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

Romans 12:21

Christians Enduring Evil In Our World Today...

As I write this, a young Pakistani woman, Asia Bibi, has been embroiled in a series of life and death court cases in Pakistan. Her crime? In 2010 she used a cup, reserved for Muslims, to have a drink of water, while on a break with a work gang picking berries. Those Muslims present demanded that Asia immediately convert to Islam. Instead, she declared her faith in Christ as her Saviour. For this declaration she was accused of 'blasphemy' and legal charges



Pakistani protesters call for Asia Bibi's death, and the death of the three Supreme Court Justices who acquitted her. (Nov. 2018)

were then laid against her leading to her imprisonment while awaiting her trial. In Pakistan, being convicted of blasphemy carries with it the death penalty! Initially, a lower court upheld the charges, but on appeal, Asia Bibi was finally acquitted in 2018 (Nov. 1). But as I write this, President Imran Khan has not agreed to release her from prison or for her (and her husband) to even leave Pakistan if she is eventually released. What has happened to Asia Bibi has been evil. For Asia and her husband, Ashiq Masih, Romans 12:21 is not merely some nice Biblical text tucked away in some Bible study notes. And neither is it for the estimated 2.5 million Pakistani Christians. And perhaps, one day, it may not be for any of *us* either.

As we conclude our series on building a covenant community of believers, we shall see that in order to implement each of these twenty-seven imperatives of living as a Christ-follower, we are going to need to need to each other.

1. Read Psalm 34:14. When do we most need to be reminded of this command?

Christians Running Into The Fray



The joint-winner of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize was a Congolese gynecologist, Dr. Robert Mukwege (pictured left). Robert's father was a Pentecostal minister who regularly prayed for sick in their war-torn country of the Democratic Republic of Congo as Robert was growing up. Young Robert was so moved by this that he committed his life to also healing the sick - by medicine. After graduating as a medical doctor he was awarded a post-graduate scholarship in France. He could have settled there and enjoyed a comfortable life. But he didn't. He returned to the Congo where fighting had broken out in 1996 and established a clinic for women who were the victims of the worst war crimes. He tells his story here - <https://youtu.be/rliKwDCnGws> .

In a war that has been raging for years (yet barely rates a mention in the mainstream western news media), millions of people have been killed - but by far the worst victims, of what has been described as “Africa’s World War”, are the women. They are often brutally sexually assaulted in the most violent and hideous ways imaginable. Dr. Mukwege says that many of these seriously abused women are brought to his clinic *to die* after their abusers have eventually finished with them as their sex slaves. The damage done to these women is horrendous. But Dr. Mukwege and his team have been able to rebuild thousands of these women to the point that he is now known as, “The Man Who Repairs Women”.¹ He is under constant threat of his life. When he went to Norway to receive his Nobel Peace Prize, his body guard was assassinated and his children kidnapped. He had to go into exile while the release of his children was negotiated. After this was achieved, he returned to the war-zone to continue his work in repairing women, in Jesus’ Name. Christians have traditionally run into the fray where sometimes the greatest evil is being perpetrated. Dr. Mukwege is living out this Romans 12:21 principle!

<https://youtu.be/-CR9wgZaB6I>

2. If we were to apply the principle found in Amos 5:15, what might it cost us?

1. <https://www.umurage.org/featured-legacy-makers/the-man-who-repairs-women>

As Paul concludes this list of actions for followers of Christ, he concludes with a similar theme to how he commenced in Romans 12:9.

3. How does Romans 12:9 relate to and inform us about Romans 12:21?

4. Consider First Thessalonians 5:15 and consider how we are told to repay those who act in an evil way toward us.

5. How does implementing Romans 12:21 impact our witness among unbelievers based on 3John 11?

We Are Called To Overcome Evil, Not Merely Diffuse It

6. Note Philippians 2:15 and consider when the circumstances are best for Christians to step up and begin to overcome evil within a culture?

The Church in the first three centuries from its founding practiced much unappreciated good. At the time it was common for newborn baby girls to be left exposed overnight in the market squares or forests for the wildlife or cruel elements to kill them. But the Christians of that time would rescue these girls and raise them as their own. Lepers and the desperately sick were cared for in the beginning of what

would eventually develop into modern hospitals. When Emperor Julian (“the Apostate”) took it upon himself to destroy Christianity by promoting paganism, he wrote to pagan priests to outdo these ‘Galileans’ in showing kindness to the unfortunates of society.

These impious Galileans (Christians) not only feed their own, but ours also; welcoming them with their agape, they attract them, as children are attracted with cakes... Whilst the pagan priests neglect the poor, the hated Galileans devote themselves to works of charity, and by a display of false compassion have established and given effect to their pernicious errors. Such practice is common among them, and causes contempt for our gods.

Emperor Julian, “Epistle to Pagan High Priests”

When Emperor Julian lay dying 363AD, his dying words were reported to be, “*Vicisti Galilaeae*” (You Galileans have conquered!).

How We Can Overcome Evil

Our list of covenant community ingredients commenced with *let love be genuine*. To overcome evil is going to require *genuine love*. Genuine love is *sacrificial love*. It is the kind of love that Christ personified and we must emulate. It costs. It hurts. It taxes. But when done with genuine love for Christ, this kind of love for others, that overcomes evil, is done *gladly*. Nancy Pearcey states that it is also one of the most powerful evangelistic witnesses the Church can offer.

In his widely read book ‘After Virtue’, Alasdair MacIntyre writes that as the surrounding society loses its connecting glue, the most important response is to build local, small-scale forms of community, teaching our children and congregations how to re-establish strong, life-giving relationships in a world falling apart: “What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and loral life can be sustained through the new ages which are already upon us.” Our families and church must become centers of civilization that reach out beyond themselves with a model of human community.

The strongest Christian communities (families, congregations, groups of singles) are the ones driven by a large vision — a sense of ministry.

Prof. Nancy Pearcey, “Love They Body” Baker Books, 2018, p.264

May God grant that we, His covenant people, brothers and sisters together, may shine the light of His goodness and love into this dark and evil world so that the evil of our generation is indeed *overcome*.

Amen.

A.C.