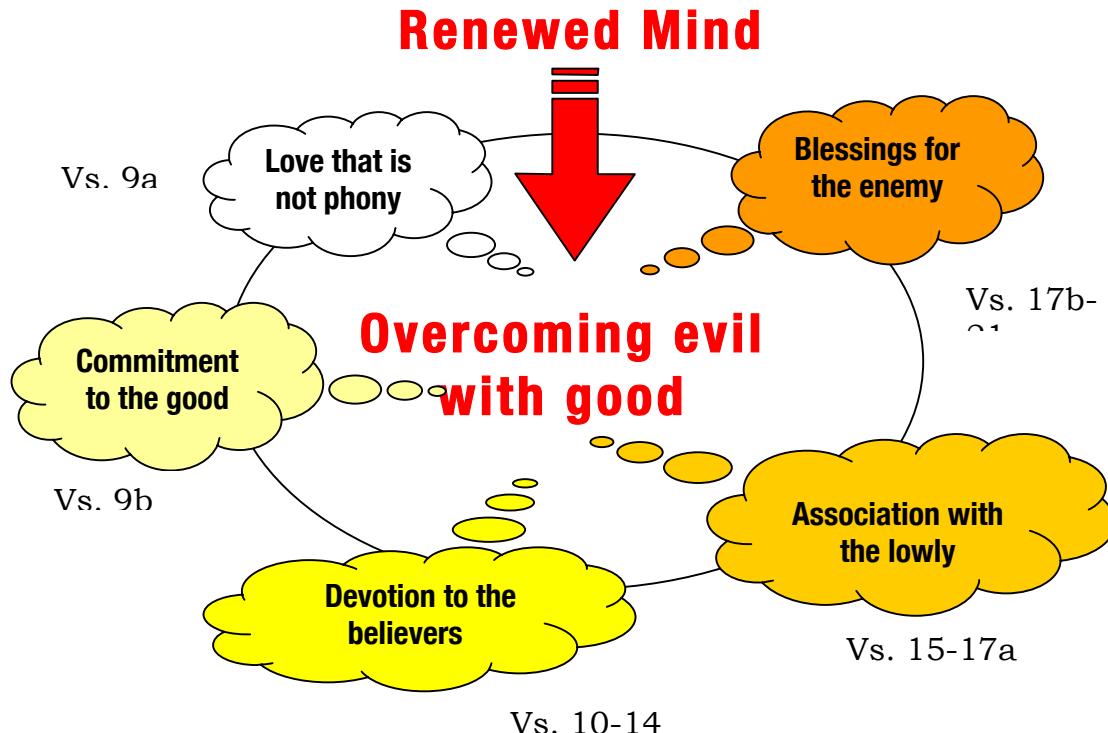


Romans 12:17-21

Loving with a Renewed Mind (part 2)

1. The theme of verses 9-21 is - overcoming evil with good.



2. Matt. 5 “38 You have heard that it was said, ‘*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.*’ 39 But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. 41 And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.”
 3. The principle culminates in the exhortation to bless our enemies, a concept that was clearly taught by Jesus. But this concept raises lots of questions.
 - Did not David call down God’s wrath on his enemies in the Psalms? How can we look to David as an example of God’s heart when he seeks vengeance?
 - Shouldn’t we resist evil when it is harming others? When my kids are fighting is it unethical for me to use force to break them up?
 - Where does church discipline fit in? Does grace exclude anything but blessing?
 - What is the role of a secular state in showing love? Is socialism (legislated economic equality) a Christian position? Should the state “turn the other cheek” when invaded by a hostile force?
 - How about capital punishment? Is it permissible in principle or in practice?

- **How are we to view the Biblical commands to exterminate the Canaanites?**
"Holy War" is not a Muslim invention. Moses and Joshua were the first to engage in campaigns of "ethnic cleansing" as HEREM (acts of religious devotion).
 - **What about "just war" theory?** Is war ever justified and if so under what conditions?
 - **Can a Christian participate in military service?** If a Christian does not feel a war is just should they refuse to participate?
 - **Is revolution ever justified?** What about the American revolution?
 - **Is competition compatible with Christian love?** Is the Sermon on the Mount to apply to business and sports?
4. While we can't answer or address all of these questions we can point to way to some solutions. Note that most of these issues are addressed in the theology files on my web site apttoteach.org.
5. Most of these difficulties are resolved by clarifying three issues.
- a. **The relationship of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.**
 1. There were good reasons why the church fathers, in setting upon the canon of sacred Scripture, separated the Hebrew Scriptures from the Christian and the gave to the former the designation "old" and the latter "new."
 2. Christians have viewed the relationship between the Testaments in different ways.
 - a. Some have believed that all Scripture is not only equally inspired but all of it is equally applicable to the believer today. This was close to Calvin's view.
 - b. Others have viewed all Scripture through the lens of Christ. The OT is to be applied in the context of (or through the lens of) Christ's revelation concerning the nature of God. This reflected Wesley's view.
 - c. Another expression of (b) is to view the Old Covenant through the lens of the New Covenant. All Scripture is written for us but not to us or about us. This is the view I prefer. I pejoratively call it Paul's view.
 3. Paul teaches us that the Law of Moses is no longer a sufficient guide to knowing the will or mind of God (Rom.5:20; 6:14-15; 7:4). We now serve under the "law of Christ" (Gal.6:2; I Cor.9:19). See apttoteach.org theology file #107.

Heb.8:6-7 "He is also the mediator of **a better covenant**, which has been enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second."

Heb.8:13 "When He said, "A new covenant," **He has made the first obsolete**. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." **9:15** "And for this reason **He is the mediator of a new covenant**, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Heb.7:12 “For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”

Heb.7:18 “For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness (for the Law made nothing perfect), and on the other hand there is a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.”

I Cor.9:20-21 “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ.”

4. **Jesus offers a contrast to the Old Covenant in Matt.5:38-39** “³⁸ You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, ‘do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have our coat also.’”
5. **The eternal ethic of God's Character and Kingdom are revealed progressively through His law.**

Natural law	Mosaic Law	Law of Christ
Subtle ethic	Superficial ethic	Supreme ethic
Eternal	Eternal (as an ethic) Temporary (as a covenant)	Eternal
Creation & Conscience	The Ten Commandments	The life of Jesus
to know that God is there	to know that I need salvation	to know the heart of God
Observing nature	Following the rules that are spelled out in the Law	The renewed mind that is lead by the Spirit

6. This effects our understanding of a number of issues.

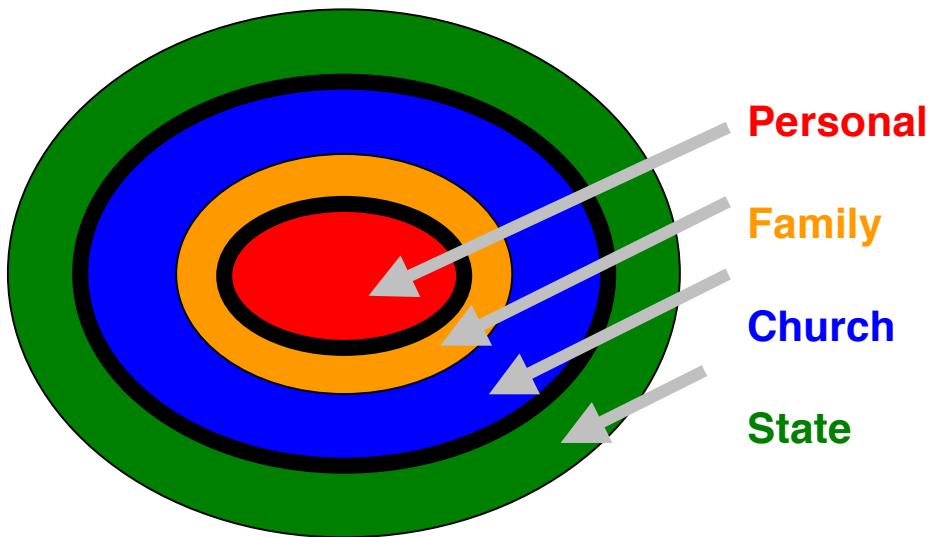
- The extermination of the Canaanites is a reflection of the harshness of God's wrath against sin and reveals the nature of what was done on the cross for us by Christ.
- David's spirit of vengeance may also reflects this harshness.

b. The distinction between Personal ethical responsibilities and responsibilities that belong to “the community” at large through parents, elders, and human government.

1. **This is the teaching of Rom.13** “³ For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; ⁴ for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for **it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.**”
2. **This effects our understanding of a number of issues.**
 - Church discipline is reserved for ordained leaders in the church. It is not the prerogative of individual members who are not to judge others.

- The principle also applies to parents and children, the state and its citizens.

3. There are spheres of ethical responsibility.



- The most important distinctions are between, personal ethics and social ethics and between the ethical responsibilities of the covenant community and the secular state.

Five basic facts about human judgment.

1. As Christians we will one day be judges with Christ. I Cor.6:1-3
 - a. We will judge the world. I Cor.6:2
 - b. We will judge angels. I Cor.6:3
2. All believers are to judge themselves. I Cor.11:31
 - a. To see if they are "in the faith." II Cor.13:5
 - b. To evaluate their ministry. Rom.12:3-8, Gal.6:4
 - c. To avoid God's discipline. I Cor.11:31-32
 - d. The believer is not to compare his work with others but only with what God is expecting of him. Gal.6:4-5
3. Those in positions of spiritual authority must often pass judgment on others. I Cor.6:1-6
 - a. With respect to the world. I Cor.2:15
 - b. With respect to the church. I Cor.5:3,12; I Tim.1:20
4. Unauthorized judgment by believers is forbidden. Lk.6:37
 - a. We will be held accountable to our own standard of judgment. Matt. 7:1-2
 - b. We are not to judge the motives of others. I Cor.4:5; Jas.4:11

- c. We are to be especially patient with younger believers. Rom.14:1
- d. We are not to pass judgment on others in areas of doubtful conduct. Rom.14:3,4,10,13; I Cor.8-10

- c. **The distinct ethical spheres of the Covenant community (Israel, and church) and the secular state in God's plan.**
- 1. The laws of Israel applied to Israel alone. Jews were to relate to foreigners in different ways than they related to fellow Jews. For example they could not make slaves of other Jews. **Deuteronomy 23:20** “You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countryman you shall not charge interest. So that the Lord our God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess.”

For example: A pluralistic society may permit certain behaviors like no fault divorce, drunkenness, profanity, disrespect for the leadership of the church, etc. These behaviors would not be permitted in the covenant community of the church. There are other behaviors like stealing, murder, etc. that are forbidden by both church and state. Blessing the enemy is not a mandate for the state.



- 2. This effects our understanding of a number of issues.
 - Pacifism may be defensible on a personal basis and as a posture for the church but it does not apply to the role of the state.
 - A secular business or state cannot and should not operate on the teaching of the Sermon on the Mt. (turn the other cheek). The state has a responsibility to mediate justice and security for its citizens.

A. Did not David call down God's wrath on his enemies in the Psalms and did not God command Joshua to exterminate the Canaanites? See apptoteach.org, theology file #905

- "Holy War" is not a Muslim invention. Moses and Joshua were the first to engage in campaigns of "ethnic cleansing."
- Moses gave the Israelites specific instructions on how they were to wage Yahweh's wars:

1. The priest initiated any war by reminding the Israelites that Yahweh fights for them. This clearly shows the war's sacred character (Deut.20:2-4) -- that is, this is God's war. He fights through His people.
 2. Cities outside the land of Palestine do not need to be entirely destroyed, but attacks on cities inside the land require destruction of all life (Deut.20:10-18). This practice is known as the "ban" or "herem" or "the law of anathema". To put a city under the ban was to devote its occupants to Yahweh for destruction. It is often translated "completely destroyed" or "devoted":
 - In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them--the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God. (Deut.20:16-18).
 - When the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally (according to the law of anathema). Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. (Deut.7:2-5, 2:34, Num.25:1-5, 31:14-17, Ex.23:33, Joshua 6:17, 8:26).
 3. They are specifically to show no pity to inhabitants of the land (Deut.7:1-2). God believes they will not want to fully carry out His directions, so He warns the Israelites against pity!
- Rwanda (the most Christianized nation in Africa) 1994: The dominant Hutus set out to exterminate the minority Tutsis. There were Christians on both sides and many participated in the killing. The request for help from the district president of a Christian denomination was answered with - "You must be eliminated, God no longer wants you."
 - Calvin noted in his commentary on Joshua that "*indiscriminate and promiscuous slaughter (of the Canaanites), making no distinction of age or sex, but including alike women and children, the aged and decrepit, might seem an inhuman massacre, had it not been executed by the command of God. But as he, in whose hands are life and death, had justly deemed those nations to destruction, this puts an end to all discussion.*"

The Imprecatory Psalms.

- *Psalm 109:6-19* 6 Appoint an evil man to oppose him; let an accuser stand at his right hand. 7 When he is tried, let him be found guilty, and may his prayers condemn him. 8 May his days be few; may another take his place of leadership. 9 May his children be fatherless and his wife a widow. 10 May his children be wandering beggars; may they be driven from their ruined homes. 11 May a creditor seize all he has; may strangers plunder the fruits of his labor. 12 May no one extend kindness to him or take pity on his fatherless children. 13 May his descendants be cut off, their names blotted out from the next generation. 14 May the iniquity of his fathers be remembered before the LORD; may the sin of his mother never be blotted out. 15 May their sins always remain before the LORD, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth. 16 For he never thought of doing a kindness, but hounded to death the poor and the needy and the brokenhearted. 17 He loved to pronounce a curse -- may it come on him; he found no pleasure in blessing -- may it be far from him. 18 He wore cursing as his garment; it entered into his body like

water, into his bones like oil. 19 May it be like a cloak wrapped about him, like a belt tied forever around him.

- How are these Psalms and the extermination of the Canaanites to be understood?
 - a. **Carnal Vindictiveness**

This view interprets the imprecatory psalms to be uninspired examples of carnal rage. C. S. Lewis held this view.

- b. **Poetic Hyperbole**

This view attempts to reconcile the imprecatory problem by simply attributing the forceful language to poetic hyperbole and exaggeration in order to make a point.

- c. **Predictions of Doom**

This interpretation attempts to explain away all the imprecatory psalms as no more than a prophetic prediction of coming doom. This interpretation denies that the psalmist had any desire to personally see justice done in his time.

- d. **Law Against Grace**

This interpretation states that the imprecatory psalms were fine examples of living under law instead of grace. But now that we are under grace instead of law, we should not consider these prayers to be valid.

- e. **Incomplete Revelation**

This view states that the imprecatory psalms are examples of an incomplete revelation and Old Testament ethics and therefore are not worthy of imitation by New Testament Christians who have access to the fullness of God's revelation.

- f. **Spiritual warfare against sin**

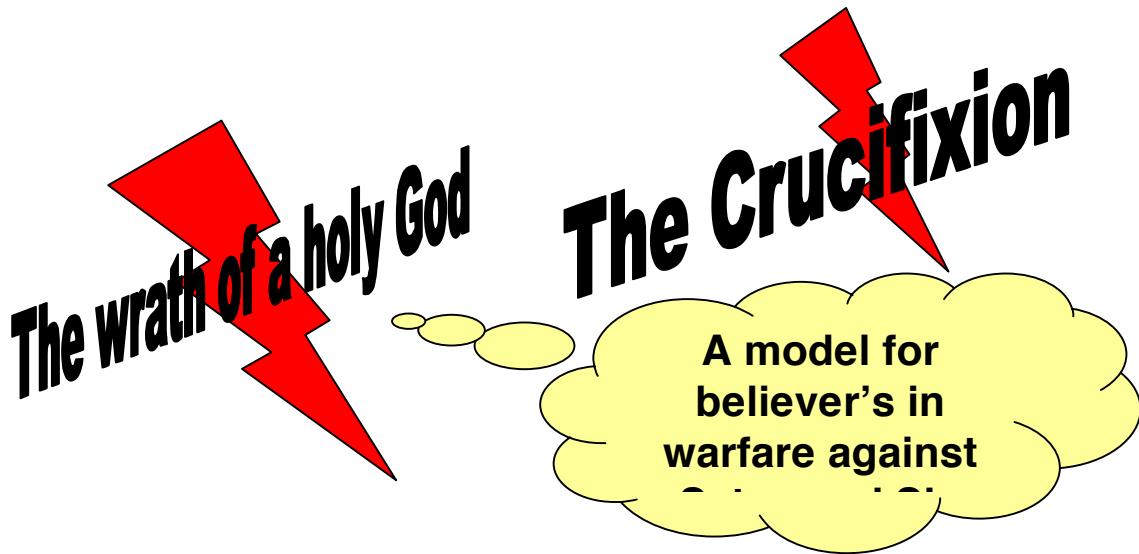
The original intent of the psalmist was to reveal the wrath of holy God toward sin, the believer today who looks back through the lens of the Kingdom of God in Christ, uses the psalms and Joshua as reminders of the nature and power of Christ's work on the cross and as examples of spiritual warfare. This is my view.

- David called on **God** to exact punishment. He did exactly what Paul advised - let God make it right. His attitude however is clearly contrary to the spirit of Jesus or Paul.
- There is a difference between a passion for the truth and a passion for self-protection.
- The Old Testament reveals the wrath of a holy God against sin while the New Testament reveals the love of that same God for sinners.

Luke 24 “²⁶ Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.”

- Biblical truths can come in various forms. The “ban” or herem may be a picture of the Crucifixion.

Paradox (enigma)	Puzzle (mystery)	Picture (type)	Paradigm (myth)
Truths that seem to defy logic <i>Trinity</i>	Truths that are logical once all the information is known <i>Church = Jew & Gentile</i>	Truths that represent a “shadow” of what is to come <i>Tabernacle</i>	Truths that are a story-guide to life <i>The sin of Adam & Eve</i>



B. Shouldn't we resist evil when it is harming others?

- I must make a distinction between defending one who is under my care and acting on behalf of myself. If I break up a fight between my children, I am acting out of love for them. I am not violating the teaching of Jesus or Paul.
- Defending the poor and the “least” among us is an important theme in Scripture. When evil forces come against those who are defenseless, Christians should offer protection, which in some circumstances may involve force. When force is called

for it must be motivated by a desire to protect (not destroy), it must be minimal (not excessive), and it must be a last resort (not a first strike).

C. What about “just war” theory? See apttoteach.org, theology file #415

D. What about capital punishment? See apttoteach.org, theology file #405

E. What is the role of a secular state in showing love? See apttoteach.org, theology file #808

- Basic considerations
 1. America is not a theocracy (nation ruled by God through a covenant relationship) and therefore not like Israel or the church.
 2. Most of the ethical teaching in the Bible is directed toward communities and individuals who are in a covenant relationship with God (specifically Israel and the church).
 3. The Roman Catholic tradition and the Reformed Protestant tradition tend to blur the distinction between covenant community and state.

F. Is competition compatible with Christian love?

- Competition without compassion is carnal.
- There are many different levels of competition

Pursuit of destruction	Pursuit of self-worth	Pursuit of excellence	Pursuit of edification
To the glory of Satan, the destroyer	To my glory	To the glory of the event or human achievement	To the glory of God

G. Where does church discipline fit in? See apttoteach.org, theology file #803