



The Good News

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Condemning the sin of...Vengeance?

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When we discuss the condemnation of sins, the first ones that pop into our minds will probably be sins that are common to our observations, such as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lying, stealing, and the like. One of the unfortunate truths of human nature is that we tend to become desensitized to sin the more we see it in our daily lives. This is why we must renew our minds daily in the knowledge of God's word, understanding what God condemns as sin. One of the sins that we may tend to overlook, or not notice, is the sin of vengeance.

Authorized in the Old Testament: In passages such as **Numbers 31:1-2**, and **Numbers 35:19**, we see how God both authorized the avenging of wrongs by a nation of people (i.e. Midianites) and the avenging of murder by killing the one who committed the sin. It is clear from these passages that God did not tolerate sin or injustice in any way and took a direct approach when dealing with it. Punishment for sin came quickly, by the direct authority of God. But we must remember that the Mosaical Law was as much a civil law as it was a spiritual law and as such required such commandments. God still does not tolerate sin or injustice, but a new law is in place that allows for mercy and forgiveness. These characteristics are not seen as much in the Mosaical Law as they are in the New Law because the Law of Christ is not a civil law, but rather one complete in the spirit.

Condemned in the New Testament: If one ever needed an example of something that was authorized in the Mosaical Law, but then condemned in the New Law, vengeance is an excellent example. Beginning with the words of Jesus in **Matt. 5:38-48**, we learn how Jesus brought teaching different from that of the Old Testament when He called

for mercy and love rather than vengeance. In **Rom. 12:17-21**, Paul makes it clear that the root of vengeance is wrath, and Christians are not to allow their actions or thoughts to be influenced by anger and wrath.

God reserves the right of vengeance for Himself: A search through the New Testament will find numerous references to God reserving vengeance for Himself. In the above-mentioned passage, **Rom. 12:19**, we read how God says "Vengeance is mine..." In **Heb. 10:30-31** we learn that vengeance is directly related to the judging of the soul, something that man is not able to do. In **II Thess. 1:3-9** we read how that God will come and bring vengeance and judgment upon those that trouble and persecute Christians, all within the realm of the "righteous judgment of God". These things are meant to comfort Christians while helping them to focus on the proper aspects of the Christian life instead of being distracted by anger and revenge.

When all is said and done, Christians are to possess "righteous indignation" toward all aspects and appearance of evil, abstaining from it and condemning it. However, there is a big difference between condemning a sin and condemning a soul. There is an even bigger difference when we go as far as to judge that soul by seeking actions of vengeance against them, something that God has clearly defined as being within His authority and His alone. While it may be often necessary to invoke consequences as a result of sin, we cannot act as judge, jury, and executioner with God's Law...we have not been given that authority. It belongs to Christ.