

## #189 “The God of Vengeance”

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God is a God of love, a God of grace, and a God of mercy. These things we have heard more times than we can count. However, what we may not have heard is that the Scripture also refers to God as a God of vengeance. Psalm 94:1 says, “O LORD, God of vengeance, God of vengeance, shine forth!” The Psalmist is in agony watching the wicked get away with their evil, hurting the innocent, even the people of God. The wicked mock and scorn God, believing that they have gotten away with their evil. But the Psalmist comes to rest in the fact the God Who made the eye can see and will judge. He says in verse 23, “He has brought back their wickedness upon them And will destroy them in their evil; The LORD our God will destroy them.” Wicked people may fool those in authority in this life, but they cannot fool God. God will make them pay eventually in eternity, even if they do not pay now. God delights in justice, and in His universe, all will eventually balance come judgment time. He will see to it because He is a God of vengeance. This is what He does because it is Who He is.

Perhaps you have been taken advantage of, exploited by a scam, tricked by someone you had trusted, or betrayed by the judicial system. Our spirits cry out for justice and for vengeance. It is not wrong to want to see evildoers get their just due. It is not wrong to call out to God for vengeance. What is wrong is to take matters into our own hands and seek payback. Revenge is a self-centered drive for retribution that stems from a personal vendetta of anger, wrath, malice, and slander. It has no redemptive value to it because it cares not for the soul of the one who has committed the wrong. This is not right.

Before Jesus went to the cross, He was cursed, mocked, beaten, and brought to within inches of dying. In that He was fully human in addition to being fully Divine, there had to be an impulse that wanted to fight back and show His accusers Who He really was and how little they were. Of course, He did not, being God in the flesh. To have taken revenge in that moment for the wrongs committed against Him would have been to miss the bigger picture. He was going to die for their wrongs. They deserved death and punishment and wrath, but that is not what Christ wanted them to have. He wanted them to believe in Him, to be saved through faith in His life, death, and resurrection. He didn't want payback but mercy. Jesus fully understood God's justice system. God sees all and knows all. One day there will be a judgment, and all will be brought to light (Revelation 20:12). No work will go unnoticed or unevaluated (Romans 2:6). Justice and wrath will be dished out to the unbelieving, while the righteous will be rewarded. Vengeance will be given. As God says, “Vengeance is Mine. I will repay” (Romans 12:19). We don't need to take revenge because our God will. Rather, we should be people who love justice, who love mercy, and who walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

Being a Christian does not mean that we so emphasize mercy and forgiveness that we don't rejoice when evil people go to jail or lose lawsuits, for example. A nation can only be as strong as the morals of its justice system, which, of course, stems from the morals of its people. Christians should desire justice and seek it out, but taking revenge when

the world's faulty systems of justice let us down is unbiblical. We can trust God to avenge us and take up our cause one way or another. Isaiah 35:4 says, "Say to those with anxious heart, 'Take courage, fear not Behold, your God will come with vengeance; The recompense of God will come, But He will save you.'" God is our hope, for He is the God of vengeance.

Isaiah 61:2 says, "To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD And the day of vengeance of our God." Isaiah 61 is the same passage that Christ claimed was fulfilled in His first coming, a passage which also speaks of healing, good news, freedom, and hope (Luke 4:17-21). Part and parcel to the gospel message is that, without grace, man deserves God's vengeance. Vengeance is a central component of God's will and purpose throughout the course of history and forward into eternity. We must not forget this attribute of His.

2 Samuel 22:47-48 is a song of David in which he says, "The LORD lives, and blessed be my rock; And exalted be God, the rock of my salvation, The God who executes vengeance for me." The first part of this passage has been put to song in many churches, but the second part has not. It is the forgotten part, that God executes vengeance on our behalf. The wicked may skirt justice, but they cannot escape the vengeance of God. He executes it for us. Revenge is not for the Christian because our God has already taken up the call. Our call is to seek justice, and when that doesn't happen, we must trust the situation to God.

We cannot become vengeful people because we are to be forgiving people (Ephesians 4:32). Evil people will pay in death, so our job is to preach to them the truth so that they will believe in life. We know how severe the payment in eternity will be, and we ought not to wish hell upon even the vilest of persons. We should rather hope and pray that they repent, for our God of vengeance will not rest until justice is served.