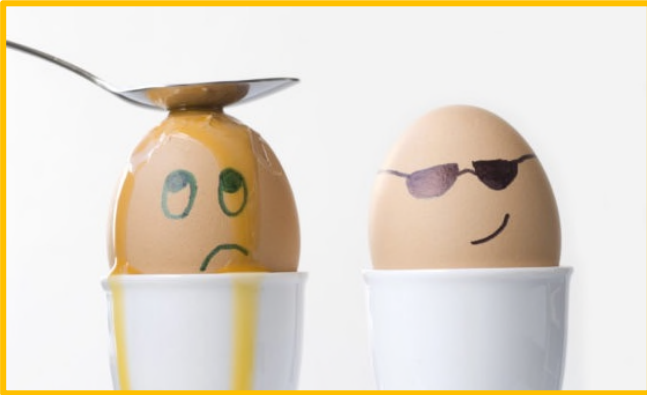


How Sweet is Revenge?

Romans 12:17: (NASB) *Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.*



Revenge - the desire for it can be a powerful and even overwhelming emotion. Sadly, thinking about revenge can be a fun, motivating and bonding experience as it occupies our minds with creative and yet often diabolical means with which to carry out our purpose. It is amazing how the development of such a negative action can spur such positive feelings. Wait, if all these positive feelings come from planning revenge then can we rightfully label revenge as wrong? Absolutely! Just because something makes you feel good or empowered or focused doesn't mean that you

are becoming a better person because of those things. Remember, Satan felt good and was empowered and focused when he rebelled against God - and we all know how that will turn out! Can revenge ever be good? How do we recognize, manage and direct our feelings of revenge?

The Bible is full of warnings against being vengeful:

Proverbs 24:28-29: (NASB) *²⁸Do not be a witness against your neighbor without cause, and do not deceive with your lips. ²⁹Do not say, Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.*

Introduction, *Psychology of Revenge*, Vanessa Van Edwards

- *My name is Vanessa Van Edwards, and I am lead investigator of the Science of People - a human behavior research lab. Our mission is to figure out the hidden forces that drive our behavior. And today we're talking about the dark, secretive and mysterious science and psychology of revenge. As much as we hate to admit it, revenge is one of those intense feelings that comes up for every single human being.*

Revenge is driven by a level of intensity that is hard to fight.

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary:

Vengeance:

Punishment inflicted in retaliation for an injury or offense, retribution

Revenge:

- 1: to avenge (oneself or another) 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

To be clearly understood, revenge needs to be compared and contrasted with justice. We want to seek justice, not vengeance.

For perspective, we will be referring to the CQ episode from May 8, 2017, "Will God's Vengeance Squash Us Like Bugs?"



We talked about God's "vengeance" which is entirely different than our revenge.

God's vengeance is for reconciliation. Reconciliation means to bring us back to the lost relationship the human family had with God.

The purpose of MY vengeance is to hurt someone.

Zephaniah 3:8-9: (NASB) ⁸Therefore wait for Me, declares the LORD, For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal. ⁹For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

 **Dave Carroll, The Greatest Acts of Revenge on People Ever, therichest.com**

- Dave Carroll - you may recognize Dave Carroll as the guitar player from the band, Sons of Maxwell. While on a trip to Nebraska, baggage handlers broke his guitar, which he obviously needed to play and write music. Carroll then filed a complaint and tried to get some sort of compensation for his broken instrument. United Airlines gave him the run around and refused to do anything about it. Then Carroll released three songs about how the airline breaks guitars and the public listened. United stock went down about 10 percent after the release of the sweet-sounding vengeance.

We will break revenge and justice into four categories:

REVENGE IS ABOUT ME

Justice is about that which is right

REVENGE IS DETERMINED BY MY EMOTIONS MIXED WITH CIRCUMSTANCES

Justice is determined by events in conjunction with the law

REVENGE IS ABOUT PUNISHING THOSE WHO HURT MY FAMILY

Justice is about lawfully trying and convicting the guilty

REVENGE IS PERSONALLY AND PASSIONATELY ORCHESTRATED AND SERVED

Justice is orchestrated and served through legal channels





REVENGE **REFOCUS** LESSON:

As with any human emotion, we must check our desire for revenge against our desire for what is right.

Revenge is almost never founded in that which is right. Instead, it is based in that which is convenient, passionate and caused by our rage.

Can mob mentality factor into a desire for revenge and what might be the outcome?

As we address this very personal issue of revenge it is so important that we understand how our connections to those around us can be for good or for ill. It is also very important that we keep our heads clear and our hearts pure!



Aaron Burr, *The Greatest Acts of Revenge on People Ever*, therichest.com



- Aaron Burr - Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton had a love-hate sort of friendship. When Burr ran for President in 1800, Hamilton endorsed his rival, Thomas Jefferson, costing Burr the presidency despite the fact that he got to serve as vice president. Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel and shot his political rival resulting in a fatal wound in 1804, thus ruining Burr's political career. It was a work of revenge that cost him everything he had worked for.



REVENGE IS DETERMINED BY MY EMOTIONS MIXED WITH CIRCUMSTANCES

The Jewish leaders were all trying to desperately stifle Paul's preaching - Paul had other ideas:

Acts 23:6-14: (NASB) ⁶But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead! ⁷As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided... ¹⁰And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks... ¹²When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³There were more than forty who formed this plot. ¹⁴They came to the chief priests and the elders and said, We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste nothing until we have killed Paul.

Being bested by your opponent
 + Others feeling the same humiliation
 + A feeling of immediacy

A mob of sore losers who will consciously step far beyond justice to exact revenge

They had no legal right to kill the Apostle Paul. (Side note: They took an oath not to eat until they killed Paul, but God protected Paul for years - did they all starve to death?) Revenge brings us to say and do outrageous things. We end up on a slippery road where we have to continually defend what we have said or done.

 **Brain's response to revenge, *Psychology of Revenge*, Vanessa Van Edwards**



- *Have you ever been wronged and wished you could punish the perpetrator? This desire is wired within us. A group of Swiss researchers wanted to know what happens in the brain when someone reaps revenge. They scanned the brains of people who had just been wronged during a game in the lab. Researchers then gave the wronged participant a chance to punish the other person, and for a full minute as the victims contemplated revenge, their activity was recorded in their brain. Researchers noticed a rush of neural activity in the caudate nucleus. This is the part of the brain known to process rewards. In other words, the study found that revenge - in the moment - is quite rewarding.*



"JoyfullandTriumphant" writes: We are instructed in Micah 6:8: *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.* We are instructed to be just AND to love kindness AND to walk humbly with God...which balances the whole picture. If we love kindness we will love to find ways to bless people. If we walk humbly with God we will want to be led by the LORD, according to His view of what should be done when we are wronged. There is a comment on the meaning of vengeance in Romans 12:9 from Vines Concordance: "The judgments of God are holy and right (Revelation 16:7) and free from any element of self-gratification or vindictiveness."

Never does the human soul appear so strong as when it foregoes revenge and dares to forgive an injury. — Edwin Hubbel Chapin

GOD'S VENGEANCE LESSON:



*God's vengeance, by definition,
is purposeful and not reactionary.*

Justice is determined by events in conjunction with the law



In his epistle to the Roman Christians, Paul had just written about the casting off of Israel which opened wide the call of the Gospel to the Romans - here the justice and mercy of God shine out!

Romans 11:28-36: (NASB) ²⁸From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers... ³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy... (There is no mob here, just a group who is undeserving being privileged to bless another group who is undeserving.) ³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? ³⁶For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God - We should have no room for vengeful thoughts. Everything is being given to us, even though we do not deserve it. Grace is receiving blessings without deserving them. God gives us hope and direction. We do not have any room for mob mentality if we say we have been called of God.

How do we daily absorb and process the defeats of life? Do we dive into a human reaction or do we step back and enjoy a just and godly panoramic view of what just happened? If we take the principles of Romans 11 that we have been given an opportunity - not because we deserve it, but because God has seen fit to allow us to have it - that is a panoramic view of God's mercy. However badly we might feel about somebody or something that happened, we ought to bask in the glory of an opportunity that is bigger than we are. Sometimes the flesh gets the best of us and our reactions and emotions take over. We must be on our guard! That is why our solution for revenge is the end of Romans 11 and the entire context of Romans 12.

At the end of those verses, Paul specifically deals with revenge and the steps to diffuse it are detailed.



REVENGE **REFOCUS** LESSON:

We all experience loss of privilege or position in our lives that often benefits another. Let us see such loss as a stepping stone towards our ultimate spiritual destination and not as a reason to get revenge on someone.

How do we handle a more personal and private feeling of revenge stemming from being offended?

No matter what the packaging, revenge is always the same basic thing - it is ME showing YOU that you cannot get away with this or that without suffering serious consequences of MY choosing. They say there is no "I" in team - we say there is an "I" in revenge! We have to understand it this way no matter how good it makes us feel in the interim.

 Pierre Picaud, *The Greatest Acts of Revenge on People Ever*, therichest.com

- *Pierre Picaud - A 19th century French shoemaker by the name Pierre Picaud is believed to be the inspiration for Alexandre Dumas' novel, "The Count of Monte Cristo." Pierre became engaged to a wealthy woman and his friends Loupian, Solari and Chaubart apparently got jealous, so they accused him of being an English spy. Pierre was locked up for seven years and then was given a lot of money by a fellow inmate named Father Torri. Once out over the course of 10 years, Pierre fatally poisoned Solari, killed Chaubart and then extracted his harsh revenge on Loupian who married Pierre's former fiancé. He tricked Loupian's daughter into marrying a criminal and then had him arrested, and then burned down Loupian's restaurant before stabbing him to death.*



A caller from Connecticut suggests three examples: 1. Saul of Tarsus did such damage by murdering Christians, and Ananias objected going to him until Jesus reassured him. Ananias could have sought revenge instead, but he did not. 2. Stephen being stoned says, *Lay not this sin to their charge*, referring to those murdering him. There were no thoughts of revenge there. What a mellow, beautiful spiritual heart. 3. Nathanael (who was the one who asked "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?") being introduced to Jesus. Jesus could have reviled Nathanael and instead said *Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile.*



REVENGE IS ABOUT ME

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.



Notice the care that Jesus took to be respectful of those who saw things differently...

⁵³But they did not receive him, because he was traveling toward Jerusalem.

(Source: Biblical commentary by Adam Clarke) They saw he was going up to Jerusalem to keep the feast; (it was the feast of tabernacles, [John 7:2](#)) and knowing him thereby to be a Jew, they would afford nothing for his entertainment; for, in religious matters, the Samaritans and Jews had no dealings: See [John 4:9](#). The Samaritans were a kind of mongrel heathens; they feared Jehovah, and served other gods, [2 Kings 17:34](#). They apostatized from the true religion, and persecuted those who were attached to it.

The Samaritans resented the Jews.

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?

Who is looking for revenge here? Wow - Jesus' own followers! And they pursued it in such a way as to have it come from God in heaven! Their vengeance would be cloaked as "the hand of God."

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.

Jesus' response is plain and powerful: Think in a godly manner and not like children of Satan! He did not come to destroy men's lives; he came to save them. Take the emotion out.



Is reacting and lashing out at someone because of irritation at something they have done a form of revenge?

Yes, it could fall in that category if it is thoughtless reaction.



We are not supposed to take the Lord's name in vain. Is saying you are Christian or godly but taking revenge on others "taking the Lord's name in vain"?

It would be taking the grace He has given us in vain. More on this as we move forward.

 After the fact, *Psychology of Revenge*, Vanessa Van Edwards

- But what about after the fact? Does revenge keep rewarding? One might think that exacting revenge is a form of emotional release, that it is a way to gain closure after a wrong, but in fact revenge has the opposite effect. Even though the first few moments feel rewarding, psychological scientists have found that instead of quenching hostility, revenge prolongs the unpleasantness of the original offense. Instead of delivering justice, it often only creates a cycle of retaliation. Philosopher Frances Beacon said, "A man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green which otherwise would heal."

Revenge is often like biting a dog because the dog bit you. — Austin O'Malley



Justice is about that which is right



The Apostle Paul continues in Romans - now that you see how utterly blessed you are...

Romans 12:1-5: (NASB) ¹Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. ³For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. ⁴For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, ⁵so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

Our just and righteous approach to our privilege is to be sacrificial in intention, transformed in thought, sound in reasoning and humble in participation. Apply these principles and you will find no room for thoughts of revenge to take root.

REVENGE **REFOCUS** LESSON:



Just because we are deeply privileged, we are not given authority to have our thoughts of revenge become weapons of destruction; instead they are tools of growth.



What do we do when revenge is being carried out against us or others and we cannot stop it?

When life happens, when circumstances and conflict and emotions are all in high gear, we must at all costs rely heavily upon the grace of God's providence and the assurance of His Justice being carried out in His time.

 Carl V. Ericsson, *The Greatest Acts of Revenge on People Ever*, therichest.com

- *Carl V. Ericsson - Carl V. Ericsson was someone who held a grudge for over 50 years after he was the victim of a locker room prank involving a jock strap. In 2012, Ericsson tracked down one of the students involved in the prank whose name was Norm Johnson, a well-liked student athlete. At the age of 73 he tracked down Norm, knocked on his door and asked, "Are you Norm Johnson?" before shooting him twice in the face. Ericsson was sentenced to life in prison, but he got his revenge.*



REVENGE IS PERSONALLY AND PASSIONATELY ORCHESTRATED AND SERVED

Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was an impeccable example of standing firmly upon God's grace and accepting the harshness of life while standing. Stephen was bold:

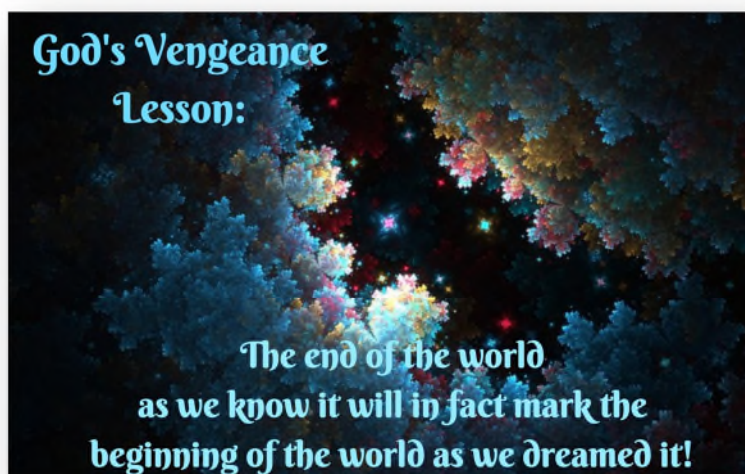
Acts 7:52-60: (NASB) ⁵²Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; ⁵³you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it. ⁵⁴Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. ⁵⁸When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. (Revenge, wrath, mob mentality, rationalization and evil are all at work!) ⁵⁹They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! ⁶⁰Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, Lord, do not hold this sin against them! Having said this, he fell asleep.

 Why important, *Psychology of Revenge*, Vanessa Van Edwards

- *Why is this important for us? Revenge reopens and aggravates your emotional wounds. Even though you might be tempted to punish a wrong, you end up punishing yourself because you can't heal. So, what do you do if you were wronged? What do you do if you feel an intense need for revenge? There is a healthy way to deal with these feelings that can help you heal and give your brain the same amount of rewards without the consequence. Are you ready for it?*

There is no revenge so complete as forgiveness. — Josh Billings

The ability to forgive is the ability to put revenge away. The burden is gone.



Justice is orchestrated and served through legal channels



Continuing in Romans 12 - being alive in Christ by grace only requires of us a foundation of humility!

Romans 12:6-16: (NASB) ⁶Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; ⁷if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; ¹¹not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, ¹³contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

So much to work towards! So much to live for! This leaves no time or place for revenge - only prayerful humility. Revenge might feel good in the "planning stages," but it will blow up on you. Why not work towards something that, yes, will take effort and energy but will give something great to us in return?

REVENGE REFOCUS LESSON:



When tempted by foolish and festering thoughts of revenge, our minds should revert to the firm foundation of God's plan for us and the privileged role we are positioned to play in supporting the brotherhood through humility.



We are little in relation to the entire body of Christ. Each of us is significant in the eyes of God but are essentially very little. We are all small. But when we put all of our small efforts together and God blesses it, then we have something. If we can look at our lives through those eyes of being small but significant in the sight of God, the idea, thought and process of revenge becomes very repulsive. It would be especially repulsive if our thoughts of revenge were against another of the brotherhood.

Here is an idea...go talk to that person. Humbly let them know what is bothering you. You can begin to build something great; revenge takes it away.

**What about times when someone truly "deserves" severe consequences?
Can we now have revenge?**

Here is where the temptation for revenge is truly deepest, for consequences are obviously appropriate and the hurt perpetrated is lasting. It is here that we must always turn to the simplicity of our theme Scripture and never pay back evil for evil. We must let God's justice come to fruition!

 **Nakam, *The Greatest Acts of Revenge on People Ever*, therichest.com**

- *Nakam - Also known as the Jewish Avengers, Nakam was a group consisting of Abba Kovner and members of the United Pakistan organization, which was a Zionist paramilitary liberation group who operated in Lithuania under Soviet orders. They were disgusted and devastated over the loss of 6 million Jewish lives during the Holocaust, so they sent 3,000 loaves of arsenic-laced bread to former SS guards at an American POW camp. Sixteen hundred people ate the bread and 400 hundred died. Nakam even tried to poison the water supply for some of the largest cities in Germany in order to kill 6 million people to atone for the Jewish lives lost.*



REVENGE IS ABOUT PUNISHING THOSE WHO HURT MY FAMILY

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 (not a Jew) ...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... ⁶Then Hamor the father of Shechem went out to Jacob to speak with him. ⁷Now the sons of Jacob...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.

Bluntly, Shechem raped Dinah, but he loved her and wanted her as his wife. Jacob's sons (Dinah's brothers) were angry, and rightfully so. They entered the "vengeance zone."

What happens next is a premeditated act of revenge. The brothers suggest to Jacob that forgiveness and even an alliance be granted if all the males of the tribe of Hamor be circumcised. This was a sacred symbol for the Jewish people.



So, it happens...

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.*

The thinking, planning and executing stages of revenge may thrill, but the results are darkness!

The best revenge, *Psychology of Revenge*, Vanessa Van Edwards

- This one comes from the amazing, prolific Frank Sinatra. In his words, "The best revenge is massive success." The next time you feel the dark tendrils of revenge creeping into your soul I want you to take that intensity and put it towards succeeding. Put it towards your goals, put it towards hustling to get what you want. Get the rewards center of your brain pumping by thinking about how sweet it will feel when you meet your goals. This shifts the focus onto you and your mission and makes the other perpetrator irrelevant.*

To translate this for the Christian, seek your spiritual goals. Seek to be more Christlike. This is what we should be running towards every day. Rather than seeking revenge, seek humility in being a small part in the body of Christ.

Excel in your Christian integrity. Excel still more to serve and please the Lord. Focus on the important things, not the pressing things like revenge.

Evil is always devising more corrosive misery through man's restless need to exact revenge out of his hate. — Ralph Steadman

God's Vengeance Lesson:



Justice is about lawfully trying and convicting the guilty



Paul continues and weaves a powerful anti-revenge message into his powerful message of privilege:

Romans 12:17-21: (NASB) *¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. ¹⁸If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. ¹⁹Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. ²⁰But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if*



he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Respect what is right - not what is convenient, not how you feel.

Please see our CQ episode from August 31, 2014, "What Happens When Life Gets Broken?" about a family coming to grips with an assault on their daughter and the power of forgiveness.

What does *coals of fire* mean?

(Source: Works by Kenneth S. Wuest (1893-1962)) In Bible times an oriental needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time in order to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, oriental fashion, back to his home. The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of getting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury.

We want to *heap coals of fire* on the head of someone who would do us evil - to give goodness to them. That is what Jesus did.

REVENGE REFOCUS LESSON:



Even our most hurtful and traumatic life experiences NEVER warrant revenge – what they do warrant is God's justice done in His way and in His time!

Put the matter into the hands of God and His justice rather than our own revenge. His vengeance brings goodness; ours brings destruction. Do what is upbuilding for you and those around you.

*So, how sweet is revenge?
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!*



Various interpretations of *heaping coals of fire* upon their heads:

(Source: Egrc.net) According to the Jewish Encyclopedia: The word "coal" is often used in a metaphorical sense: 2 Samuel 14: 7 speaks of the "quenching of the coal" of a man, meaning the complete annihilation of his issue; while in Proverbs 25:22 kindness bestowed upon an enemy is called "heaping coals of fire upon his head," since it tends to waken his deadened conscience and help him to realize his wrong. Eccclus. (Sirach) viii. 10 compares the smoldering and easily roused passion of the godless man to the coal that is easily lighted and breaks forth into flame. The picture of putting coals on a person's head initially sounds like a picture of



causing burning pain, but it really is not. Instead, it seems to be a picture of stirring up the coals of a fire to rouse it back to life again. It is a picture of stirring within a person a response of remorse, when they see your kindness in the face of their meanness. This must also be the sense of Paul's passage - we cause our enemies to be remorseful for their actions toward us, and in doing so we overcome evil by doing good.

(Source: ebible.com) The thought that Paul was expressing in this verse was not new. He was quoting from Solomon's words in Proverbs 25:21-22, and saying that, by a Christian being kind to an enemy, the enemy would (or should) rightly experience such embarrassment and shame for his unjust hatred or maltreatment of the Christian, that it would cause the enemy to figuratively feel as if he had had burning coals piled on his head (that is, the "hot flush" that people often feel when they are caught doing something that they themselves know (or come to realize) is wrong). What the Christian's enemy would be feeling in that case would not be unjust, or something that the Christian himself would have caused or been responsible for in a malicious way, but a sense of reproach that the enemy's own God-given conscience was inflicting upon him, and that would have been meant to make the enemy realize the wrongfulness of his actions toward the Christian, and to bring the enemy to repentance.

Did you ever think about the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes and some of their context) in light of our human propensity towards revenge?

First, the beatitudes:

Matthew 5:1-20: (NASB) ¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²He opened his mouth and began to teach them, saying, ³Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Jesus is showing us HOW TO LIVE, no matter what the outside world says about us or does to us. His message is clear - live above the fray - let not anything (including revenge) undermine your godly approach to life.

Next, Jesus teaches us WHY WE NEED TO LIVE THIS WAY:

¹³You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Our "why" is obvious - we are to be lights, examples and inspiration to all who might observe us, for we are God's representatives. Bitterness and revenge are a far cry from being a light of the world!

Next, Jesus tells us HOW GOD'S PLAN UNFOLDS BY OUR FOLLOWING HIS EXAMPLE:

¹⁷Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of



heaven. ²⁰*For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

We **MUST** be better than - godlier than - the scribes and the Pharisees, for they fell into pride of position, bitter rivalries and finally revenge upon Jesus himself for standing against them!