



Should We Ever Seek Vengeance?

Proverbs 14:29-30: (KJV) ²⁹*He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.* ³⁰*A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones.*

"Trayvon Martin"...mention that name and you unleash a flood of emotion and turmoil. This young man was tragically shot to death at age 17 and his death has raised a firestorm of controversy. Was it self-defense? Was it racially motivated? Should his killer have been arrested immediately? Will there be justice? These are all questions that we have no answers for - sorry! What we do want to discuss though, is the emotion, reaction and desire by some for vengeance. Is vengeance ever appropriate for us to take? What if justice is NOT served? Does vengeance give closure? What does it really mean to leave things like this in God's hands? Are the Old and New Testament different on this? Stay with us as we look into this important question.

Are justice and vengeance the same thing?

Trayvon Story, CBS This Morning

- *Three weeks ago, the unarmed teen was shot in this gated subdivision in Sanford, outside Orlando. He had been visiting his father after getting suspended from school.*
- *Zimmerman, a Hispanic neighborhood watch volunteer, was not arrested. He claimed self-defense. Florida's Stand Your Ground Law expands the right to claim self-defense beyond the home.*

WHAT CAN CAUSE THE DESIRE FOR REVENGE...???

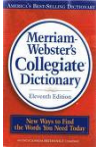




Intro - Evolutionary origins of revenge, Templeton Foundation

- We see these dynamics in every culture that has been known to human observers. You would have a harder time finding a society of three-armed people than you would a society of people that don't know the concept of revenge.*

We think God hard-wired into us the concept of justice. What can cause the need for justice to be served? The committing of any wrong as defined by law.



VENGEANCE

Punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense: RETRIBUTION

REVENGE

1: To avenge (as oneself) usually by retaliating in kind or degree

2: To inflict injury in return for <revenge an insult>

JUSTICE

The maintenance or administration of what is just, especially by the *impartial* adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments

Is there a connection between these definitions and our theme text?

Proverbs 14:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹He who is slow to anger has great understanding, But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly. ³⁰A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones.

Consider this: Vengeance and revenge are personally owned, "I'll get my vengeance!" Justice is the property of everybody. What is the difference between the two?

M REVENGE

Revenge is about "ME" - Justice is about that which is right!

Circumstances Emotions

Revenge is determined by my emotions mixed with circumstances

- Justice is determined by events in conjunction with the Law!

M REVENGE



Revenge is **personally**
orchestrated and served -
Justice is orchestrated and served through legal
channels!



No Justice, CBS This Morning

- *Hundreds were at a rally saying there is no justice for Trayvon Martin, in what was called the "Million Hoodie March," Trayvon was wearing a hoodie the night George Zimmerman shot and killed him.*
- *(Martin's parents surrounded by supporters) Our son was not committing any crime! Our son is your son! I want you guys to stand up for justice and stand up for what is right!*

What does God's vengeance look like?

Nahum 1:2-3: (NASB) ²A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and wrathful. The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies. ³The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and the LORD will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

God's vengeance does not sound very appealing! But....He is slow to anger, so His vengeance is controlled.

What would one do to avoid it?

Leviticus 26:1-2: (KJV) ¹Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God. ²Ye shall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD.

An idol is anything that gets in the way of God being first...our 401(k), our car, our home, our spouse, our hobby...idols can be anything that take us away from God first. We need to keep things in the right perspective.



The Sri Mariamman Temple is Singapore's oldest Hindu temple, a shrine to various dieties.



Sweet Revenge - Evolutionary origins of revenge, *Templeton Foundation*

- *If you put somebody into an MRI and put them into a game where somebody ends up harming them, and then you give this person the opportunity to harm "in kind" the person who has harmed them, the place where you see the brain activity going on is in an area of the brain that scientists now recognize is the brain's pleasure system. It is "sweet revenge."*



In Hong Kong today, there are women who set up small shrines under the highways. For a fee, they will put a curse on someone you don't like...and they have no shortage of business!



Leviticus 26:14-20: (NASB) ¹⁴*But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments, ¹⁵if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,*

Notice all that has to unravel here...this is not just a small slip up in our lives, this is a true turn against God...

¹⁶*I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.*

(Source: Bible Commentator, Albert Barnes) The first warning for disobedience is disease. "Terror" (literally trembling) is rendered trouble in Psalms 78:33. The first of the words in the original comes from a root signifying to waste away; the latter (better, fever), from one signifying to kindle a fire.

¹⁷*I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you. ¹⁸If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. ¹⁹I will*



also break down your pride of power; I will also make your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. ²⁰Your strength will be spent uselessly, for your land will not yield its produce and the trees of the land will not yield their fruit.

So, is this revealing a vengeful God? Do we ever ask why God would be like this? Human nature in its fallen condition generally does not react to simple correction alone. God does have vengeance towards His created in certain circumstances, but is it there to beat us down or build us up?

What does "My" Vengeance look like - is it in the "image" of God?

 **Stand your ground under fire, CBS This Morning**

- *As that tension rises, the co-author of the Stand Your Ground law, in effect since 2005, says it may need to be clarified...*
- *The law was not intended to cover citizens who pursue suspected threats.*
- *We need to look at the circumstances that occurred to see if some sort of legislation is in order.*

Having looked at the vengeance of God, we now look in the mirror. Obviously we come from a different place as is exhibited by the following account:

Genesis 34:1-7: (NASB) ¹Now Dinah the daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob, went out to visit the daughters of the land. ²When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land, saw her, he took her and lay with her by force. ³He was deeply attracted to Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her. ⁴So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, "Get me this young girl for a wife." ⁵Now Jacob heard that he had defiled Dinah his daughter; but his sons were with his livestock in the field, so Jacob kept silent until they came in. ⁶Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷Now the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it; and the men were grieved, and they were very angry because he had done a disgraceful thing in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done.

So, what do we have?

- The rape of Dinah, a daughter of Jacob;
- Infatuation;
- A desire to marry and a conference between the fathers; and
- The sons of Jacob entering The Vengeance Zone!

What happens next is a premeditated act of vengeance - the brothers suggest to Jacob that forgiveness and even an alliance will be granted if all of the males of their tribe be circumcised.

The agreement was reached:

Genesis 34:25: (NASB) Now it came about on the third day, when they were in pain, that two of Jacob's sons, Simeon and Levi, Dinah's brothers, each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male.

They set up a pre-meditated circumstance where the men were disabled and then murdered in cold blood. This is what vengeance can make us do!



Students make teachers pay, revenge - is it sweet or bitter? www.youtube.com

- *How do you feel when you experience a personal affront of one kind or another? The reaction of many people today seems to be, "I'll make them pay for what they did!"*
- *In the United States, a number of junior high school students have filed false charges of abuse to get revenge against teachers who disciplined them. What happens, says the president of the teacher's union in New Orleans, is that once the accusation is made, the teacher's reputation is tarnished. Even after the accusation has been proved false, the damage can linger.*

Genesis 34:30-31: (NASB) ³⁰Then Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, You have brought trouble on me by making me odious among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites; and my men being few in number, they will gather together against me and attack me and I will be destroyed, I and my household. ³¹But they said, Should he treat our sister as a harlot?



A few observations comparing God's vengeance with our own:

- God's is for our ultimate good - ours is for our momentary satisfaction.
- God's is to focus us on the heavenly - ours is to focus on self appeasement.
- God's is to teach a lasting lesson - ours is to lessen an emotional reaction.

What does the Old Testament's treatment of vengeance look like?

If it comes from God, then it must have a basis in justice:

Leviticus 24:15-22: (NRSV) ¹⁵And speak to the people of Israel, saying: Anyone who curses God shall bear the sin. ¹⁶One who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; the whole congregation shall stone the blasphemer. Aliens as well as citizens, when they blaspheme the Name, shall be put to death. ¹⁷Anyone who kills a human being shall be put to death. ¹⁸Anyone who kills an animal shall make restitution for it, life for life.

When there is justice, there is no need for vengeance.

As would be expected from the Old Testament, there is a very clear focus on justice:

¹⁹Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: ²⁰fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered. ²¹One who kills an animal shall make restitution for it; but one who kills a human being shall be put to death. ²²You shall have one law for the alien and for the citizen: for I am the LORD your God.

Could any of this be construed as vengeance? Perhaps, but the fact that there are predetermined guidelines for the consequences indicates a lack of the emotional skew that comes with vengeance. This is what justice is truly made of.

Revenge is pleasure; origins of revenge, [Templeton Foundation](http://TempletonFoundation.org)

- *It's the part of the brain that is active when somebody is pursuing a goal that they believe is going to lead to a reward. It's not just the plotting - they see some reward out there that looks to be really satisfying if they can just make it happen. It's the same pattern of activation you see in the brain for someone hungry and about to be given a meal, or a drug addict thinking about*



the drugs they like to use, or someone who is about to have a social interaction they are looking forward to.

There is a wiring in our brain that feeds that desire for vengeance. We need to fight this urge.

Perceived inequity breeds the human propensity towards vengeance and injustice. The Old Testament was full of warnings against it:

Leviticus 19:13-18: (NRSV) ¹³You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. ¹⁴You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD. ¹⁵You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. ¹⁶You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not profit by the blood of your neighbor: I am the LORD. ¹⁷You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself. ¹⁸You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

 **Eyewitness uncovered, Fox News**

- *We've seen the rallies and heard the outcry. Now we go back to the night George Zimmerman shot Trayvon Martin to death. A witness we have not heard from before paints a much different picture than we have seen so far. The night of that shooting, police say there was a witness who saw it all.*

Proverbs 20:10: Differing weights and differing measures, both of them are abominable to the LORD.

Proverbs 22:22: Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate;

Jeremiah 22:3: Thus says the LORD, do justice and righteousness, and deliver the one who has been robbed from the power of his oppressor. Also do not mistreat or do violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow; and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

What does the New Testament's treatment of vengeance look like?

So we have seen that the Old Testament, while based squarely on the foundation of justice, did not leave room for personal vendetta. The clear defining of justice was a key to being able to identify what can sometimes be a fine line between justice and vengeance.

 **Eyewitness speaks, Fox News**

- *Tonight we are learning more about why cops believe that night George Zimmerman shouldn't have gone to jail. Zimmerman called a non-emergency line and told the dispatchers he was following a teen. He was told not to. From that moment to that shooting, details are few.*
- *But this man's testimony could be key for the cops. "The guy on the bottom, who I believe had a red sweater on, was yelling, "Help! Help!" I told him to stop and that I was calling 911."*
- *Trayvon was in a hoodie; Zimmerman was in red.*

Matthew 5:39: (NASB) But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.



Did you ever wonder what you would do in certain situations? Emotions are so hard to control. Jesus is telling us to control that gut feeling and approach it differently.

Remember our text from last week? Christian love says, "Love your enemies!"

Matthew 5:43-46: (KJV) ⁴³Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt **love <25>** thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴But I say unto you, **Love <25>** your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; ⁴⁵That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if ye **love <25>** them which **love <25>** you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

- We are to rise way above our circumstances.
- To love an enemy dissolves any potential traces of vengeance.
- To bless and pray for those who hate and abuse you can only be *truly* accomplished based upon our striving for that selfless love towards them.
- Be like God: God is a good and just God to all as shown in the seasons.
- Even when you are being persecuted, God is still a good and just God.

Do we get to choose which vengeance fits our situation?



Workplace revenge, revenge - is it sweet or bitter, www.youtube.com

- *In the workforce, an increasing number of disgruntled employees seek revenge on employers by damaging or deleting information on the company's computer network. Others steal company secrets and sell them or give them away. In addition to the looting of electronic files, old-fashioned theft also remains a staple of worker retaliation, reports the New York Times.*
- *To combat the threat of revenge, many companies have resorted to having a security officer escort a dismissed employee to his desk, wait for him to clear out his things, and walk him off the premises.*

Romans 12:14-21: (NRSV) ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but **take thought for what is noble in the sight of all**. ¹⁸If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰No, if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This time the Apostle Paul sets our feet on firm ground:

- *Bless those who persecute you.*
- *Live in harmony with others.*
- *Don't avenge yourselves; rather, act in the opposite manner.*
- *Overcome evil (vengeance and all that goes with it) with good!*



- Vengeance belongs to God and He is in control. He *will* right all of the wrongs.

What roll should vengeance play in our lives?



New photo of bloody head, ABC News

- *There is an exclusive new photo of George Zimmerman from the night of the Trayvon Martin shooting. It is raising lots of new questions.*
- *This picture seems to support George Zimmerman's assertion that he felt he was locked in some sort of life and death struggle with Trayvon Martin. In this picture you see two cuts on the back of Zimmerman's head with blood trickling down.*

So all of this talk about the Trayvon Martin killing...what do we *learn* from this tragedy? Suppose you jumped onto one side or the other on this issue and evidence comes out, justice is served, and your point of view is proven to be incorrect. Are you going to, with the same urgency and loudness, proclaim that you were wrong? Do we have the same enthusiasm and passion if we need to be corrected? Repentance is a remedy for vengeance.

As Christians, do we ever get that "I can't wait 'till you get yours" attitude? Sadly even some of the best examples of Christianity have fallen into this pit:

Luke 9:51-56: (NASB) ⁵¹When the days were approaching for his ascension, he was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵²and he sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. ⁵³But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, **Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?** ⁵⁵But he turned and rebuked them, and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village.

God's justice:

Jeremiah 31:28-30: (NASB) ²⁸As I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to overthrow, to destroy and to bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, declares the LORD. ²⁹In those days they will not say again, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But everyone will die for his own iniquity; each man who eats the sour grapes, his teeth will be set on edge.

God knows what is happening, and there is great comfort for our sense of wanting vengeance. God will not let acts go unnoticed or unpunished.

Isaiah 61:1-4: (KJV) ¹The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; ²To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; ³To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified. ⁴And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.

We can all relate to this subject. We have all had experiences where that sense comes into our hearts and minds. Jesus tells us how he dealt with it -



love your enemies and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you and abuse you.

Because we can have the absolute, positive, unrelenting faith that God has it under control, things that are unpunished now will not remain so.

So for us, vengeance is not only a waste of time, it is an attitude and an action that is diametrically opposed to that for which we stand. Let us leave vengeance to shrivel and die and in its place, plant and cultivate the love of God through Christ and thereby find peace!

*So should we ever seek vengeance?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*



*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition of CQ Rewind!***

(Source: McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia) Revenge means the return of injury for injury, or the infliction of pain on another in consequence of an injury received from him further than the just ends of reparation or punishment require. Revenge differs materially from resentment, which rises in the mind immediately on being injured; but revenge is a cool and deliberate wickedness, and is often executed years after the offence is given. By some it is considered as a perversion of anger. Anger, it is said, is a passion given to man for wise and proper purposes, but revenge is the corruption of anger, is unnatural, and therefore ought to be suppressed. It is observable that the proper object of anger is vice; but the object, in general, of revenge, is man. It transfers the hatred due to the vice to the man, to whom it is not due. It is forbidden by the Scriptures, and is unbecoming the character and spirit of a peaceful follower of Jesus Christ.

Once again, God's vengeance is founded in His Justice. The payment was a JUST payment - a life for a life:

Romans 5:15-19: (NASB) ¹⁵*But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.* ¹⁶*The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.* ¹⁷*For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.* ¹⁸*So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.* ¹⁹*For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.*

God's vengeance is part of his formula for breaking through man's stone cold hearts and replacing them with a heart of flesh.

Notice how, as the verse progresses, the destruction, etc., turns into that which is something to be longed for.



This is a great lesson in the difference between God's vengeance and our own:

Jeremiah 31:28-34: (KJV) ²⁸And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD. ²⁹In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge. ³⁰But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. ³¹Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: ³²Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: ³³But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Our vengeance is established in emotion, implemented with hatred, carried out with vitriol and brings an end result of destruction and hurt.

God's vengeance is established in justice, implemented with wisdom, carried out with power and brings an end result of His love for all mankind by the establishment of His Kingdom on this earth!