

A close-up photograph of an elderly person's hand resting on an open book. The hand is wrinkled and has a natural skin tone. The book is open, showing printed text on the pages. A black rectangular box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the image, containing white text. The background is dark and out of focus. There are some decorative elements: a light-colored L-shaped line in the top left and a light-colored arrow pointing left from the right side, both partially overlapping the black box.

Doing Right When Wronged

Romans 12:17-21

Introduction

This is one of those texts that gets:

- ✓ over-applied by some people
- ✓ under-applied by other people
- ✓ mis-applied by a lot of people



Doing Right When Wronged

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Introduction

In times of international aggression (e.g., sieges, invasions, captivities, atrocities, etc.), God's people were to seek divine guidance through their national security council (prophets, priests, and kings).



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In times of international aggression (e.g., sieges, invasions, captivities, atrocities, etc.), God's people were to seek divine guidance through their national security council (prophets, priests, and kings).

Hostilities de-escalated when God's people trusted him to give their national security council an appropriate response.



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In times of criminal activity (e.g., thefts, kidnappings, rapes, murders, etc.), God's people were to seek justice through their established legal system (laws and judges).



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Hostilities de-escalated when God's people trusted him to give their judges his wisdom for a just settlement.



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In times of personal offense (e.g., slights, insults, disputes, insensitivities, etc.), God's people were to seek relief through their own reconciliation efforts (beginning with personal forgiveness).



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In times of personal offense (e.g., slights, insults, disputes, insensitivities, etc.), God's people were to seek relief through their own reconciliation efforts (beginning with personal forgiveness).

Hostilities de-escalated when God's people trusted him to give them the emotional support they needed to move beyond the offense.



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Romans 12:17-21 and other similar passages are meant to address personal offenses, not international aggression or even criminal activity (cf. Rom 13:4), though reconciliation is always the goal.



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This means a person who has been severely violated through criminal activity may pursue legal relief, even as they struggle to pursue emotional relief.



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, do not try to settle the score yourself (17a, 19a, 21a).



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17a Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

19a Do not take revenge, my friends.

21a Do not be overcome by evil.



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*The problem with revenge is that it doesn't feel like sin.
It feels like justice.*



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, do not try to settle the score yourself (17a, 19a, 21a).

Revenge is primarily emotional; justice is primarily rational.

Revenge is personal and partial; justice is impersonal and impartial.



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, do not try to settle the score yourself (17a, 19a, 21a).

Revenge is an act of vindictiveness; justice is an act of vindication.



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Revenge is about cycles; justice is about closure.

Revenge is about retaliation; justice is about restoring balance.



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, do not try to settle the score yourself (17a, 19a, 21a).

The OT foundation for this NT instruction: “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord” (Lev 19:18).



Doing Right When Wronged

Romans 12:17-21

When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).



Doing Right When Wronged
Romans 12:17-21

When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).

17b Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).

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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).

^{17b} Take thought in advance for what is visibly good in the sight of all people.

¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.



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Romans 12:17-21

When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).

20a "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink."

21b . . . overcome evil with good.



Doing Right When Wronged

Romans 12:17-21

When PERSONALLY WRONGED, find ways to be kind to your offender (17b, 18, 20a, 21b).

The OT foundation for this NT instruction: “If you come across your enemy’s ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it” (Exod 23:4-5).



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, trust God to make things right in the end (19b, 20b).

19b . . . leave room for God's wrath.

20b "In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."



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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, trust God to make things right in the end (19b, 20b).

God: "Get out of my chair. Only I have the right and the ability to sit in the judgment seat."



Doing Right When Wronged
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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, trust God to make things right in the end (19b, 20b).

*“You are more righteous than I. You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly... May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today.”
(1 Sam 24:17, 19b)*



Doing Right When Wronged

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When PERSONALLY WRONGED, trust God to make things right in the end (19b, 20b).

The OT foundation for this NT instruction: “‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay’ (Deut 32:35), says the Lord” (Rom 12:19b).



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*Believers are never more
like Christ than when we respond to
personal offenses like Christ.*



Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus suffered:

- ✓ international aggression . . .



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Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus suffered:

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- ✓ criminal activity . . .
- ✓ personal offense . . .



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Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus did not try to settle the score himself.

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Pet 2:23).



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Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus found ways to be kind to his offenders.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).



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On the cross, Jesus trusted his Father to make things right in the end.

Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last (Luke 23:46).



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Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus became our example for life.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps (1 Pet 2:21).



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Conclusion

On the cross, Jesus became our expiation for life.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed (1 Pet 2:24).



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