

"VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY"

by Hendrik Joubert

The story of the almost 30 year old lady who was abducted when she was but 11 made headline news this week. A panel discussed the details of her *imprisonment* and her children by rape, the first when she was a fragile 14 year old child. Negative feelings towards the couple involved in the abduction grow as one learns more details. A panelist brought up the idea of reinstating the death penalty in such terrible cases where children are involved. A lady on the panel expressed her opposition, while admitting that she would be ready to kill any person who would harm her little children or grandchildren. When we are personally involved it is difficult to keep our heads.

I felt emotional as I thought of the 11 year old girl's ruined life. One of the panelists pointed out that she would *never be the same*. How does one repay the couple for this gross misdeed, realizing that it would not change the outcome for the poor woman? If this life is all there is to consider I am afraid there is nothing we may do to *make things right*. There is a consolation; God will take care of it. ***Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. (Romans 12:19 NKJV)***

Now consider the following words: ***Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? ³⁰ For we know Him who said, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. And again, "THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE." ³¹ It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:29-31 NKJV)***

Think of how the innocent Jesus, *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:6-7 ESV)* Think of how He came to pay the debt of sin of the world so we may have an *eternally* positive outcome; because His Father determined that He was going to die in our stead. Notice the degree of obedience: ***And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:8 ESV)***

Consider the attitude of the very people He came to save: ***But they all cried out together, "Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas"-- ¹⁹ a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. ²⁰ Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" ²² A third time he said to them, "Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him." ²³ But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. (Luke 23:18-23 ESV)***

A catholic priest once expressed the opinion that ultimately all people would end up in heaven. What did he base this idea upon? *God would not shed His Son's blood just for a few people, He is going to make it worthwhile...* Many seem to think that God has overextended Himself by allowing His Son to die for mankind. We love to talk of His love and His grace while ignoring the warnings of His severity: ***For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. ²² Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off. (Romans 11:21-22 ESV)***

Return to the words recorded in **Hebrews 10:26-31**. Will God be patronized by sinners who compliment Him for His grace while continuing in their sin, willfully? Those who violated the Law were killed (*Anyone who has set aside the law of Moses dies without mercy on the evidence of two or three witnesses.*) and this by stoning, which in our society would be considered barbarous. Notice that the punishment for disrespecting the sacrifice of Jesus is to be severer: ***How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28-29 ESV)***

In the light of the grace of God and the attitude of Jesus it seems ungrateful and disrespectful to talk of the judgment of God and obedience to Him from a negative standpoint. Perhaps we lack the humility needed in order to appreciate our own sinfulness and the deserved consequences. We think of the *sacrifice* of repentance, instead of the grace of a

second change at establishing a relationship with the Creator of the Universe, the One who loved us enough to sacrifice His Son for our sins.