



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

Subject: Bitterness

Release date: September 26, 2016

BITTERNESS

For we know him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' and again, 'The Lord will judge his people.' Hebrews 10:30

A certain woman, bitten by a dog suspected of having rabies, was immediately rushed to a hospital where she was treated and left in an adjacent room until it could be determined whether or not the dog had rabies. As you probably know, treatment for rabies is painful and expensive. If it can be determined that an animal is not infected, it saves a great deal of trouble and anxiety. An intern on duty explained the seriousness of the situation to the woman, and then was called to other duties.

Passing by the room a short while later, the young doctor noticed that the woman would stare in space and mutter to herself, visibly shaken by the trauma of what had happened. He also noticed that the woman was writing something. He thought it was possibly her will or funeral instructions. This had really gotten to her. So certain was he that she was taking it much too seriously that he went in to comfort her.

"Are you writing your will?" asked the young doctor. "Oh, no!" she replied. "Funeral instructions?" Again, she shook her head negatively. Then she explained, "Just in case I do have rabies, I'm making a list of the people I want to bite before I die."

We smile at the thought of such a thing taking place; but daily, people poison their systems with hatred and revenge, which makes what I've just mentioned more like a childish prank. I'm thinking of a friend of Guidelines who wrote recently and poured out her heart. She told how her name had been maligned, how her marriage had fallen apart. She had lost her husband and family as the result of a malicious, conniving woman who had taken her husband. She closed by saying, "I have nothing now to live for but revenge."

"The sweet taste of revenge" some call it, but, in reality, there is nothing sweet about the bitterness of revenge. I have known people who lived for years with the burden of hatred, biding their time to take revenge on an enemy. Surprisingly, Christians are not immune from the desire to take revenge on their enemies, either.

To harbor bitterness and hatred towards an individual who has wronged you is only natural; to forgive is supernatural. Twice in the New Testament God cried out, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19, KJV). When He was crucified, instead of taking vengeance upon His enemies, Christ cried out, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34, KJV).

If ever a man had the right to seek vengeance, it would have been Joseph, whose brothers sold him into slavery because they were jealous of the love of his father. Broken homes often produce hatred between half-brothers and sisters, but instead of awaiting his time for vengeance, he blessed his brothers who came seeking his help. You can read about it in Genesis 37 to 50 in the Old Testament. Joseph explained why he refused the path of vengeance, saying, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good..." (Genesis 50:20, KJV). In other words, you meant it for evil, to hurt me, but God used it for good.

What's wrong with vengeance? First--God says because of our own failures and frailties, we have no right to vengeance. He'll settle the score without our help. Second, because it stunts your growth spiritually. Third, because hatred and bitterness are poisons that physically hurt you. When you become filled with bitterness, you are the real loser. Think about it.

Resource reading: Genesis 45:1-15