

## To be Innocent to Evil

*Romans 12-21:- Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Apostle Paul says this verse in the context of responding evil done to us with Good. When are we overcome by Evil? Is it when people do evil to us? Is it when people deny things that rightfully belong to us? No, it is when we respond to them back with Evil, that is when we allow the Evil to overcome us. Or it is when we lose our joy and peace because we are treated in an evil way, then we allow evil to overcome us. But when we respond with goodness of Christ then we do not allow Evil to overcome us and have overcome Evil done to us by good.

*Matthew 10: Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so <sup>10</sup>be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves.*

Here Jesus tells us to be Shrewd as Serpents and also to be innocent as doves. When should we be shrewd as Serpents? When should we be innocent as doves. The conventional wisdom of this world will tell us to be Shrewd to people who do evil to us and to be innocent to people who are good. But did Jesus mention this? The answer is in last chapter of Romans.

*Romans 16:19:- but I want you to be wise in what is good and innocent in what is evil.*

Here Apostle Paul clearly explains where he wants us to be wise, it is in what is good. Hence we need to be shrewd as Serpents in the area of what is good, not in the area of evil. When people do evil to us, we are expected to be innocent towards them.

Last week, I went through a trial, when I was denied something that was rightfully mine. The leasing office in apartment that I lived in Atlanta refused to give me a receipt of the amount that I paid to break the lease. I needed the receipt to make a claim from my employer for the refund of the amount. Without the receipt I cannot get a refund. I wanted the apartment leasing office to give me a letter containing the amount I paid for breaking the lease. But the apartment denied it saying it is not their policy to give such a letter. They only gave me an invoice saying how much I owe them for breaking lease. Even after repeated requests from me asking for a letter they kept ignoring them. The natural response here is to fight for this letter. Some 5 years back, I was denied something similar from the leasing office. But that time I did not have the spiritual maturity as I have now, I fought with the leasing office and wrote an angry comment in their social media site. I finally got what I wanted! But this time I am not going to fight the same way for this letter.

I then wrote back to the management office that heads the leasing office, requesting them for the letter and told them how important it is for me and how much I value if they relax their policy for me and give me this letter. I made sure that I wrote this letter without complaining about the leasing office or their attitude to ignore my requests. The management wrote back saying they will ask the leasing office to relax this policy for me. I got the letter I wanted!

I believe this is the way God wants us to deal with people who deny things that are rightfully ours. In an innocent way live doves, without fighting for our rights.

There is a brother in Chennai CFC who used to pray for those who persecute him, asking for the Lord to give him an opportunity to do good to them. Once he was working in a private school as teacher. The correspondent of the school fired him from the job giving false accusation against him. He then made a similar prayer which was answered in few years time. By then he got a government job and was assigned to work in an office that grants permission to private schools. The correspondent who once fired him came to the brother's office one day, seeing him the brother ran to him and asked if he can help him as he was his ex-employer. He then helped him by getting the permission for the school. Now, a worldly person would have reacted in a shrewd way and made sure the school never gets its permission in an easy way. But the brother here is different, he was innocent towards his ex-employer like a dove.

I always believe as the scripture says, our citizenship is in heaven. We are just visitors here. Today we are all gathered in Brother Praise's house. If Brother tells us that you should not use the room in first floor, then will we fight with him for denying us from using the room? No, because we are only visitors here. Same way if we truly live as visitors on this earth then any denial of rights will not affect us.

Now there are certain things toward which we should be shrewd, which is things of Good that we received from Christ. Our salvation from Sin, our peace in Jesus and our Joy in Jesus are something that we need to be shrewd in retaining and be careful not to lose. When I go through trails, I make sure I do not lose the Joy of serving the Lord nor the inner peace that I have in Christ. These things I remain in alert. Especially in our family life when we realize that our spouse is not giving the respect we deserve for the work we do either in kitchen or office, do we lose our joy and peace? Are we diligent and shrewd to maintain peace and joy?

May the Lord give us wisdom to be innocent as Dove to Evil and Shrewd as serpents to Good things. Amen.