ROMANS TWELVE



VERSES 17–21 | PAGE 1616

“[17]Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Provide
for the good before all people. [18]If it is
possible, from you, with all people, be
peacemaking. [19]Do not of yourselves be
avenging, beloved, but instead, give a place
to the wrath, for it is written, “I avenge, I will
repay, says the Lord.”

Romans 12:17–19 NLT26

“[20]Instead, if he hungers, your enemy,
feed him. If he thirsts, give him drink.
For by this coals of fire you heap upon
his head. [21]Do not conquer by evil but
instead, conquer in the good, the evil.
Romans 12:20–21 NLT26

Is wanting punitive justice wrong?

Does a person that wants justice—to be avenged on behalf of their victimization—want something only base, unloving and immature?

When their heart cries out for justice—

Are they, the victims, the evil ones?

Are they misguided?

Are they morally unsophisticated?

Are they wickedly vindictive?





Antonius' Corpse



But isn’t Christianity about love?

Is this compatible with “sincere love”—with humility, with not paying back evil for evil, with the mercy of God?

“One would think a deed of malevolence was enjoined.”

“Interpret the coals of fire as the burning groans of penitence.”

Augustine, On Christian Doctrine 3.16.24

“Heaping coals of fire on the head, to my thought, implies conferring favors upon the enemy.”

“Being enkindled by our kindness, he ultimately becomes displeased with himself and more kindly disposed to us.”

“I do not think a Christian should desire punishment to fall upon his enemy.”

Martin Luther, “Christian Revenge,” ¶70

“I take a simpler view, that his mind shall be turned to one side or another.”

Either he “shall … be softened by our benefits,” or “he shall yet be burnt and tormented by the testimony of his own conscience.”

John Calvin, on Romans 12:20

“Spiritual fare is poor sustenance for an empty stomach.... To a hungry person blessing means bread.”

Cragg

“For in this way you will make him feel a burning sense of shame.”

Moffatt’s translation

“The interpretation so widely accepted by interpreters that the coals of fire refer to shame, remorse, or punishment lacks all support in the text. In the Egyptian literature and in Proverbs the ‘coals of fire’ is a dynamic symbol of change of mind which takes place as a result of a deed of love.”

William Klassen

“I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain… “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” …and they were told to wait a little longer,”

Revelation 6:9–11 NIV84

“God’s judgment is right… God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled… when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.”

2 Thessalonians 1:5–7 NIV84

“Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.”

2 Timothy 4:14 NIV84

Real faith in God’s vengeance can make us more loving peacemakers

Gospel Clarity:

1. We are Conquers
2. God is forbearing

How faith in God’s vengeance can make us more loving peacemakers



1

We don’t need to unnaturally and unjustly repress our desire for justice.



2

We learn God only vindicates real righteousness—no counterfeits will be honored.



3

Produces humility: we are not qualified to take vengeance at this time.



4

Produces simplicity: We don’t need to try to get vengeance or vindication now—we can just be living sacrifices offering mercy in sincere love.



5

Believing in God's wrath elicits compassion toward the perpetrator.

ROMANS TWELVE

XII

