

Start 7/10/19
HBS 19

Vv. 5, 6, Vengeance

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?*

I speak as a man. “And in the present case, where he is not expressing his own sentiments, *κατα ανθρωπον λεγω* is designed to declare that he is not speaking in his character of an apostle or Christian, but speaking as others speak, expressing their thoughts, not his own.” (C. Hodge)

That is, he is simply speaking as others of his day speak.

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, so why does God take vengeance against me?"

V. 5. Speaking from their position of self-importance, the Jews say, *But if our unrighteousness proves the righteousness of God*, then is not God unrighteous to take vengeance against us?

"Since we are God's people, and even our wrong actions bring glory to him, why would God judge us as wicked sinners?"

Paul's answer:

How can God be accused of being unrighteous, or unfair, when his vengeance is against all sin?

V. 6, how shall God judge... Paul is speaking to the Israelites who were secure in their heritage to Abraham, and in the fact that their nation had been chosen by God.

How shall God judge the world if he does not judge all sin even among his chosen people, Israel?

Though fallen man overlooks his sins, God does not. God cannot act as if nothing

is wrong. Chapter 2 told us that God, in his patience, grace and mercy can postpone 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 coming, his righteousness requires vengeance, or justice.

V. 5, Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?

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 just judgment of the world.

The word of God is clear that vengeance and Christianity do not go together. (“Entertainment” involving vengeance sells.)

Modern Christianity tells us that the Old Testament God was a God of wrath and vengeance. It says that the New Testament God is a God of love and mercy. **In other words, he overlooks sin because he loves us so much.** However, both Testaments speak very clearly of vengeance and of love.

Deuteronomy 4:24 *For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.*

In **Genesis 15:16**, Abraham was told that he could not take possession of the “promised land” yet because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full. God sent Jacob/Israel into Egypt to prepare his army to take the “promised land,” when the time was right.

Deuteronomy 9:3 *Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.*

In **Acts 16:19**, Paul tells his hearers that God used his army, Israel, to destroy the seven wicked nation in the land of Chanaan.

Conclusion:

Deuteronomy 9 tells us that God did not destroy the seven exceedingly evil nations that inhabited Chanaan because his people were righteousness, but because

of the wickedness of the nations. Though he waited 400 years, his righteous vengeance came against the ungodly nations.

The law and the prophets prove that the God of the Old covenant was a vengeful God against ungodliness, particularly in the Gospel Church.

Hebrews 12:29 *For our God is a consuming fire* brings the warning of a vengeful God forward to the Elect.

Vengeance means retribution; vengeance is a defense of justice; vengeance is retribution against evildoers.

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

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 love. However, love that avoids vengeance destroys justice, and anarchy soon follows.

We are told many times that God is a God of 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 10:6 *And having in a readiness to **revenge all disobedience**, when your obedience is fulfilled. 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.*

Paul complements the Corinthians for taking godly vengeance against sin in their church and in their own lives. That vengeance brought about **repentance and change.**

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

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

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.*

What are the three commands?

First, personal acts of vengeance are forbidden to man.

Second, instead of vengeance, "*thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*"

Third, *keep my commandments.*

Our God absolutely forbids personal thoughts and efforts of vengeance.

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.*

Albert Barnes:

“the 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)

give place unto wrath.

Adam Clarke:

“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.” (Adam Clarke)

Again Adam Clarke:

“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.**” For God will repay in his own time and in his own way. (Adam Clarke)

In other words, we must not avenge ourselves, 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 *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* We live in a very discontented society, even in the church. However, we must **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 according to his timing.

Two methods of God’s vengeance

First, civil government

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.*

Only the state has the right and the duty to punish evil doers. Our command is Romans 12:9, *“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 our Lord told the rich young man in **Matthew 19:16-22:**

End of Lesson 19

