

**Doing Right When You Are Wronged – Part One**  
**Romans 12:17-21**

---

**Romans 12:9-21** New International Version

- 9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.**
- 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.**
- 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord.**
- 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.**
- 13 Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.**
- 14 Bless Those Who Persecute You; Bless And Do Not Curse.**
- 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**
- 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.**
- 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.**
- 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**
- 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.**
- 20 On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”**
- 21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.**

We need to understand how God wants us to respond when we are wronged, whether in a relatively minor or in a major way. We need to practice with the minor wrongs that we suffer so that we’ll be prepared for the major wrongs. As with the previous section (**Romans 12:14-16**), the thread of selflessness or self-denial runs through our text. Our aim must be to exalt Christ in our bodies, whether by life or by death.

**Philippians 1:20** New Living Translation

- 20 For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die.**

Our desire should be that our enemy would come to know the same mercy and grace that we found at the cross. And so, rather than responding to the evil done against us with evil or with vengeance, we are commanded to respond with the radical love of Christ that overcomes evil with good.

The world says, “Don’t get mad; get even!”

**Luke 6:27** New Living Translation

- 27 But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.**

**1. The Wrong Response To Being Wronged Is To Pay It Back With Wrong.**

Paul says this three times in slightly different ways for emphasis.

- 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.**
- 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.**
- 21 Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.**

We are similarly instructed in **1 Peter 3:9**.

**1 Peter 3:9** New Living Translation

**<sup>9</sup> Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will grant you his blessing.**

Returning evil for evil may not be as severe as seeking revenge, but it is still forbidden. For example, your husband snaps unkindly at you and you respond by being cold to him or by not speaking to him. You aren't plotting revenge, but you're not exactly blessing him. You're returning evil for evil.

Or, if someone makes a cutting remark and you try to counter it, even in jest, you're returning evil for evil. Revenge, which goes a step beyond returning evil for evil, is motivated by pride. Someone's sinful actions against us wound our pride, so we want to get even to restore our honor. It all stems from sinful pride.

- **Four Reasons That It Is Always Wrong To Take Your Own Revenge.**

(1) **Revenge Runs Contrary To What Society Deems To Be Right.**

**<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.**

- a. Our laws prohibit vigilante justice, where one person takes it upon himself to right some perceived wrong.
- b. We sometimes chuckle at the absurd extremes that people take to get revenge, at least our culture usually knows that their behavior is wrong.
- c. The world generally knows that revenge solves nothing.

(2) **Revenge Does Not Promote Peace But Incites Men To Hostility.**

**<sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.**

- a. Vengeance doesn't lead to peace, but to further vengeance.
- b. It keeps the vicious cycle going.

(3) **Revenge Usurps A Task Which Belongs Only To God.**

**<sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.**

- a. We are incompetent to carry out personal vengeance, because we cannot know all of the motives and circumstances that were behind a person's wrongful action towards us.
- b. Besides, our emotions get involved and cloud our judgment.
- c. Only God, who knows all things, is a competent and righteous Judge.

(4) **Revenge Gives In To Evil Rather Than Overcoming Evil With Good.**

**<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.**

- a. To take revenge is to respond to sin with more sin.
- b. It puts you on the same level as the one who sinned against you.

**Conclusion:**

And so, as difficult as it is (and it is difficult!), it is always wrong to respond to wrong with more wrong. Paying back evil for evil or taking revenge is always motivated by selfishness or pride. It does not honor our merciful God. It will not lead to the conversion of the one who sinned against you. So, we have to determine in advance that when we are wronged, we will not retaliate with more wrong.