

The Vengeance of God

Romans 3:5 *But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) 6 God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*

The vengeance of God is not a popular word today in or out of the pulpit. However, we see in v. 6, that without vengeance, there can be no justice of the world.

I speak as a man. Hodge tells us that Paul was simply speaking not as an apostle, but as was typical of his day.

Typical of Paul, he answers a question before it is asked: "I am part of God's chosen people. And since my unrighteousness reveals the righteousness of God in all he does, even as sin takes its natural course, then why does God take vengeance against me?"

V. 5. That is to say, *But if our unrighteousness proves the righteousness of God*, then is not God unrighteous to take vengeance against us?

Answer:

V. 6, *how shall God judge...* Paul is speaking to the Israelites in Rome who were secure in their supposed blood tie to Abraham, and in the fact that the Israelite nation had been chosen by God out of Egyptian bondage.

The Old Testament gives us the record of God's dealing with his "chosen people." They were proud and confident that they were special in God's eyes. Their false pride and self-confidence led to their hardness in sin, and God's final judgment against the Israelite nation in 70 AD. The Jewish-Roman war erased the ancient nation of Israel from history. (Modern Israel officially disclaims any connection with ancient Israel. However, they do claim heirship to the spirit of the Pharisees of Christ's day.)

V. 6, Paul's answer: How shall God judge the world if he does not judge all sin even among his chosen people?

1 Peter 4:17 *For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?*

Though fallen man overlooks his sins, God does not. God cannot act as if nothing is wrong. Romans 2 told us that God, in his patience, grace and mercy often postpones the just rewards of sin, or vengeance against sin as he gives man the chance to repent and submit his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. But though it may be very long in coming, God's righteousness requires

vengeance or justice.

V. 5, *Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?*

The word of God is clear that vengeance and Christianity do not go together. (“Entertainment” involving blood and vengeance sells. It is becoming very difficult to find “entertainment” that is not about sex or very violent vengeance.

Modern Dispensational Christianity tells us that the Old Testament God was a God of wrath and vengeance. Dispensationalism says that the New Testament God is a God of love. However, both Testaments speak very clearly of vengeance and of love.

Three times the Tri-une God tells us he is a consuming fire: Deuteronomy 4:24, and 9:3. **Hebrews 12:29** brings the warning forward to the Elect: *For our God is a consuming fire.*

The Hebrew word for vengeance means to **vindicate, to reestablish the cause of justice.**

Vengeance is a defense of justice; vengeance is retribution against evildoers. Without that vengeance, evildoers prosper at the expense of the innocent.

Therefore, those who speak against the ministry of vengeance **deny justice, and support evil.** The attitude of our day is that justice must be set aside in the name of compassion and love. However, love that avoids vengeance destroys justice, and will result in **anarchy.**

Clearly, godly love requires vengeance.

The Christian God is a God of **vengeance.** The Christian God is a God of **love** because he provided his only Son that his people might avoid his righteous vengeance.

Jeremiah 15:15 *O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke.*

Nahum 1:2 *God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.*

2 Corinthians 7:11 *For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. 10:6* *And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled*

(Numbers 35:19, 21, 24, 25, 27, &c.)

God has established various methods for exacting vengeance.

First, civil magistrate

The ministry of vengeance or the ministry of justice is not placed in the hands of individuals.

The law tells us that **personal acts of vengeance are forbidden** to man. In the same verse, the law spells out our responsibility:

Leviticus 19:18 *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD. 19 Ye shall keep my statutes.*

In **Romans 12:19** *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

Personal vengeance is to be replaced with love and obedience to the law-word of God. The New Testament defines the godly actions that must replace anger and vengeance, which we will only touch on.

Albert Barnes says here:

“[T]he command is, to avoid a spirit and purpose of revenge. But this command is not to be so understood that we may not seek for justice, in a regular and proper way, before civil tribunals. If our character is assaulted, if we are robbed and plundered, if we are oppressed contrary to the law of the land, religion does not require us to submit to such oppression and injury without seeking our rights in an orderly and regular manner.” (Albert Barnes)

Adam Clarke:

“**give place unto wrath.** Leave room for the civil magistrate to do his duty, he holds the sword for this purpose; and if he be unfaithful to the trust reposed in him by the state, leave the matter to God, who is the righteous judge: for by avenging yourselves you take your cause both out of the hands of the civil magistrate and out of the hands of God.

“**Vengeance is mine** This fixes the meaning of the apostle, and at once shows that the exhortation, Rather *give place to wrath* or punishment, means, Leave the matter to the judgment of God; it is his law that in this case is broken; and to him the infliction of deserved punishment belongs. Some think it means, "Yield a little to a man when in a violent passion, for the sake of peace, until he grow cooler.”

“**I will repay** In my own time and in my own way. But he gives the sinner space to repent, and this longsuffering leads to salvation.”

In other words, we must not avenge ourselves, **even in our thoughts**, but leave room for divine justice either through the civil magistrate or through God's divine justice: "*for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*"

We must imitate Paul in Philippians 4:11, and *learn to be content* in whatever state we find ourselves, and wait for God's day of vengeance.

Deuteronomy 32:35 *To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste.*

The Lord promises payback to the evil doer in his own way, and according to his timing.

Romans 13:4 ~~*For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*~~

God shares his exclusive right of vengeance only with the civil government. He gave the state alone the right to take life. That right can only be exercised according to his law-word or it is murder. Our command is "*Avenge not yourselves, vengeance is mine saith the Lord, I will repay*"

Our obligation is to love our neighbor and our enemy, which clearly means fulfilling the 2nd table of the law as the Lord told the rich young man in Matthew 19:16-22:

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? 17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. 18 He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, 19 Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 20 The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? 21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. 22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

Paul says the same in Romans 13:7 *Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. 8 Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. 9 For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly*

comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 10 Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

~~That is, “Thou shalt not Kill.” Respect your neighbor’s right to life.~~

~~“Thou shalt not commit adultery.” Respect the sanctity of his home.~~

~~“Thou shalt not steal.” Respect his property.~~

~~“Thou shalt not bear false witness.” Respect his reputation.~~

~~“Thou shalt not covet,” respect these things in thought as well as in word and deed.~~

Accordingly, we are given **only two requirements** in order to maintain social order:

First, vengeance and justice which must be left up to God, and his established representative here on earth, the state.

Second, faithful fulfillment of the second table of the law.

Why is our social order falling apart?

Hosea 4:9 And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings.

The people, even many professed Christians, do not want godly vengeance and justice, so God gives them leaders after their own hearts. That spiritual decline in the church results in the decline of Godly vengeance and justice in society.

When God’s people will not enforce godly vengeance, or discipline, against the evil doer in the church, how can we expect civil government to do what we refuse to do.

People profess a desire for godly justice, yet they do not vote what they profess. Even Christians have no biblical basis for their political vote, so they follow men according to what those men say, rather than according to godly precepts which require men of good reputation.

However, the ungodly state is not interested in godly justice for several reasons:

First, the general attitude of the people is against godly justice. The breakdown of godly law and order in the state is because there is a breakdown of law and order in the church and in the general population. People may want vengeance and justice for others, but not for themselves.

Second, the breakdown of lawful justice works to benefit the ungodly state. Without biblical vengeance against the evil doer, anarchy must reign. That breakdown of justice must result in anarchy, which allows the state to increase its power over people, as the people look to the state to control the anarchy. Simple enforcement of godly vengeance by the state would stop the anarchy.

Third, the dream of the ungodly for four thousand years has been to create their own world order. So, the ungodly foment chaos so they can bring about their imagined perfect world order.

Chaos is being encouraged by the state today.

Example: The chaos that reigned in Richmond not long ago was the result of the anarchists attacking those who were peacefully demonstrating. Law enforcement was told to stand down, and let the anarchists have their way. That story has been repeated all over the country.

The eternal desire of fallen man is to succeed where Nimrod failed with city of Babal. So, the Nimrods of our day encourage or even create chaos, with the goal of bringing about their New World Order according to their vain imagination as described in Psalms 2.

The wicked cannot ascend into heaven to throw down God, but they can overthrow God in the hearts and minds of the people.

It seems as though the sinful chaos described by Jeremiah 5:7-9 – as spoken to God’s professed people – is being fulfilled right before our eyes:

7 How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots’ houses. 8 They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour’s wife. 9 Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Covetousness reigns in the hearts of God’s people, so covetousness reigns in the hearts of those who are in authority, both in and out of the Christian community. Lack of vengeance allows covetousness to reign.

His final, complete and total vengeance and justice shall be accomplished in the final judgment when all men must stand before him and face righteous just judgment. To deny the vengeance of God is to deny the final judgment.

The denial of vengeance not only denies Christianity, but it denies justice, and destroys the social order.

V. 5, Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?

God has various methods of executing vengeance.

First, vengeance through the civil magistrate. Vengeance and justice go hand in hand. We see that justice is now very seldom enforced by the civil magistrate, and anarchy is taking over the streets.

Second, vengeance through Divine Providence.

As we see concerning the 1629 Mayflower Compact, that a covenant was made with God through Jesus Christ. Though that covenant was erased from history and all memory, it was not erased from God's memory.

God uses natural events, such as rain, floods, hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, to execute his vengeance.

God uses foreign invaders to execute his vengeance. We are in the midst of a foreign invasion from the south.

God uses wicked rulers to execute his vengeance.

God uses judicial blindness to accomplish his vengeance against the ungodly. That is, he blinds them to the natural deadly results of their plans.

God even uses false teachers who profess to represent him to execute his vengeance. They give false hope to the wicked as the wicked willfully and contentedly march toward their self-chosen destruction.

Though his people cannot seek self-vengeance; we are told to seek God's vengeance:

Luke 18:1 *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

Some important points as we talk about the vengeance of God.

First, the context is prayer in response to the lack of proper vengeance and justice by the judge.

Second, the judge had no interest in justice.

Third, rightful vengeance and justice was granted only because of the continued cry for righteous vengeance. Because the widow continued in her plea and pestered him endlessly, he finally granted her justice.

Fourth, God's people have forgotten to pray for God's vengeance against the wicked.

7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily.

Our lesson here is that in the face of no justice, we are to pray for God's avenging justice against the evil doers. Luke 18 tells us that we are to pray for God's vengeance upon evil. We are to pray for God's vengeance against those who seek to undermine his command-word, whether that undermining is done by the ungodly, or whether it is done from supposed "Christian" preachers and teachers who proclaim man's imaginative ideas in place of God's truth.

We should pray particularly for God's vengeance against those people, societies and states as well as individuals who are guilty of the theft of property. It is becoming common to hear of the state stealing children from families who are obeying God's command concerning children.

The vengeance of God is also proclaimed against all who are guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain or blaspheming God:

Blaspheming is made evident in every kind of false doctrine presented in the name of the Lord: Modernism and unbelief, the death of God, the social gospel, socialism, communism, welfareism, and the toleration of all kinds of evil such as homosexuality and false modesty in the name of the Lord. Not only do these things call for the vengeance of God against them, but people who bear the name of Christ yet do not live what they profess also are asking for the vengeance of God.

We should be praying for God's righteous vengeance against the workers of iniquity.

Three times we are told that our God is a consuming fire.

God also declares that part of his ministry of justice, or vengeance, is to separate his people from those who are ungodly. That line of separation is brought about by judgment and by the providence of God. God makes clear that his day of vengeance and justice is about to come.

Every day, the false professor of Christianity and false Christian churches become more obvious for what they are. The evils that lurks in the heart of professed Christians is becoming increasingly obvious as they openly separate from the Christian faith which they profess.

As God and his justice continues to show the truth about the false "Christian churches," and institutions, the flow of honest Christians out of them must increase.

I do not have much contact with Orthodox Presbyterian churches, but the Orthodox Baptist community is growing.

As we face the world of our day, we need to rejoice that it is under God's judgment, that his ministry of vengeance is in operation today. We need to be mindful of our responsibility to be in prayer that God's justice or vengeance will be accomplished.

We need to be crying with the widow, "Oh Lord, avenge me of mine adversary."