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Surrender to Sovereignty

953-A

Series: God's Living Legends II



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The scene is a crowded courtroom. The occasion is a divorce trial. On one side stands the husband; on the other, the wife. Tension fills the air. One party has deceived, disappointed, and rejected the other. Now the tables are turned. A few, well-chosen words from an articulate attorney and he or she can ruin the reputation of the one who has caused so much grief. A voice in their heart says. "It's time to even the score." Revenge at last!

Or the scene is the boardroom of a large corporation. There sits a young executive who *has been* trampled on by so many others as they made their *way* up the corporate ladder. The footprints of his peers have made a path through his life. Now he has the upper hand. With one penetrating statement he can end their careers and assure his own. Something says to him: "Go for it!" Revenge at last!

Your competitor has belittled you (and your product) and made a mockery of advertising integrity. Now he's made a serious mistake in merchandising, and if you just play his game, and strike quickly, you can finish him off. Revenge at last!!

That bully in school who has made life so miserable for your children has been apprehended for a minor infraction of the rules, and he's now at your mercy. You can deal with the issue at hand, and be just, or you can literally ruin his life. A voice within you whispers, "He deserves whatever he gets." Revenge at last!

Your political rival just slipped and made a statement that, properly used against him, could create a huge question mark about his integrity and poison the mind of thousands against him. You can let your life speak for itself, or you can do to him what he's done to you. "Why not," you argue, "an eye for an eye." Revenge at last!

The quest for revenge: how sweet it is to so many! For there rests deeply within the soul of the natural man (even the cultured, the peace-loving, the even-tempered natural man) that innate response:

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...that justifies anger, as long as it's in response to anger.

...that justifies sarcasm, as long as it's in response to sarcasm.

...that justifies even physical hurt, as long as it's in response to physical hurt.

...that seemingly built-in mechanism that gives man the right to strike back, as long as someone else strikes first.

...And the courtrooms of history echo over and over the refrain... "Vengeance is yours! Do what you must!" to the one who dared to wrong you.

But the Word of God indicates there is a better way! (A much better way in fact.) It is not natural; therefore, it has to be supernatural. But the fact that it is not natural does not keep it from being normal.

It is that "better way" that we address in this study as we continue our journey through the pages of Scripture, seeking to unravel the mystery and validate the history of this Living Legend we've come to know as David.

Our excursion takes us into the wilderness of En-gedi for that long-awaited confrontation between Saul and David, a confrontation that seemed to be inevitable. We begin by setting the scene, taking up where we left off in our last study, in I Samuel, chapter 23, verse one. David, you remember, has been trapped in a mire of problems and persecution since that eventful day in the valley of Elab when he, by faith, saved the day for an entire nation by believing his God was bigger than an *overgrown* Philistine superman.

He became the national hero! (To everyone, that is, but King Saul.) For Saul, upon hearing a new song on the Hebrew Hit Parade went into a paranoid panic. The song was this: "Saul has slain his thousands; but David has slain his tens of thousands." That somewhat unfavorable comparison between our insecure king and his ultimate replacement has set in motion a reign of terror that has resulted in David's becoming a fugitive in the very land in which he has been anointed as king, and 21 attempts will have been made on David's life before this incredible series of injustices has run its course.

David, with the dubious distinction of being the commander of a band of rebels, malcontents, dissidents, now numbering a meager 600 men, was being hounded once again. The footsteps of

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our mad monarch are not far behind. So the battle goes on. Let's read beginning with verse 1 of I Samuel 23:

Then they told David, saying, "Behold, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and are plundering the threshing floors."

So David inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and deliver Keilah."

(I Samuel 23:1,2 NASB)

You would think David had enough problems of his own without taking on the Philistines in a seemingly unnecessary struggle, and sheer reasoning uncovers several reasons for David to avoid this particular conflict:

1- It would needlessly expose his position to Saul. He had been in hiding for weeks; now an open battle with the Philistines would bring him out in the open and reveal to his real enemy both his location and the number of his troops.

2- It could further diminish the ranks of his questionable entourage of unwilling warriors (he couldn't afford to lose a man!).

3- It would possibly allow Saul to catch him exhausted at the end of the conflict, making him easy prey for his enemy, ripe target for "all the king's men".

Another good reason not to fight the Philistines at this juncture is found here.

But David's men said to him, "Behold, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the ranks of the Philistines?"

(I Samuel 23:3 NASB)

4- His men had developed a yellow streak that made their enthusiastic entrance into the fray a virtual impossibility.

5- On the flip side, there was only one reason to fight the Philistines with all those strikes against them.

And the LORD said to David, "Go and attack the Philistines, and deliver Keilah."

(I Samuel 23:2b NASB)

Beloved, the Word of God plus nothing is all the reason you'll ever need to make a decision. Even one that appears to go against all of the reasoning the world has to offer. God said, "Go!" So David went. It was that simple. Now David did a wise thing when he realized the odds were so against him. Verse 4 tells us about it:

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Then David inquired of the LORD once more. And the LORD answered him and said, “Arise, go down to Keilah, for I will give the Philistines into your hand.”

(I Samuel 23:4 NASB)

He went back to the Word of God for confirmation. Having received that, once more by faith, David walked into the arena of what appeared to be certain defeat in the Name of his God.

So David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines; and he led away their livestock and struck them with a great slaughter. Thus David delivered the inhabitants of Keilah.

(I Samuel 23:5 NASB)

It’s interesting to note that David was constantly battling the same enemy. The setting was often different, but the conflict was ever the same. You may feel the same way. You may feel that much of your Christian life, the warfare in your life has been centered around one particular spiritual problem. Others may not be bothered by it. You, meanwhile, may not be bothered with some of the things that trouble them. Take heart! David fought the same foe again and again. It was his particular obvious enemy. The key is, that in the Spirit, he was continually the victor. It wasn’t a one-time conquest; it was a continuous conflict, with continuing victories. That pattern ought not to be unfamiliar to most of us as Christians.

Sure enough, Saul read the Keilah Gazette on Monday morning, and sees front page photos of David and his ranks of rejects disposing of the pesky Philistines and says, “Aha! Now I know where the enemy is...” And Saul, once more yielding to a presumptuous spirit, utters these ridiculous words.

When it was told to Saul that David had come to Keilah, Saul said, “God has delivered him into my hand, for he shut himself in by entering a city with double gates and bars.”

(I Samuel 23:7 NASB)

Saul succumbed to the peril of presumption. He presumed that, because David and his men were now in the city of Keilah, a city enclosed by walls and gates that was a sign that “God had delivered David into his hands.” Do you see the pattern and the problem? Believers reading the will of God by viewing their circumstances through the eyes of their selfish wants, rather than through the clear Word of God. He took a simple fact and misappropriated it by assuming that God was arranging life for *his* convenience.

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How often we look so hard for something to confirm our prejudices, rather than sticking to the principles of the Word. In our marriages or in our jobs, or in our finances, we'll make wrong choices and then give God the blame, as though He "so arranged the circumstances" it had to be of Him. I think the correct theological phrase is "horse feathers".

Saul presumed that because David was in a tight place, it must have been by divine appointment so Saul could get what *he* wanted—David's head on a platter. That kind of presumption was wrong for Saul; and it's wrong for us.

So the word gets to David that Saul has learned of his whereabouts and is on the six o'clock flight to Keilah. Unlike Saul, David presumes nothing. Instead, he goes to inquire of the Lord:

Then David said, "O LORD God of Israel, Your servant has heard for certain that Saul is seeking to come to Keilah to destroy the city on my account.

Will the men of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."

Then David said, "Will the men of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you."
(I Samuel 23:10-12 NASB)

One interesting thing about God's dealings with his children that isn't always true of our dealings with one another is this: *God always tells it like it is*. There are no sugar-coated promises that won't come true, just to keep us from worrying. We have an honest God who gives honest answers. He doesn't promise something just to make us like Him. He promises certain blessings; He promises certain consequences. He tells us the rain will fall on the just and the unjust alike. God tells it like it is. The Bible tells it like it is. God told David the truth. If you stay there, Saul will descend, and those fine-feathered friends in Keilah, whom you just delivered from the Philistine hordes will turn on you and turn you over to the invading infantry.

So David and his troops had a twelve second meeting and determined their stay in this lovely city needed to come to an abrupt end. Not that they weren't enjoying the sights, mind you. It was just that the anticipation of assassination was not

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acceptable. So David and his 600 assorted soldiers took the next Greyhound out of town, and got off in the wilderness of Ziph. It was time to retreat, retrench, and rest. The interesting thing was that “the angel of the Lord was encamped round about David, delivering him” for we read in verse 14:

And Saul sought him every day, but God did not deliver him
into his hand. (I Samuel 23:14b NASB)

Saul was powerless to touch David unless God permitted it. Don't ever forget that. Then in verses 16-18, God, knowing David is growing a bit weary of the warfare, sends Jonathan to encourage his heart in the Lord. Three things are interesting about this:

1) God knows exactly when our hearts need an encouraging word.

2) Nothing changes the perspective of someone who is caught in the midst of a struggle quite like someone who comes alongside, and just quietly encourages you.

3) And isn't it interesting, that while Saul had been hunting David for months with no success, Jonathan finds him with no problem at all.

Oh, the wonderful plan of God to build up his children. Jonathan's warning was, “Do not be afraid”, and David apparently gained new confidence.

Have you ever considered the fact that God may be calling you to a ministry of encouragement? It doesn't take a degree to do it. It only takes love. What you do is this:

You walk alongside someone who is hurting or fearful or lonely and you put your arm around them and quietly (maybe even without their realizing you have done it), you lift the focus of their perspective off of the circumstances (which they cannot change) to their wonderful God (who will never leave them or forsake them). Without either sermons or sandpaper, you will have reminded them that the battle is not theirs, it's God's. You will not have scolded them for their fear. You will have given them a substitute for their fear: faith. And you will have done it in such love that their spirits will soar back into the heavenlies even though the circumstances that so surround them will not have changed at all.

It's called the ministry of encouragement. It is the bond of

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friendship in the spirit of love. It's something you can begin doing this afternoon. And there is an amazing tool that God has placed in your home to assist you in your ministry. It's called the telephone. By simply picking it up, dialing the appropriate number, and telling someone that you love them and that you understand, your ministry has taken its first important steps. Try it. It worked for Jonathan. It'll work for you.

Now in verses 19-29 we read of the "beginning of the end." The Ziphites send a team of traitors to Saul and tell him that his archenemy, our hero the harpist, is hiding in the countryside of Ziph, and if Saul will just send a few troops to find him, they'll gladly surrender the giant slayer into his hands. Saul puts on his robes of self-righteousness and again assumes that it is God who has brought him this telegram of truth.

And Saul said, "May you be blessed of the LORD; for you have had compassion on me." [Oh, brother.]

(I Samuel 23:21 NASB)

So Saul sends them back as spies to scope out exactly where David and his menagerie of military misfits is hiding. David hears about it, and he moves into the caves near Maon. Saul finds out and pursues him.

Soon Saul descends to just across the mountain from where David is hiding, and an immediate military confrontation appears to be imminent.

...for Saul and his men were surrounding David and his men to seize them.

(I Samuel 23:26 NASB)

We don't know what was going through David's mind at this time. If it had been me, I probably would have been angry at God for having sent Jonathan with false hopes of deliverance, if God was going to allow me to be clobbered after all. David, however, was probably resting in God as always.

At any rate, this was neither the time nor the place where God intended the two to meet. So just at the last minute, Saul gets word that the Philistines were taking advantage of the fact that they were gone, and were invading their territory. So Saul and his tenacious troops make a U-turn and head back to defend their home base, leaving David to escape once again.

So Saul returned from pursuing David, and went to meet the Philistines; therefore they called that place the Rock of Escape.

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And David went up from there and stayed in the strongholds of Engedi. (I Samuel 23:28,29 NASB)

So the scene is set for the final conflict. Now it would appear to be time for the score to be settled. Chapter 24 begins like this:

Now it came about when Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, saying, “Behold David is in the wilderness of Engedi.”

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men from all Israel, and went to seek David and his men in front of the Rocks of the Wild Goats.

And he came to the sheepfolds on the way, where there was a cave; and Saul went in...Now David and his men were sitting in the inner recesses of the [that] cave.

(I Samuel 24:1-3 NASB)

Here at last, we have David’s opportunity for revenge. Here comes King Saul with 3,000 warriors trying to hunt down David and his 600 corps of rebels. Saul stops at the cave and enters. David and his men are huddled inside hiding. Now instead of 5 to 1 against, the odds are 600 to one in David’s favor.

Had I been David, what would have been running through the computer of my mind would have been the weeks of running, the humiliation, the danger, the loneliness, the persecution, the by now 20 or so attempts on my life by this madman from whom the Spirit of the Lord had obviously departed. I would have been praying for an opportunity for revenge. I would have construed this to be just that.

Now in verses 4 and 5, we see David’s encouragement to revenge:

And the men of David said to him, “Behold, this is the day of which the LORD said to you, ‘Behold; I am about to give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it seems good to you.’” Then David arose and cut off the edge of Saul’s robe secretly.

And it came about afterward that David’s a conscience bothered him because he had cut off the edge of Saul’s *robe*.

(I Samuel 24:4,5 NASB)

You’re probably saying, “Wow, what a vicious thing to do.” This guy has been chasing David all over the countryside trying to end his stay on planet earth, and here’s David with his big chance; and what does he do? He cuts off the edge of Saul’s robe, without

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Saul even knowing it. All this in spite of the encouragement he is receiving from his troops to sever Saul's head from his neck, as they remind David that God has given him the freedom to do to Saul whatever he thinks best.

In the next few verses, we're going to see David's alternative to revenge. It is a full 180 degrees from the world's approach to the problem. We're also going to look at David's spirit and see what attitudes and character qualities surface as his moment of truth emerges, and he has in his power the opportunity to retaliate. Let's watch closely.

In verse 5, David has second thoughts about what he's done. You say, well, at last, he's come to his senses. He wishes he'd taken a revolver and had target practice using his wild-eyed pursuer as the target, right? Wrong!

Instead, David is grieved in his spirit that he has so much as intended harm to God's king. Listen:

So he said to his men, "Far be it from me because of the LORD that I should do this thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed, to stretch out my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed."
(I Samuel 24:6 NASB)

Look at the sensitivity of this man of God. So attuned to God's mind is he, that the fact that he even THOUGHT of harming God's chosen was more than he could bear. The fact that God's anointed wanted to plant him six feet underground had no bearing on it. David was dead to self. His sole desire was to do the will of God.

Now look at his courage. He not only is grieved that he has done this, but he turns to his band of 600 wild-eyed castoffs and persuades them to leave the king alone, too. They were, no doubt, for the most part, unbelievers, and here they were, battle-scarred and weary of running from a mad king they had never even met. Now their chance comes to become free of his oppression, and their leader is asking forgiveness for having cut off the edge of the guy's robe. But the verse reads:

And David persuaded his men with these words and did not allow them to rise up against Saul. And Saul arose, left the cave, and went on his way.
(I Samuel 24:7 NASB)

That took courage. If ever a leader risked mutiny for the sake of righteousness, David just did it. It would not have been surprising to see those 600 of society's castoffs kill Saul and then turn on David, or at least leave him in disgust. But so great was

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their respect for him, and so great was his courage in the face of danger, that he was going to do what was right, regardless of the consequences, that his men agreed, probably in amazement at themselves, to go along with David, and let the king go free.

Now look at David's humility,

Now afterward David arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, saying, "My lord the king!" And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.

And David said to Saul, "Why do you listen to the words of men, saying, "Behold, David seeks to harm you?"

"Behold, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD had given you today into my hand in the cave, and some said to kill you, but my eye had pity on you; and I said, 'I will not stretch my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed.'

"Now, my father, see! Indeed, see the edge of your robe in my hand! For in that I cut off the edge of your robe and did not kill you, know and perceive that there is not evil or rebellion in my hands, and I have not sinned against you, though you are lying in wait for my life to take it.

May the LORD judge between you and me, and may the LORD avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you.

As the proverb of the ancients says, 'Out of the wicked comes forth wickedness'; but my hand shall not be against you."

(1 Samuel 24:8-13 NASB)

Now I will make no effort to speak for you; but I must honestly speak for myself and say I am utterly amazed that anyone could suffer at the hands of another what David has suffered at the hands of Saul, then have a chance to kill him, and not only refuse to do so, but then follow him outside and bow down before him and honor him, and humble himself before him as David has done.

I couldn't handle that. But the difference is, David is a man after God's own heart. In David's mind, Goliath wasn't David's problem, he was God's. The Philistines weren't David's problem, they were God's. And even Saul wasn't David's problem; Saul was God's problem. David's problem was only to properly demonstrate God's attitude even when revenge seemed appropriate. If he should suffer for it, that, too, was God's problem, and he was

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willing to do so. The issue was not the consequences. The issue was doing the right thing regardless of the consequences.

David humbles himself, but even as he bows to the ground, he stands ten feet tall; for he says to his pursuer, “This matter that stands between you and me is God’s to judge, not mine”. So you have wronged me; God is my judge. He’ll take care of the results. If you need to be punished, God will punish you. My job is not to judge you, but to respect you for the office you hold. God’s job it is to deal with you for all you’ve done...and God is faithful. Verse 15 reiterates it:

“The LORD therefore be judge between you and me; and may He see and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand.”
(I Samuel 24:15 NASB)

You say, that isn’t normal. You’re wrong. When God lives in a man, that’s normal. It isn’t natural; it’s super-natural, but it’s normal.

Now look at Saul’s response:

Now it came about when David had finished speaking these words to Saul, that Saul lifted up his voice and wept.

And he said to David, “You are more righteous than I; for you have dealt well with me, while I have dealt wickedly with you.

And you have declared today that you have done good to me, that the LORD delivered me into your hand and yet you did not kill me.

For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him go away safely? May the LORD therefore reward you with good in return for what you have done to me this day.

And now, behold, I know that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.

So now swear to me by the LORD that you will not cut off my descendants after me, and that you will not destroy my name from my father’s household.”

And David swore to Saul. And Saul went to his home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.

(I Samuel 24:16-22 NASB)

What you have just witnessed is the opposite of revenge. It is surrender to the sovereignty of God at a time when revenge seems to be justified. There is no earthly explanation for it; it is a divine act performed in a human body. It is godliness in the flesh.

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Even here, Saul's response was far from perfect. He did not take David back home and restore him to his wife. He did not grant asylum to his 600 so-called warriors. He did not offer to make restitution for all the grief and loss he had caused David. Instead, he asks David for a concession. Since David was going to be king, Saul wanted to beg for a little mercy while David was in a merciful mood. Then he leaves him and his troops in the wilderness and goes back to the palace to enjoy whatever was left of his reign.

What a guy! He was moved emotionally by what David did. But he still did not really repent. He was convinced he was wrong, and that David was God's anointed; but he was not moved to do anything he didn't have to do, or offer anything to David he didn't have to offer. Even in his best moment ever, Saul did not have the mind of God.

But Saul is not the issue. It isn't HIS life we're studying at this stage; it's David's. And David's response even now is so incredibly god-like we cannot even grasp what it must be like to behave that way.

The life we are looking at is the life of a man after God's own heart. A man, who having faced danger and destruction for weeks on end at the hand of a jealous, mad king, now having the opportunity to even the score, falls on his face and honors his pursuer, and quietly gives the matter of evening the score to a just and holy God. The questions we must answer are: Was he simply an oversensitive saint who was called by God for a specific purpose? Was it only because he was responding to one in authority? Or is this kind of behavior the will of God for believers today?

The issue at stake is the sovereignty of God and the place of revenge in the life of the Christian. Back to the opening illustrations: The divorce trial in a courtroom. One party has been grievously wronged, and he or she has their chance at last.

That corporate executive who has been so abused at the hands of his colleagues—now *he* has a chance for revenge.

Then there was that businessman whose competitor had tried to put him out of business and who has the tables turned.

Those parents with an opportunity to scar the life of a child who has scarred the life of theirs.

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And that politician whose opponent has made a practice of character assassination, but who now has slipped on the banana peel of self-destruction and is but waiting for the knife to fall.

By man's reasoning, these are *all* justifiable times for revenge. The "innocent" party has been totally wronged, and judgment time has arrived. The question is: Has God given his children the right to strike back when wounded or not?

We're not, incidentally, dealing with national principles. Even while David was exercising personal restraint in his dealings with Saul, he was slaying Philistines right and left. The Philistines were a national enemy of God's people, and war was a part and parcel of God's plan for protecting His people. This is not a lesson on pacifism. Far from it.

The issue here is PERSONAL VENGEANCE. The act of responding to evil with evil. The right to retaliate when a believer is wronged by another (whether or not the other is a believer).

Question: Is this a constant principle throughout Scripture? Does it work in a world that is bent on revenge? In a world that, strangely enough, with Satan at the helm, has reversed the principle, justifying personal revenge, and condemning national retaliation, through a systematic misuse of the Scriptures, infusing them with humanistic principles that defy the precepts of God?

Answer: The Bible is clear. The right to retaliate does not belong to the Christian. It belongs to God. What David was doing was demonstrating God's protection for God's child who is in the process of doing God's will in total opposition to the mind of man. Leviticus 19:18 says it clearly:

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.
(Leviticus 19:18 NASB)

Proverbs 20:22 is specific. It says:

Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.
(Proverbs 20:22 NASB)

Do not say, "Thus I shall do to him as he had done to me; I will render to the man according to his work."

(Proverbs 24:29 NASB)

Psalms 94:1 adds the reason. We seek vengeance because we do not trust the sovereignty of God. The Psalmist answers with

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these words:

O Lord, God of vengeance; God of vengeance, shine forth!

And they have said, “The LORD does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.” (Psalm 94:1,7 NASB)

He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see?

He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke, Even He who teaches man knowledge? (Psalm 94:9,10 NASB)

These passages solidify the precept, but in Romans, chapter 12, we get our best explanation of the how and the why of it all. Please turn to Romans 12,

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. [The King James translation says your “reasonable service.”]

And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1,2 NASB)

Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY,” says the Lord.

BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

(Romans 12:16-21 NASB)

Let’s glean the principles from the passage:

Principle 1- The basic issue is Lordship. You have traded your right to retaliate. “You are not your own, you’ve been bought with a price.” Your job is, as an act of worship, to give your entire being with all its rights back to God. This is the only reasonable thing

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to do, Paul says, in light of the cost involved in your salvation.

Principle 2- Having done that, your specific task is to reject all forms of conformity to the world system.

Principle 3- You do that by saturating your life with the Word of God, renewing your mind by replacing the world's concepts with the Word's precepts.

Principle 4- Your objective in being different is to demonstrate the will of God to the world. It is different, decidedly different, but it is good, and acceptable, and perfect. It's total opposition to the world's ways that calls attention to the fact that it is perfect.

Principle 5- With that in mind, God has invoked a spiritual law that is diametrically opposed to man's law. It says this: never (that apparently means never) pay back evil for evil! You say, of course, that depends on who is involved. Negative! The verse goes on to say, "never pay back evil for evil...to any one! (Regardless of what they've done.)

Principle 6- That means (verse 19) that the right to revenge has been removed from your list of acceptable responses, regardless of the occasion; regardless of the opponent.

Principle 7- The reason is given in verse 19, "leave room for the wrath of God." When you take matters into your hands, you take matters out of God's hands, and deny him the privilege of using that situation to glorify Himself. So every time you retaliate, you thwart God's will, you steal God's glory, and you violate God's plan for your life.

Principle 8- God has given you a written guarantee that He will see to it that the books are balanced. "I will repay, saith the LORD." Maybe not your way; maybe not according to your timetable; maybe not even for you to ever see...it may be better that you don't. But God has guaranteed you that he will be responsible.

Principle 9- God has, instead, given you another job to do, every single time vengeance seems to be appropriate. If someone has harmed you, rather than retaliate, meet a need in their life. If they're hungry, feed them; if they're thirsty, give them a cup of cold water. Luke chapter six, verses 27 and 28 in fact, gives you four specific things to do for those whose behavior calls for revenge. Remember?

A) You love them.

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- B) You pray for them.
- C) You bless them (that is, you ask for God's best for them).
- D) You do good to them...you meet their needs in a spirit of love.

You say, "That's not natural!" Exactly. It is supernatural! So by your responding in exactly the opposite way from what the world would, the world is awakened to something or should we not say Someone in your life who has lifted you into a totally different realm of existence...out of darkness...into light.

Principle 10- The final statement then, that Romans 12 makes is this: Don't ever let evil overcome you, causing you to retaliate; and don't simply respond by NOT retaliating. Overcome evil with good. Find a way to demonstrate love in a real and practical way to the very person who is chasing you into the caves of life; throwing at you the spears of life; taking from you the pleasures of life; the very person who may be maligning your reputation and seeking your very destruction.

I don't know who that might be in your life. In David's life it was Saul. Whoever it might be, either today or in the future, the living legend of David speaks to us without apology or compromise: the right to revenge is not ours. It belongs exclusively to God. We only have the right to repay evil with love, to return blessings for cursing, leaving the results, the ultimate balancing of the books, to God, who will in the meantime, through our supernatural godly responses, draw men and women to Himself.

If you are involved right now, either outwardly in a conflict, or inwardly in an internal battle of bitterness, and you are struggling with the problem of retaliation; the right to revenge; to get what's yours at the expense of those who have made what's yours, theirs...I beg you, in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who has called you to commit your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, acceptable to God,...to go home today, and get alone with God and release that person and that situation into the hands of the Holy God whose very name is perfect righteousness. He will take total responsibility both for exercising judgment and for executing revenge. *Then take a piece of paper, and make a list of the tangible ways you can love, bless, pray for and minister to those very people towards whom you were considering revenge.*

Surrender to Sovereignty

You will experience the lifting of an unbelievable burden from your shoulders, a burden God never intended you to carry.

You will have surrendered to the sovereignty of God, and accepted His alternative to revenge. In response, He will fill you with His love, and free you, with His love, to overcome evil with good.

To Him, be praise and honor and glory forever!

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