

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

January 7, 2014

Issue No. 126 Mark Aites, Editor

Revenge

"He that studieth revenge keepeth his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well." – John Milton

"May we not succumb to thoughts of violence and revenge today, but rather to thoughts of mercy and compassion. We are to love our enemies that they might be returned to their right minds." – Marianne Williamson

"Anger ventilated often hurries towards forgiveness; anger concealed often hardens into revenge." – Edward G. Bulwer-Lytton

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

The desire for revenge is an ugly emotion for sure. It blinds us with hatred and poisons our souls. And often it is not that one wants to even the score, but to inflict even greater harm upon the one who committed the wrong. But in truth, the one to whom the greater damage is done is the one who harbors that bitterness and desire to hurt in their hearts.

Paul's exhortation in Romans gets right to the heart of the matter. "Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written. 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore '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" (Rom. 12:19-21).

Quite often these passages are quoted but brethren don't realize that verse 21 is the point of the thought. There is a great danger of being overcome by evil. The spirit or desire for revenge blinds us to any thoughts of love and compassion. It is replaced by the most evil of thoughts of injury or even murder.

The Law of Moses instructed with the concept of "an eye for an eye" (Exod. 21:23-24). But Jesus took that thought in the Sermon on the Mount, and said, "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (Matt. 5:39). And in that same context goes on to talk about the need to love our enemies (Matt. 5:43-48).

One would expect to find such a bitter sentiment of the desire for revenge among worldly-minded people. But when it is found among God's children, it is terrible. We are supposed to be people of love, known for our brotherly love (John 13:34-35). As long as such a sentiment of bitter revenge is harbored in a person, the fruit that is born will be ugly and detestable in the sight of God.