



Questions and Answers From the Bible

WHAT DOES ROMANS 12:20 MEAN?

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.

To properly understand this verse, we must view it in the greater context. This verse is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22, which reads: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee." When you view Romans 12:17-21, you see the tenor of the principles the Apostle Paul was addressing. In verse 19 when he mentioned, "For it is written, Vengeance is mine," in essence he was quoting Deuteronomy 32:35. Paul was setting down long-held moral principles for appropriate behavior when being ill-treated.

Romans 12:21 summarizes much of the discussion with "overcome evil with good." Retaliation never wins the offender; two wrongs never make a right, but kind Christian conduct, as exhibited from the Cross by Christ when He said, "Father forgive them" (Luke 23:34), is as effective as it was on the centurion. In Acts 7:60, read the words of Stephen, when the life was ebbing out of him. He said, "Lay not this sin to their charge," no doubt making a profound impact on young Saul of Tarsus.

CAN SIN BE INHERITED?

The most basic truth we must understand is spiritual qualities, or conditions, cannot be inherited. Therefore, sin cannot be inherited. Ezekiel 18:20 declares, "The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." In Ezekiel 18:2 we read, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." In verse 3 the Lord instructed Ezekiel, "Ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel." Ezekiel 18:21 teaches us, "Sins . . . [are] committed." Sin is not something that is able to be inherited.

In Ezekiel 18:4 the Lord informs us, "Behold, all souls are mine." At conception a soul is placed within that newly conceived body. Would the Lord create a soul with sin in it? In Galatians 2:17 the Apostle Paul posed this question: "Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?" Then he answered with a resounding, "God forbid." So in reality, there is not an

Adamic nature, or inbred sin, from which man needs to be cleansed. Some are of the persuasion that since the fall of man, all children enter the world with a depraved nature from which they need cleansed. However, let us consider what the Scriptures teach.

In Ecclesiastes 7:29 (penned approximately in 977 B.C.—many centuries subsequent to the fall of man), we read, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright [the Hebrew word is *yashar* meaning 'righteous']; but they have sought out many inventions." Ezekiel 28:15, speaking of "the king of Tyrus" (verse 12) in 588 B.C., says, "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee."

Biblically, there are not two types of sin—committed and inherited. According to James 4:17, for there to be sin, both knowledge and an act of will are required. "To him that knoweth [knowledge is required] to do good, and [two elements necessary] doeth it not [an act of the will, the exercise of the power of choice], to him it is sin." Thus, there are not two types of sin that require two cleansings.

For further study, read "*The Worshipers Once Purged*," Chapters 1-3. Available at GodsAcres.org (click on "Resources" and "Study Materials").

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