

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

VENGEANCE IS GOD'S WORK NOT YOURS

Romans 12:19 "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord."

Remember the devotion on Romans 12:14 about blessing those who curse you? Today's devotional verse takes another run at this similar human behavior of getting revenge for some hurt a person has inflicted upon you. Retaliation and retribution are the way of the world, aren't they. They are seen especially in how countries respond to other countries who in some way have caused harm to them.

In your interpersonal relationships, verse 19 says that taking revenge, retaliating, seeking vengeance is not the Christian way to deal with hurt someone inflicts upon you. This verse, in essence says, do not take the law into your own hands. Punishment is not yours to determine or inflict upon an adversary. Instead, writes St. Paul, give God room to work, stay out of His way, give Him opportunity to apply His law to sinners to cause them to see their sin, the punishment they deserve and pray His Law brings them to repent and seek both your and God's forgiveness.

Socrates had a discussion with Crito regarding vengeance, "*Socrates*, 'And what of doing evil in return for evil, which is the morality of the many—is that just or not? *Crito*, Not just. *Socrates*, For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him? *Crito*, Very true. *Socrates*, Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him....'" St. Paul says, instead of you inflicting evil toward one who has harmed you, pour out upon that person love and charity. Overwhelm them with good things instead of trying to hurt them more than they hurt you.

Dealing with sin and sinners is God's work! When you seek revenge, you are actually breaking the First Commandment because you are replacing God with yourself. You are taking over God's work of punishing sinners by inflicting your own punishment instead. The way of a Christian is to remember you " . . . are more than a conqueror through Him who (loves you.) For (in and through Christ) neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate (you) from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (your) Lord." (Romans 8:37-39)

Prayer: Lord, fill me with power through Your Spirit to love my enemies. In Jesus' name. Amen.

There will be peace with ev'ry man Each faithful soul desires,
For which they do the best they can, Like as Saint Paul require' s.

Their aim is not revenge to seek, Nor yet in malice live:
But like their Savior humble meek And freely will forgive.

To wrath and spite they give no place But keep their Lord in view;
They pray for His renewing grace To bear His Image too.

Their charity to all extends, They feel for other's grief,
They pity foes as well as friends, And pray for their relief.

They help in ev'ry time of need; And with a liberal hand;
The naked clothe, the hungry feed, As Jesus gave command.

O may the Lord impress my mind With love and Christian faith,
To be affectionate and kind As the Apostle saith.
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