

This morning I mentioned, that verses 17-21 form a single unit with a single thought or principle—negatively we are not to seek our revenge, but positively—return evil with good and live peaceably, as much as depends on you, with all men—this principle is first stated (vv17-18), then expanded (vv19-20), and then summarized (v21)—thus verses 19-20 are saying the same things we learned this morning, except now, the principle stated in vv17-18 is expanded in two ways—[1] byway of sober motivation (v19), and [2] byway of an OT quotation (v20)...

I. The Principle Expanded by Motivation—v19

II. The Principle Expanded by Quotation—v20

I. The Principle Expanded by Motivation—v19

1. The motivation I refer to is the future wrath or retribution of God—that is—the punishment of eternal hell...
2. V19—"beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the lord..."
3. The "wrath" referenced is obviously "God's wrath" not man's—do not avenge yourselves, but give room for God's wrath..
4. From chapter 1 we learned—that God's wrath is evidenced in two ways—now in part and in the future in full...
5. I suggest that Paul likely has both of these in mind—do not avenge yourself but leave room for present wrath...
6. Rom.13:4—"for he [the magistrate] is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil..."
7. We will examine this text in a few weeks—but suffice it to say—it has an evident relevance to our present text...
8. God uses the magistrate, specifically the death penalty, as a means to express or execute His righteous wrath...
9. But—personally I agree with the majority of commentators—who interpret this wrath—as the future judgment...
10. Rom.2:5—"But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God..."
11. In other words—do not avenge yourself—but leave room for the wrath of God—at the final or last judgment...
12. [1] Wrath—wrath is best defined as—"the expression of anger"—it's the necessary result of God's holiness...
13. Because He is righteous and hates all evil—His wrath is the necessarily response or reply to that sin or evil...
14. 2Ki.22:17—"they provoked Me to anger with the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against them..."
15. Simply put—wrath is the tangible expression of God's anger—because His anger is aroused—His wrath comes...
16. Now—we have to remember that God's anger is pure, controlled, and always justified—it doesn't control Him...
17. This is what our confession means in saying—"God is without passions"—without passions that control Him...
18. This doesn't mean that God is without affections—He possess real anger—and this anger results in real wrath...
19. But God does NOT possess passions like we do—in that—He is NOT ruled, moved, or governed by them...

20. [2] Vengeance—this word means—"to repay someone for their actions"—to punish them for their wrongs...
21. It has the idea of retribution or recompense—thus the quotation continues—"vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord..."
22. That is—I will recompense my enemies by punishing them—I will repay them for mistreating My people...
23. Thus—technically speaking—it refers to the just recompense of God in punishing guilty and blameworthy sinners...
24. Deut.32:35—"vengeance is Mine, and recompense; their foot shall slip in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things to come hasten upon them..."
25. This text was the text Jonathan Edwards used for his famous sermon—Sinners in the hands of an angry God...
26. When He says—"vengeance is Mine"—He means—it belongs to Him—as the only one qualified to perform it...
27. Vengeance belongs to God because—all sin is ultimately against Him—He alone has the right to repay sinners...
28. Deut.32:39-43—"Now see that I, *even I, am He*, And *there is no God besides Me*; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; Nor *is there any* who can deliver from My hand. 40 For I raise My hand to heaven, And say, "*As I live forever,* 41 If I whet My glittering sword, And My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, And repay those who hate Me. 42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood, And My sword shall devour flesh, With the blood of the slain and the captives, From the heads of the leaders of the enemy." ' 43 "Rejoice, O Gentiles, *with His people*; For He will avenge the blood of His servants, And render vengeance to His adversaries; He will provide atonement for His land *and His people*..."

II. The Principle Expanded by Quotation—v20

1. The apostle now illustrates his teaching with a lengthy quotation from Prov.25:21-22—which has two parts...
2. [1] What we're to do, v20a—"therefore, If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink..."
3. These actions are illustrations of the good mentioned in v17—"have regard for good things in the sight of all men..."
4. They are merely representative of tangible, evident, and necessary expressions of love—shown to neighbor...
5. [2] Why we're to do it, v20b—"for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head"—this is given byway of motive...
6. There have been basically two opposing interpretations of this phrase—[a] that hot coals represent judgment...
7. That is—to show good to our enemies—will in the end increase or intensify their final and eternal punishment...
8. So, according to this view—the more good we show our enemies—the more intense will be their final judgment...
9. [b] The hot coals represent repentance—that is—hot coals represent, the sorrow associated with repentance...
10. There is debate as to the precise imagery intended—some suggest the practice of pouring ashes upon the head...
11. But more likely the imagery is simply that of the pain and agony that would be associated with heartfelt repentance...
12. John Stott—"The coals of fire heaped upon by our good deeds...are intended to heal, not to hurt, to win, not to alienate, in fact, to shame him into repentance..."
13. MLJ—"The idea of coals of fire on someone's head obviously carries with it the suggestion of pain and of acute discomfort...What it means, surely, is that you will cause pain, not physical pain, but the pain of shame, and the pain of remorse. It means that as the result of your kindness, your enemy will have an

intense feeling of shame and of remorse. He will know a kind of burning, a keen anguish in his mind, heart and spirit and your hope is that he will feel this to such an extent that it will lead to self-examination and repentance. You will shock him and he will begin to reconsider what he has done to you, and then will see how terribly wrong it is. And this will lead to repentance..."

14. [i] The context—that is—the first interpretation simply runs contrary to the overall tenor and teaching of this passage...
15. Think about it—we're told to do good to our enemies—for the express purpose of destroying and cursing them?...
16. Having just told us to bless and not curse our persecutors—and repay evil with goodness in the sight of all men...
17. Does it seem likely—that Paul would then give a motive—that in so doing—we'll pour more judgment on them...
18. Furthermore—Paul goes on to summarize the larger passage in v21—"do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good..."
19. That is—overcome their evil with good—overwhelm them with undeserved and unmerited love and kindness...
20. [ii] Rom.2:4—"or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance..."
21. That is—God's continued and unmerited goodness—ought to melt our hearts—and lead us unto repentance...
22. [iii] Prov.25:21-22—"If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you..."
23. Notice the phrase—"and the LORD will reward you"—that is—He will reward you for love shown to enemies...
24. Repay evil with kindness—that ultimately, under the blessing of God, evildoers will be brought to repentance...
25. AND THE LORD WILL REWARD YOU—that is—He will reward you for imitating and glorifying Him...
26. [iv] The NT witness, 1Pet.2:12—"having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation..."
27. This phrase—"the day of visitation"—has been understood in one of two ways—conversion or consummation...
28. 1Pet.3:15-16—"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed..."

III. Observations

A. The REALITY of future wrath

1. For all of the different things this text teaches—let us not forget the sober reality—of the future wrath of God...
2. We get so caught up in the many responsibilities of this life—we become so consumed by temporal realities...
3. Thus—again and again the Scriptures put before us the realities of eternity—both eternal joy and eternal torment...
4. Oh my dear friends—let us ever remember the wrath of God—what is done NOW—matters for all eternity...
5. Rom.1:18—"for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...2:5—"but in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" v8—"but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath" 3:5—"is

God unjust who inflicts wrath?" 5:9—"we shall be saved from wrath through Him" 9:22—"what if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction" 12:19—"but rather give place to [God's] wrath..."

B. The REASONS for future wrath

1. Here—I want to suggest three reasons why—vengeance belongs to God—and He alone—will repay sinners...
2. [1] The JUSTICE of God—that is—vengeance belongs to Him—because ultimately—all sin is committed against Him...
3. Nah.1:2-3—"God *is* jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and *is* furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves *wrath* for His enemies; the LORD *is* slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds *are* the dust of His feet..."
4. [2] The TRUTH of God—that is—the truthfulness or faithfulness of God to His word—threatenings and promises...
5. Rev.6:9-10—"When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth..."
6. [3] The LOVE of God—that is—God's future vengeance—if often related to the abuse of His beloved people...
7. V19—"beloved [that is, those beloved of God], do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to [God's] wrath..."
8. Herman Hoeksema—"When the apostle uses the term beloved in connection with vengeance, the meaning is that vengeance presupposes a love relation. Vengeance is a covenant idea. When God established the covenant with Abraham, God said that he would bless them that blessed Abraham and curse them that cursed him. Even among men, vengeance presupposes a relation of love. You avenge those whom you love. You avenge your wife if she is wronged...The teaching of the text is that God loves us and, in His love, will surely avenge us..."
9. Deut.7:9-10—"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments; and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face..."

C. The RESPONSES to future wrath

1. That is—how should we respond to the reality of this future wrath—both as Christians and non-Christians...
2. [1] Christians—for the Christian the reality of the wrath of God—has far reaching implications and applications...
3. Ps.37:1-2—"Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. 2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, And wither as the green herb..."
4. [2] NonChristians—for the nonChristian the reality of God's wrath also has large and important implications...
5. Simply put—you need a Savior—someone to protect you from the wrath of God—but who can that possibly be?...