

- e. ²⁰ “But 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 upon his head.” We are to HOLD BACK THE EVIL and DO THE GOOD! When someone has wronged us, *they may expect us to retaliate!* But if, *instead*, we HELP THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR NEEDS, they ♥ will be very surprised, ♥ may feel bad about what they did to us, and ♥ may see a glimpse of God’s great love in Christ! Furthermore, *what is the BEST THING we can try to do with our enemies?* Allow God to use us to *MAKE THEM OUR FRIENDS – in Christ!*
- f. ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Literally, in the Greek, *do not be CONQUERED by the evil, but CONQUER the evil with the good.*

Conclusion: Revenge is normal – ✦ on TV, ✦ in the movies, ✦ in this sinful world, and ✦ according to our sinful natures. HOWEVER, *having received God’s forgiveness in Christ*, we are NEW and DIFFERENT in many wonderful ways! Therefore, let us:

- Forgive as we have been forgiven!
- Leave all revenge to God!
- Take bold action to *CONQUER the evil with the good!*

And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

“Forgiveness is the Only Way to the Cycle of Revenge!”



Based on Various Passages
 3rd Wednesday of Lent – 2010
 March 3 → 11:00 & 7:00

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, so far we have focused on these two aspects of forgiveness:

- **Forgiveness is a promise!** Therefore, WHENEVER WE OFFER FORGIVENESS, we are also promising:
 - I will not *use the sin against you!*
 - I will not *bring the sin up to others!*
 - I will not *dwell on the sin!*
 - I will not *let the sin hurt our relationship!*
- **Forgiveness is a gift!** Therefore, whenever a person sins against us, WE SHOULD ACT FIRST to offer the gift of forgiveness – *whether the person is sorry or not!*

Today we focus on the *anti-forgiveness aspect of revenge:*

- Sin against us *turns our attention toward revenge!*
- But forgiveness *breaks the cycle of revenge!*

1. **We have ALL Sinned Against God, but He is not Seeking Revenge:** *Instead, He is offering us forgiveness!*

- a. The punishment we DESERVE was poured out upon Jesus, *so that the forgiveness we NEED can be freely offered to us!* Here are some key passages:

- i. ^{NAS} **Psalm 103:12** “As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.” Think about what the LORD did: He saw us → *whom He loves* and our sin → *which He hates*; then He put an *INFINITE DISTANCE* between us and our sin! *That is good news!*
 - ii. ^{NAS} **Isaiah 1:18** “Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool.” The LORD *should* destroy us, but instead He has *washed us clean in the blood of the Lamb!*
- b. Forgiveness IS being offered – *freely and fully*; however, *for those who reject God’s wonderful offer in Jesus Christ*, the Bible says: ^{NAS} **Hebrews 10:26** “For if we go on sinning **WILLFULLY** after receiving the **KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH** [what God has done for us and all through Jesus], there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment...”
 - c. God wants to forgive, *not punish*; however, ALL WHO REFUSE HIS GIFT OF FORGIVENESS will be punished forever! As the Bible says: ^{NIV} **2 Thessalonians 1:9** “They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord...” *Punishment is God’s part, not ours!*

2. **Others have Sinned Against Us, but We should not Seek Revenge:** Jesus said to His disciples: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ...” (NIV Matthew 5:44)
We find *more detailed instruction* in Romans chapter 12:
 - a. ^{NAS} **Romans 12:17** “Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.” In other words, no matter who does evil to us, WE SHOULD NEVER DO EVIL BACK TO ANYONE!
 - b. ^{17b} “Respect what is right in the sight of all men.” Literally, in the Greek, *providing for good things before all men*. When the world gives evil, **CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED TO GIVE GOOD!**
 - c. ¹⁸ “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” In other words, we are to do our part – **WHATEVER WE CAN** – to be at peace, *in a good relationship*, with others. Even if we don’t want to, *even if they refuse*, we are called to do our part!
 - d. ¹⁹ “Never 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.”
 - i. Our part is to FORGIVE! God’s part is to TAKE REVENGE! *We should focus on AND DO our part AND let God take care of His part!*
 - ii. Maybe this will help: Literally, in the Greek, *not yourselves avenging, beloved, but give place to wrath...* In other words, *if you take revenge*, you leave no room for God’s revenge. Now, ask yourself, who is better at revenge? *Me or God*