

PURSUE WHAT IS GOOD

Ponder: Is revenge really sweet?

Scripture: “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all” (1 Thessalonians 5:15, NKJV).

“Don’t get mad – get even!” So goes a popular slogan in the world. The fleshly part of us craves payback. We even have an expression: “sweet revenge.” But is revenge really sweet?

Paul taught otherwise to the young Christian converts in Thessalonica. Coming out of a pagan background, foregoing revenge may have posed a profoundly difficult challenge for them. Nevertheless, Paul uses the imperative mode. This is not a suggestion or recommendation, but a command! Payback (rendering evil for evil) is not an option.

Our text contains an obvious contrast between evil and good. When someone does evil toward us, it is still evil if we do it back to him. Instead, we are not only to do what is good, but to pursue it. Yes, it takes effort and discipline to run after what is good until we “catch” it, especially when we’re doing it for someone who has done evil toward us.

Paul’s instructions to the Christians at Rome parallel those to the Thessalonians. “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. . . 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 12:17, 19).

Note that our pursuit of good things is not limited to our family in the Lord. It is “for yourselves *and for all*” (1 Thessalonians 5:15); it is “in the sight of all men” (Romans 12:17); and the pattern continues in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good *to all*, especially to those who are of the household of [the] faith.”

May it never be that the world would know us as vengeful people! If ever anyone had reason to take personal vengeance, our Savior did. Yet Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). As His disciples, that ought to be our practice as well, regardless of who the recipients of that good might be.