

Righteous Retaliation

Somebody hurts you... by word or deed. What do you do?

If, as one saying goes, you give them some of their own medicine, are you to be congratulated?

If, as another saying goes, you grin and bear it, is that admirable?

If you hold no grudges and forgive, is that commendable?

Maybe it's commendable, maybe it's enough for the general public; but, if you are a true follower of Christ, it's not nearly enough.

What does the Lord expect of you? He expects a reaction of retaliation – sanctified retaliation. You need to get even; you have to repay; you must do something in return. Christianity is not passive. We are not wimps.

Our witnessing and our reputation would be on a much higher level and would be much more effective if we consistently demonstrated Christian retaliation. (I am talking strictly about how a Christian responds to personal attack or mistreatment. The laws of the land determine how society as a whole handles evil, crime and wartime aggression.)

There is something innocent, naïve and childlike about Christlike retaliation. It's priceless! There is no hostility, no malice, no vindictiveness. We wouldn't break a bruised reed; we are like sheep led to slaughter. Wise as serpents, harmless as doves. We wish everyone well. And therein is our secret, therein is our strength.

So, then, what is so different about our kind of required retaliation? What is it about our faith that gets people's attention? Since you probably already know, I can only remind you.

You must heap burning coals on people's heads. These are not cold, dead coals; they are hot, they are burning. And you can't be skimpy; you have to heap them on. Be generous. The metaphor probably means they will be embarrassed and ashamed of themselves and maybe even feel sorry for what they did to you. Their attitude and behavior may very well change; but, even if it doesn't, you're doing what the Lord expects of you.

If someone is giving you a hard time, you don't curse them; you don't even keep quiet; you actively bless them in some way. If your adversary is hungry or thirsty, you feed him, you give him something to drink.

Don't permit evil to intimidate you or overcome you. On the contrary, you can overcome evil with good. (All that from Romans, Chapter 12.)

To the Christians in Thessalonica, Apostle Paul writes: "Make sure no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to everyone." No exceptions: be kind to *everyone*. And in his first letter, Peter writes: "Do not repay evil for evil or insult with insult, but [repay] with blessing, because to this you were called... so that you may inherit a blessing." Give no blessing, get no blessing.

Both Peter and Paul were taught by Jesus, who said: "If someone strikes you on the right

cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have it [He means the tunic] and your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles...Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be the sons of your Father in heaven...if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

So... then... how is this done in everyday life? If you have never before practiced Christian retaliation, at first it will be awkward... strange... difficult. Be sure to react with your new nature, not with the old. Before long you will feel comfortable with it. You will actually like it. You will be blessed as you bless others.

If neighbors ignore you and don't speak to you, continue to greet them anyway...as you would anyone else. That makes the problem theirs, not yours.

If neighbors are mischievous or do damage to your property, bring them flowers, fruit or vegetables from your garden or bake or make them something.

If someone hurts you by word or deed, try to do something nice to them or for them. Offer your assistance when you see that they need help. Don't discriminate, don't differentiate between friend or foe. A foe is a friend in the making...and you make it happen.

Be creative. Depend on the Holy Spirit to make you resourceful. Be consistent and persistent, without being obnoxious, without overdoing it. Don't kill them with kindness. Just get their attention. Show them what Christianity is all about.

So...start retaliating. (*Practice at home.*) ◇◇◇