



Books in Review

HOW TO OVERCOME EVIL

by Jay E. Adams

P&R Publishers, 152 pages, \$6.99

It is too often the rule that good theological books quickly go out of print, while the aberrational and heretical are reprinted numerous times.

Thankfully, Jay Adams' *How to Overcome Evil* is an exception to the rule. It first was published in 1977 and has stood the test of time as it is one of the most helpful books available for nearly 35 years. Recently, P&R Publishers reissued this volume with a clean, crisp, new appearance.

Those who have left a cult or abusive church often do so with overwhelming feelings of anger, resentment, bitterness, and a desire for retaliation. Adams speaks to those debilitating emotions and offers solid biblical counsel to avoid such "hand-to-hand combat with evil." But the war is not just reserved for the cult victim. The "battle is with sin wherever it is found — within you, outside you."

Adams instructs, "No one should be surprised when he is maltreated in a world of sin; that's only to be expected. Apart from Christ, there is no perfect person. 'All have sinned' (Rom. 3:23). If that is so, it should not be a surprise that others have wronged you, even wives, husbands, parents, and children. Both believers and unbelievers will wrong you — often with evil intent" (pg. 20). And so this is a book for the growing Christian because it provides "help for and insight into everyday conflicts for ordinary believers, church leaders, and counselors."

The volume is subtitled, "A Practical Exposition of Romans 12:14-21," and furnishes the biblical response toward conflict with not only enemies, but with family, fellow believers, co-workers, and neighbors. After all, conflict occurs most often with those who we more closely associate. This information is so very vital because, as Adams writes, "so many Christians are defeated precisely at the point of their response to attacks on them by evil persons."

Adams asks his readers, "Are you a winner?" and confronts the feelings of self-pity, defeatism, and hopelessness that often occur when people sin against them. He subsequently answers with, "You can be a winner," offering hope and a foundation for his biblical exposition of Paul's instruction.

From there Adams instructs as to the evils we fight, our battle orders for today, the aggressive essence of fighting evil, the weapons of our warfare, how our mouth can be a problem — and how to manage it, the fact that our fight is not alone, how to do "good" to an enemy, and a lot more.

While the book is clearly biblical, from the biblical comes the practical. The reader is urged to plan, because "Sinful tendencies and habits will prevail unless you have previously taken the time to plan (1) what (concretely) you will do and (2) how you will do it. ... Only deliberate planning for different responses, carefully spelled out in the cool rather than in the heat of battle, is adequate. When you've been hit on the nose or kicked in the shins (literally or figuratively), pain and anger can cloud any but the most plain and deliberate plans" (pg. 93).

Christians are confronted with far too many quick fixes and fads, full of bizarre and unscriptural precepts, presented as methods for fighting evil. Christian publications and airwaves are full of faulty and unbiblical direction. Therefore, Adams' handbook is crucial for the believer. It is faithful to Scripture and not only instructs the Christian as to the nature of evil and what a Christian must do to overcome evil, but how to do it.

The battle plan for fighting against evil, when drawn from the Word of God, is simple and effective. Yet it is not passive and does not come without great effort. Evil can only be stopped with good. Adams writes, "If you try to destroy evil with evil you spread more of the same, thereby enlarging rather than destroying it" (pg. 72).

This reviewer has often prescribed a "daily dose" of Romans 12 to those he has counseled over the years. A prescription which included reading, praying, and personalizing the mandates of Paul's passage (e.g., "I will bless those who persecute me ... I will rejoice with those who rejoice ... I will repay no one evil for evil."). *How to Overcome Evil* is a further antitoxin to kill off the deadly poison of evil.

—MKG

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