

THURSDAY August 28 Vengeance

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord' " (Rom. 12:19, ESV; see also Deut. 32:35).

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. Deut. 32:35

What promise and command are found in these verses, and how are they closely related?

THIS FIRST PARAGRAPH MAKES A GREAT POINT!

Until the Lord brings the justice so lacking now, it was the duty of the judges in ancient Israel to implement the law and to determine a just punishment when harm or injury occurred. But they needed the facts first. The problem was that the teachers of the law in Christ's time applied this law in a way that opened the door for personal vengeance. By doing so, the principle was taken out of its context, and the initial purpose was missed. Consequently, they were defending what the law actually forbade.

Read Matthew 6:4, 6; Matthew 16:27; Luke 6:23; and 2 Timothy 4:8. What do these texts tell us about how Jesus viewed the principles of reward and punishment?

MATTHEW 6:4, 6— That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

MATTHEW 16:27 — For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.

Luke 6:22 NKJV - "Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake."

LUKE 6:23 — Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

2 TIMOTHY 4:8 — Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give

me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

Jesus was not against the principle of reward and punishment. Justice is a matter of principle; it is a crucial part of life. However, no individual is to take the role of judge, jury, and "executioner" upon himself or herself. How easy it would be for us to pervert justice! It is not up to us to repay harm. If some evil is to be addressed, this must be performed by an objective court; it is the work of judges. AND JESUS IS THE ULTIMATE JUDGE, THE FINAL ARBITER OF ALL OUR THOUGHTS AND DEEDS.

In this context Jesus tells us to be as perfect as our "Father in heaven is perfect." How can we be as perfect as God Himself? Unselfish love is the overarching characteristic of God. He teaches His followers how to love their enemies and to pray for those who persecute them. True perfection is to love, to be forgiving, **and to be merciful (Luke 6:36)**, even to those who do not deserve it. This principle, and the actions it leads to, is what it means to reflect God's character.

REVELATION 19:1-6 --

PSALM 73-

REVELATION 12-20 -

What are ways in which, day by day, we can learn to love in the way that we are commanded to? Why does this always involve a death to self?