

LOVE Without Hypocrisy

(in the book of Romans)

64 – When we don't
understand



When it might as well be in a foreign language...

On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on
his head."

Romans 12:20 (NIV), quoting Proverbs 25:22a

γαρ ποιων ανθρακας πυρος
σωρευσεις επι την κεφαλην
αυτου

כי גחלים אתה חתה על-ראשו



There is an
answer!



A good way
to respond!



First of all, realize that ...

- ✓ **Our lack of understanding:** It doesn't mean the *original* readers didn't understand it.
- ✓ **What we should expect:** Some portions of Scripture will be more difficult than others.
- ✓ **We must be careful:** We must not distort what we don't understand.

[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

2 Peter 3:16b (NIV)

What should we do? START HERE!

1. Pay attention to the context!

Paying attention to issues such as:

- ✓ Who the speaker and readers were.
- ✓ The word choice, purpose, circumstances for writing.
- ✓ The time and place – when and where it was written.
- ✓ What the nearby verses say – the context.

This will resolve many questions
and eliminate many misunderstandings.

2. Make it your goal to neither add to, nor subtract from, what Scripture says.

Not just when you aren't sure about a passage, but any time ... and every time!

Every word of God proves true. ... **Do not add** to his words, or he may rebuke you, and you will be found a liar.

Proverbs 30:5a, 6 (NLT)

Do not add or subtract a thing to what I'm commanding you. Observe the commands of the LORD your God.

Deut. 4:2 (ISV)

Adding and subtracting could have serious consequences.

And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the prophetic words of this book: **If anyone adds** anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book.

And **if anyone removes** any of the words of this prophetic book, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city that are described in this book.

Rev. 22:18-19 (NLT)

3. You may want to do some research, to find out what others say... and why they say it.

Research may give you valuable information, but **YOU ALSO NEED TO BE CAREFUL!**

- ✓ A view may sound good, but be based on faulty reasoning!
- ✓ False religions (cults, etc.) often present false interpretations of Scripture, to fit their heretical views.



Sometimes the reason people reach their conclusion is the most valuable information!

Ultimately, you will have to compare your research to Scripture.



- ✓ Research is opinion; God's Word is true!
- ✓ Follow the example of those who examined Paul's words, to see if they agreed with Scripture. (They found out that Paul did agree with Scripture.)

They were very willing to receive the message, and every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if those things were so.

Act 17:11b (ISV)

4. If you are still uncertain about the passage's meaning, it's OK!


There are many other Scripture passages that you will find easier to understand.

- If you are willing to take the time to understand them.

The meaning of some specific verse will not contradict the rest of God's Word!

- If you look elsewhere in Scripture, you might find similar things expressed in easier-to-understand ways.

ONE CAUTION



✓ When you say you "don't understand" a verse, make sure it's not simply a matter of *not liking what it says!*

EXAMPLE:

Those who have been born from God *don't* live sinful lives.
 What God has said lives in them, and they *can't* live sinful lives. They have been born from God.

1 John 3:9 (GW)

I THINK SAVED PEOPLE **CAN** KEEP ON SINNING.

THIS MUST BE ONE OF THOSE "DIFFICULT" PASSAGES!


YOU **KNOW** WHAT IT SAYS, BUT YOU DON'T **LIKE** WHAT IT SAYS!

TIME FOR APPLICATION!



TIME FOR APPLICATION!

APPLICATION TO OUR VERSE.




On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Romans 12:20 (NIV)


What is the "burning coals" all about?

"...you will heap burning coals on his head."
 Romans 12:20b (NIV)



DOES IT MEAN, "YOU WILL CAUSE THEM TO BURN HOTTER IN HELL"?

I DO GOOD... THEY BURN... IT'S GREAT!!!




IF THAT WERE OUR INCENTIVE FOR DOING GOOD



IT WOULD CONTRADICT EVERYTHING WE'VE LEARNED ABOUT UNHYPOCRITICAL LOVE!

OBSERVATION #1

The entire context of this verse goes *against* using punishment as an incentive for doing good!




UNHYPOCRITICAL LOVE

- ✓ ENCOURAGES expressions of KINDNESS and LOVE toward enemies.
- ✓ OPPOSES having a vengeful, mean spirit.

Even if punishment were to happen, it *couldn't* be something we desired for them, or the reason we wanted to be kind!

So if we never learned anything else about this passage, we would at least know something about it!


"...you will heap burning coals on his head."
Romans 12:20b (NIV)



★ We know what it doesn't mean! ★

OBSERVATION #2 This passage has no command that we must follow.

"...you will heap burning coals on his head."
Romans 12:20b (NIV)




FACT, NOT COMMAND!

✓ It just tells us that something will happen when we do good. OUR job is to do that good!

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

OUR JOB...
According to the context:



is to overcome evil.

... overcome evil with good.
Romans 12:21b (NIV)

✓ So even if we don't understand the "burning coals" statement, we know it has something to do with expressions of kindness to our enemy.

So if we do OUR JOB...

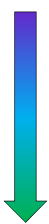
Bless those who persecute you ...
Romans 12:14a (NIV)

Do not repay anyone evil for evil.
Be careful to do what is right ...
Romans 12:17a (NIV)

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
Romans 12:18 (NIV)

Do not take revenge, ...
Romans 12:19a (NIV)

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink ..."
Romans 12:20b (NIV)

GOD will take care of the "burning coals" issue.
(WE don't have to worry about it!)

IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING ...

A possible interpretation of this passage, which fits the context:

"...you will heap burning coals on his head."
Romans 12:20b (NIV)

Your kindness and goodness might lead them to shame for their meanness and badness...

and eventually to repentance and salvation!

➤ Kindness and goodness ...
leading people to shame ...
and eventually to repentance and salvation!

This is more than just
"a wonderful concept" ...
**This is something that
GOD himself has done!**

[Do you not realize] that God's kindness
leads you toward repentance?

Romans 2:4b (NIV)

Think about it...

**Did God's kindness have any effect on you,
when you were his enemy?**

**If so, then maybe you can pray that your kindness
will have a similar effect on your enemies!**

- Pray that they will have sorrow and remorse ...
that leads them to repentance and salvation.

When your enemies become your friends –
(especially if they become part of your
Christian family)

**That's the best way to
"overcome evil with good"!**

... overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21b (NIV)

Your Mission...

**FIRST
THIS**

**REALIZE THAT YOU DO NOT NEED
TO KNOW EVERYTHING ...
before you can start to accept
what you do know!**

**SO: LET WHAT YOU DO KNOW CONTROL
YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS!**

Your Mission...

**THEN
THIS**

**REGARDLESS OF HOW YOU INTERPRET
THE "BURING COALS" PASSAGE...
make it your goal to do what
the passage tells you to do!**

**LIVE A LIFE OF UNHYPOCRITICAL LOVE...
SO THAT YOU WILL**

... overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:21b (NIV)

Credits (1)

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Your Mission...



**"On the contrary:
'If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' "**
Romans 12:20

"BURNING COALS"?

What could that mean?

THE CONTEXT

This verse is a quote from Proverbs 25:21-22:

**If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,
and the LORD will reward you.**

What exactly does it mean to "heap burning coals on his head"? Interpretations vary, depending on one's understanding of Old Testament culture. (See below.) But Paul makes sure that there is *no mistake* in understanding his intention, by telling us his intention in the verse that follows!

Romans 12:21:

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

This is the same thing that *Jesus* requires from us! → →

Matthew 5:44-45a:

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

Luke 6:27-28:

But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

"COALS OF FIRE" - SOME POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS:

Here are two suggested interpretations of the what the "coals of fire" might signify:

1) In many cultures at that time, fire was considered very important. Hot embers could be carried from place to place in containers. In some instances, an insulated container may have been carried on the individual's head. (Then he would not be in danger of burns from the *rising* heat.) According to this view, the emphasis would be on the *good* we are to do, especially when the other person is in need.

2) This statement could also be reminiscent of an Egyptian ritual signifying "repentance." According to this view, the good that we do would (hopefully) bring shame and repentance to the person. The focus would be on the *mental* pain the person had, rather than on the *physical* pain that would be experienced, if the live coals were to actually touch his head.

This second view is probably the more predominant view among commentators (whether or not they make reference to the Egyptian ritual). But either way, the context shows us that our goal is to do good to the evildoer - in the hope that he will repent. We want him to become our friend, rather than our enemy. (The verse is definitely *not* an encouragement for us to hope that he will have a "hotter fire in hell" - that is, that more coals will be "heaped upon his head"!)