



Why Not Take Vengeance?

October – 59

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY SOCIETY SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH REFORM MOVEMENT

Youth Department of the General Conference

My dear youth:

When I was young, I learned certain things that did me no good and that over time I had to unlearn. We tend to believe that what the majority believes is correct or better, but this is not the case. The majority is not always right, as evidenced by the fact that the majority rejected Christ or that the majority was in favor of denouncing and exterminating the fledgling Christian church or that most civilized countries have engaged in war and abuse social rights, such as slavery and so on, much more. It was normal for me to hear phrases like these: “He who does it must pay,” “I forgive, but I don't forget,” “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” “revenge is very sweet,” etc. As can be seen, it was an exaltation of the justification for revenge. The last sentence refers to the satisfaction that the avenger experiences when the one who does harm receives what he deserves. Could it be that revenge is justified for a Christian?

Interpretation errors

The issue of war, like that of revenge, has found rather weak support in the Word of God. Many justify military action and revenge in stories that occurred in the past and that appear in the Bible. For example, when Israel went to war with other nations or when some well-known character took revenge into his own hands. When studying the Bible, we must take into account that what it teaches is a whole and not in a single fact or passage.

From the first pages of the Word of God, the line that every believer must follow on the matter is clearly seen. The first thing we must establish is the basis of this concept of revenge, which the Bible teaches is synonymous with punishment and that God is the only one who has the full right to take revenge or punish. **“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense...”** Deuteronomy 32:35. Nevertheless, it is clearly seen that for God the work of punishing is not something that He delights in: **“For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God. ‘Therefore turn and live!’”** Ezequiel 18:32. The psalmist presents the character of our Lord when he says: **“The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.”** Psalm 103:8. In the New Testament Paul teaches the same thing despite the many years that had elapsed since the Old Testament era: **“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord.”** Romans 12:19.

Overcome evil with good

It is seen, then, that although it is true that God is the only One who can make the resolution to give each one what he deserves, he teaches His children not to take His place: **“Judge not, that you be not judged.”** Matthew 7:1. Since we do not possess the natural love that emanates from God, and we always tend to condemn and harm our neighbor, we have our emotions at the surface, and quickly when offended, we tend to retaliate.

But since our Father is merciful and slow to anger, He asks us to imitate the character of Christ, who taught: **“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you...”** Matthew 5:44. Is this easy? In no way, because we are used to the logic of the world that is based at all costs on the defense of revenge.

If we take a look at the media, we see that the idea abounds in them that evil is overcome through revenge because each of those harmed receives the compensation they deserve. In our society, living day to day, we are going to find ourselves with this ideology, which is more deeply rooted than we think. But it is a mistake. Revenge has never generated a better situation, but has come to aggravate it. Christ did not defend the law of talion (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth), but rather established the standard of love applied from the beginning in the Bible. Let us remember the case of Cain, that when he sins by killing his brother Abel, God gives him a second chance and that, even though he rebelled in heaven, Satan was granted thousands of years of mercy, until he took to the cross of Calvary the Son of God.

No one should take revenge into his own hand. Only God has this prerogative, because He is in a position to know the human heart and to know in what situation the individual finds himself, since He has created us and because He has given himself in Christ to save us. Revenge is self-aggressive and those who live with hatred and wanting to return evil for evil (although it seems very logical), are ruining their lives and moving away from the divine model: **“If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”** Romans 12:20, 21.

Conclusion

If God had paid us what we deserve, there would not be a single human being left on this planet. However, in His infinite love, and even after our first parents offended Him, He devised ways and means to restore us, to give us back the lost Eden, and to have us again by His side. Only the love of Christ, housed in the heart, is the only possible way for God's desire to be verified in us. "Turn the other cheek," "pray for our enemies," "forgive those who offend us," "leave vengeance to God," etc.; in the world is seen as a great human weakness, but in reality, it is a sign of greatness and dignity. Jesus could have destroyed all those who wished him harm, however, in His humanity, "...**when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.**" 1 Peter 2:23.

Perhaps this exercise of the soul is most difficult for us, dear youth, but this is what the Word teaches. We must not take vengeance because this work corresponds exclusively to God "**who 'will render to each one according to his deeds.'**" Romans 2:6. This way we avoid getting sick and carrying unnecessary burdens in life. We can be sure that, if someone is harming us or hurting us in some way, referring the cause to God will bring us great relief and protect us from the self-destruction of anger, hatred, resentment and the thirst for revenge. Let us be sure that he who sows winds reaps storms or the like: "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**" Galatians 6:7. No one can steal happiness from someone who acts like Christ, and on the other hand, by not taking revenge the opportunity is given for the one who did evil to repent. God bless you abundantly. Amen.

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For personal and group reflection:

1. How could we define vengeance?
2. Can we ever justify human vengeance?
3. What does the Bible teach about human vengeance?