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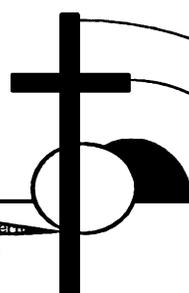
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# GRACE

Rom. 5:21

Heb. 12:15

bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness



"Reconciliation"

2 Cor. 5:18-20



Weapons of Righteousness

2 Cor. 6:7

"VINDICATION" Isa. 54:17



"Forgive"

The foolishness of God is

1 Corinthians 1:25  
Romans 11:33

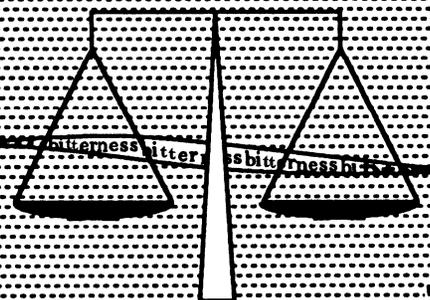
The weakness of God is

wiser than men

stronger than men

# JUSTICE

Psa. 89:14

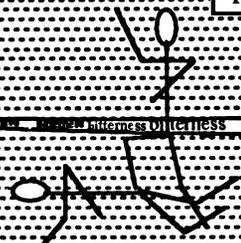


"Rights"

1 Cor. 6:1

bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness

"Blame"



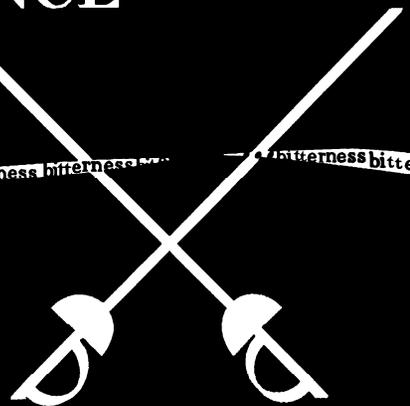
# VENGEANCE

Rom. 12:19

"Revenge"

Matt. 26:52

bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness bitterness



"Get even"



# *Vengeance — Justice — Grace*

Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord (Rom. 12:19, KJV).

Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword (Matt. 26:52, KJV).

Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face (Ps. 89:14, KJV).

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? (1 Cor. 6:1, KJV).

The whole outlook changes—sin used to be the master of men and in the end handed them over to death; grace is the ruling factor, with righteousness as its purpose and its end the bringing of men to the eternal Life of God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21, Phillips).

From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation. What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself--no longer holding men's misdeeds against them, and entrusted to us the message of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18,19 NEB).

In the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left (2 Cor. 6:7, NASB).

Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! (Rom. 11:33, NASB).

'No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. And their vindication is from Me,' declares the Lord (Isa. 54:17, NASB).

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled (Heb. 12:15 NASB).

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them (Eph. 5:8-11, NIV).

...to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me (Acts 26:18, NIV).

# GRACE for the Rest of Your Life

## VENGEANCE—JUSTICE—GRACE

### FORGIVING GRACE:      **Three Realms; Root of Bitterness; Carnal Weapons vs. Spiritual Weapons; Supremacy of Grace/Forgiveness**

The following anecdote as told by Joe Stowell, while president of Moody Bible Institute, illustrates this lesson. A woman had gone shopping at a mall, and after carrying her purchases for a while, she grew weary and decided to take a break—a chocolate break. She promptly bought herself a KitKat Bar. Although the mall was crowded, she found a place on a bench next to an elderly gentleman. She sat down, arranged her packages and gave a sigh of relief. Then she broke off a piece of the KitKat Bar that was placed in the space between them, and was really enjoying it. A little while later, the man broke off a piece, obviously enjoying it too. Surprised, the woman broke off another piece of the KitKat Bar and was starting to get upset at this man. Then he broke off another piece. Well, that was about all she could take. She thought, “What kind of man is this? This is terrible! Someone should do something about this! He can’t get away with this!” So she quickly gathered up her packages and went off in a huff thinking about the rude man who had just helped himself to her chocolate bar.

As she walked farther around the mall, she noticed the same man at a donut shop where he had just bought a donut. He held it carefully with a paper around it and began to take a bite. The woman thought, “Okay, here’s my chance...I’ll teach him a thing or two.” So as she neared him, she whisked the donut out of his hand, threw it in the wastebasket and walked off, feeling very justified in what she had done. “The man needed to learn the lesson anyway,” she thought. The woman finished her shopping and finally reached her home. When she arrived, she dutifully put her car keys into her purse and gasped as she spied her KitKat Bar. (Pause for audience reaction.) There were three reactions in this little scenario: vengeance, justice and grace. Who did what? Obviously the gentleman was gracious all the way through, while the woman went from justice (Someone should do something about this! He can’t get away with this!), to vengeance (I’ll teach him a thing or two!). All the while the gentleman was very gracious and forgiving, never saying a word.

### Three Realms

Reactions or responses occur in one of three realms: **vengeance, justice or grace**. We will begin at the bottom of the card and move upward. The two realms the world works within are vengeance and justice. We often pride ourselves on not “getting even” (vengeance), because we know that would not be right. But, “we do have our ‘rights’ after all” (justice)! In many cultures today, vengeance permeates daily life. Remember when Peter tried to defend Jesus at his arrest—he met force with force by cutting off the soldier’s ear. Jesus rebuked Peter by saying, “*Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword*” (Matt. 26:52). Today, many people and nations are continually taking revenge—anarchy prevails. Those who participated in the L.A. riots remarked, “We knocked on justice’s door, but justice wasn’t home!” Their only option (they thought) was to go back to vengeance. They did not know about the third realm—God’s grace.

Many societies used to display some concept of grace such as in the bill-paying process by providing for a “30-day grace period.” Because of computers and other inventions, it is now common to offer “no grace period.” Satan still wants to rid the world of any semblance of grace. He has been a “grace snatcher” from the very beginning.

### **Root of Bitterness**

In cultures where vengeance reigns, bitterness continues on century after century after century. Notice the ribbon or “root of bitterness” that flows through the vengeance realm. *“See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled”* (Heb. 12:15). As long as revenge seems sweet, there is still bitterness in the heart. Bitterness leads to an endless trap of emotional ups and downs. Someone once said that staying bitter is like taking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

The story of the Auca (Waorani) Indians of Ecuador, South America tells how vengeance used to be their way of life—not just between tribes, but even within their own families. Their entire lives were wrapped up in spearing each other and avenging each other. Jim Elliot and four other missionaries were speared by the Aucas (Waoranis). When Elisabeth Elliot and Rachel Saint were later safely led into the Auca (Waorani) village, they were able to tell the Indians that the missionary men would rather have been speared than to spear anyone. The Aucas (Waoranis) were astounded—they had never heard of such a thing! Men live in darkness unless the light of the Gospel of grace enters. When Rachel and Elisabeth brought the message of God’s grace to the Aucas (Waoranis), it broke the cycle of revenge. The men who killed the missionaries in the 1950s are now believers and godly church leaders in their tribe. See the feature film *The End of the Spear* for the full story.

Notice the darkness in the **vengeance** realm where there is no light of the Gospel. The people kill each other in the end. It is a **LOSE/LOSE** situation (both the offender and the victim lose). Yet, Paul wrote, *“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘Vengeance is mine; I will repay,’ says the Lord”* (Rom 12:19).

Now move up the card to the **justice** realm in the middle. *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Thy throne; lovingkindness and truth go before Thee”* (Ps. 89:14). God’s way is righteousness, but we usually pride ourselves on having our ‘rights.’ We have an instinctive attitude of defending ourselves. We want to blame someone else if something goes wrong. When something bad happens, we may not want to “get even,” but “we know whose fault it is.” If we are missing something, we are quick to wonder who stole it and look for someone to blame. But notice this is a **WIN/LOSE** situation: one wins and one loses. The idea is for the not-guilty party to win. However, the guiltless party sometimes gets punished and the guilty party goes free. It becomes, not a matter of right and wrong, but who (i.e. which lawyer) is more skillful in presenting his case. The issue seems to be, “Can you win the case?” You have to be smarter and/or outwit the opposition or find a flaw or loophole. Even in this area, notice that the root of bitterness still remains. There is no place to go with it. The justice realm is a shaded area; it has more light than the vengeance realm, but it is a **WIN/LOSE** situation instead of a **LOSE/LOSE** situation. Is a **WIN/WIN** situation possible? It can only happen through GRACE.

**We go to the “wall” for our rights. He went to the cross for our wrongs!**

Notice the line between the **grace** realm and the **justice** realm, *“The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men”* (1 Cor. 1:25). A third realm is available—choosing God’s ‘foolishness’ and ‘weakness’, which is still above men’s wisdom and strength. *“Oh, the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”* (Rom. 11:33).

When we move up to the **grace** realm, we find the operative words are *“forgive”* and *“reconciliation;”* the operative words for **justice** are *“blame”* and *“rights;”* while the operative phrases for **vengeance** are *“get even”* and *“revenge.”*

### **Carnal Weapons vs. Spiritual Weapons**

Notice the fellow in the **grace** realm has to leave behind his own ‘rights’ (scale of justice) and ‘revenge’ (sword of vengeance). He is no longer going after either of those weapons in his own way, and he trusts his vengeance and vindication to the Lord, *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay,’ saith the Lord”* (Rom. 12:19). *“No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. And their vindication is from Me,’ declares the Lord”* (Isa. 54:17).

Oswald Chambers prayed, “Lord, deliver me from this lust of vindicating myself!” So the figure is coming to the Cross without any plea—without trying to vindicate himself, without trying to get even—without trying to blame anyone else. He is coming empty-handed to the Lord, confessing that the reactions he was leaving behind had not been godly or grace-oriented. He had been cherishing his own rights and desiring to get even. Now he is leaving those behind and is looking to the Lord alone to take up his case.

The “root of bitterness” ends at the Cross. No other system works in ending bitterness. *“He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness, by whose wounds you have been healed”* (1 Pet. 2:23). We are now free to live unto righteousness and have *“the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left”* (2 Cor. 6:7). The figure is now holding the *“fruit of the Spirit”* (Gal. 5:22-23).

Note: Righteousness is a weapon in a paradoxical sort of way. An example would be, *“A gentle answer turns away wrath”* (Prov. 15:1). Other examples are found in the Beatitudes (see Matt. 5). Instead of conventional weapons like swords or scales of justice, we now are armed with righteousness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we have a greater weapon than the world has to offer. The other weapons seem greater because they are tangible, but we must remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against evil powers. In that arena, the weapons of righteousness overcome the other weapons. In the end, every knee, including those in all other realms, will bow to Jesus as Lord (Phil 2:10-11).

**We are most like beasts when we kill;**  
**We are most like men when we judge;**  
**We are most like God when we forgive.**  
*(Anon)*

***“Oh! The LOVE that drew salvation’s plan,  
Oh! The GRACE that brought it down to man,  
Oh! The mighty gulf that God did span,  
At Calvary!”***

*(Wm. R. Newell)*

### **Supremacy of Grace/Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is one of the riches of God’s grace. Forgiveness is the divine miracle of grace. Forgiveness is the attitude needed to extend to the offender. In the realm of grace and forgiveness, eventual reconciliation between the two parties is available. We can go down to the other levels and help people find the reconciliation that is only in God through Christ. This is called the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20).

God is the source or fountainhead of the grace of reconciliation. Reconciliation is possible, but is not a guarantee. The offender needs to come to the cross in the same way as the person he offended. If he chooses not to come, the offended party can still go on in fellowship with God, leaving the other party in God’s hands.

### **Examples:**

*“If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?” (1 Cor. 6:1).* A situation arose between two roommates where one moved out and still owed the other rent money for the next month. The lender’s attitude was that she had a right to claim the money owed her. The other party did not want to pay even though she moved out which left the lender in a predicament. However, the lender couldn’t sleep and sought counsel from many of her church friends. Everyone advised her to “go for her rights.” She had a case! However, she knew that if she did that she would forfeit the relationship. So, what should she do?

GRACE was an option in that she could forgive the debt and the debtor, take the financial loss herself, and trust God to provide for her. At least she would be free from holding that blame over her roommate. It was a hard step, but she did release her roommate from the debt, even though her roommate had been wrong in not repaying her portion. The lender was able to sleep again and God gave her another lovely roommate. Eventually the first roommate paid back the money she owed and apologized for her wrongdoing. It was a **WIN/WIN** situation! God’s grace brought reconciliation between the two parties.

In order to forgive a debt, the offended party has to agree to suffer the loss connected with the debt. However, to take it a step further, agreeing to suffer the loss could also be looked at as making an investment—an eternal investment. By giving the loss to God, the eternal return is a hundred-fold. This is a freeing concept.

When a person does extend forgiveness, it is good to give a word of testimony along with it. For example, a dentist wanted to have a way to witness to her clientele. God gave her the following plan. After she completed a patient’s dental needs, she would send the usual bill for five months. However, if the patient had still not been able to pay the dentist would send a bill on the sixth month that would say something like this:

*“I honestly believe you would pay your bill if you could. Since you have not been able to, I would like to take some of the pressure off all concerned. Further, the best I can understand the teachings of our Lord Jesus, we are to share one another’s burdens and should forgive others to the extent He has forgiven us. I am therefore*

*forgiving you this debt and canceling your account balance with this office. We are still here for you if you need us, should you choose to honor us with your continued confidence. Sincerely..."*

The dentist has had a variety of responses over the years just as people respond to Christ's offer of grace in a variety of ways. Some come, humbly acknowledging their need for forgiveness and are very thankful for the grace offered. Others are offended and really want to pay back—it is hard for them to humble themselves and accept God's gracious offer of forgiveness.

**To return evil for good is devilish;**  
**To return good for good is human,**  
**To return good for evil is divine!**  
*(Anon)*

Notice that the top area of grace is a light area in contrast to the shaded and dark areas below. Grace can only be extended where the light of the Gospel has shone. This darkness-to-light truth is also seen in Romans 5:21, "...so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the message of **grace, forgiveness and reconciliation**.

The outstretched arms of Grace is Forgiveness!

Grace's mutual embrace is Reconciliation!

*"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1 Jn. 1:7). "For you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them" (Eph. 5:8-11).*

Phillip Keller remarks about Jesus restoring the ear of Malchus: "It was the last miracle of healing Jesus was to perform. And he did it to the man who came out to help lynch Him in the dark. Oh, the amazing generosity and graciousness of Christ. It was a precise enactment of the very principles He had taught His disciples: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you'" (Matt. 6:27-28).

Let's review by looking at examples from God's creation in nature.

### **LOSE/LOSE – Vengeance realm**

Two horned animals approach each other from opposite directions. They confront each other and butt heads each determined to have their own way. In their impasse and skirmish, their horns may lock making it impossible for them to extricate themselves. They are stuck and both eventually may die of starvation. Hunters sometimes come upon two carcasses with locked horns in a forest. Figures of speech such as "on the horns of a dilemma," "they locked horns," "they butted heads," come from this type of situation.

### **WIN/LOSE – Justice realm**

This illustration will take us to a narrow mountain path where two horned animals meet—each wanting to go their own way. They start a fight and the stronger will usually win (or sometimes the wiser if he can outwit the stronger). The weaker animal plunges down the mountainside. Figures of speech such as “survival of the fittest,” and “the law of the jungle,” are derived from this type of situation.

### **WIN/WIN – Grace realm**

In situations with mountain goats when they meet head to head on a narrow mountain path, how can it be a win/win situation? This actually happens: one mountain goat lays down and the other mountain goat walks over its back to the other side. The other mountain goat then can arise and both go their own way. Truly a win/win situation! God gave us a clear illustration of his design, “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*” (Matt. 20:28).

A similar illustration is found in the *Colorado Rules of the Road*. On narrow mountain roads, a sign is posted, YIELD TO UPHILL TRAFFIC. The one headed downhill must yield to the one headed uphill, because of the struggle and the harder climb.

Another example is shown on America's Funniest Home Videos TV show. It shows two children coming out of a church after a wedding. The little boy was the ring bearer and the little girl was the flower girl. It had been raining which created a small stream between them and where they needed to go. So the boy looked at the stream and then looked at the girl all dressed up. He then laid down over the stream, and she walked over him. The clip is aired a lot, because the boy's actions are such a rare occurrence in our culture that people just cannot get over it. The audience loves it! It reaches their hearts!

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**Review and reinforce this lesson by incorporating the following notes and quotes pages and by reading the Scriptures on the back of the card.**

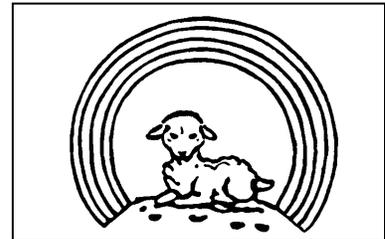
# Bitter to Sweet

During the Exodus the Israelites came to a place in the desert where there was water. But thirsty as they were, they could not drink it; it was bitter. Following God's instructions, Moses threw a piece of wood into the water, and the water turned from bitter to sweet. I believe the wood symbolized the tree from which it came, and the tree in turn symbolized the Cross (Deuteronomy 21:23; Acts 5:30; Galatians 3:13). There is a tree in the experience of every believer that will turn bitter waters sweet. It is the Cross of Jesus Christ, and it is the cross everyone who wishes to follow Jesus must take up... The only cure for bitterness is the way of the Cross made real in the believer's life... If you want to follow Jesus, then you must take up your cross daily, and taking up your cross means forgiving and believing that what someone else meant for your harm, God intended for your good. By so doing you will, amazingly and mysteriously, redeem both the act and the person who did it. You redeem the act by turning it from harmful to helpful. And you redeem the person by setting him free from his debt to you.

"The Way of the Cross" by Skip Gray  
*Discipleship Journal, 1985*

*But you ask, "Can it really be that God Himself is in what has happened?" I think we can say yes, if we see that each one of us is standing in the center of a circle, a circle which we call the will of God. Nothing therefore can touch me from outside the circle, unless it has first penetrated that circle. The thing in question may be hurtful, unfair, and callous, but no matter how it originated, by the time it has reached me, it has passed through the circle of the will of God; it has become God's will for me; it has been permitted for wise and good purposes of His own.*

"In the center of the circle  
Of the will of God I stand;  
There can be no second causes.  
All must come from His dear hand."



Therefore in resenting it and refusing it, I am in reality rebelling against God and His will – and I succeed only in making myself more wretched... But it is in hearing it, and submitting to that will, that the soul finds peace and reconciliation with God... Our willingness to bow our necks in submission to what He has allowed will move His heart toward us and He will bestow upon us many a sweet evidence of His love for us and many a compensation.

Roy Hession — *Forgotten Factors*

It isn't that God forgives on an exchange basis. Our forgiveness of others is not a condition of God's forgiveness of us. Rather it is a condition of our ability to receive the forgiveness of God... But I could cover a plant with a sheet of iron and the rain could not get at it. So, I can surround my soul with an unforgiving spirit and completely block the forgiving mercy of God.

***"The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven;  
And earthly power doth then how liketh God's, when mercy seasons justice."***

Shakespeare — *The Merchant of Venice*

*The outstretched arms of GRACE is FORGIVENESS.*

*The mutual embrace of GRACE is RECONCILIATION.*

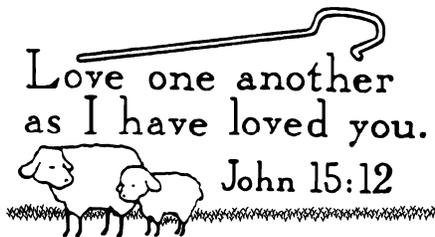
**FORGIVENESS** is one of the riches  
of GOD'S GRACE!

**FORGIVENESS** is the divine miracle  
of GRACE; it cost God the Cross of  
Jesus Christ before He could forgive  
sins and remain a Holy God...God's  
forgiveness is only natural in the  
supernatural domain—when once you  
realize all that it cost God to forgive  
you, you will be held as in a vice,  
constrained by the love of God  
(Rom. 5:5).

Oswald Chambers

**FORGIVENESS** means that I am  
forgiven into a recreated relationship,  
into identification with God in Christ.

Oswald Chambers



Booker T. Washington: "I will not permit any man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."

Of the seven deadly sins, anger (bitterness) is probably the most fun. To lick your wounds, smack your lips over grievances long past, roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.

Frederick Buechner

"Who, when He [Jesus] was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but entrusted Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23).

St. Augustine prayed, "O, Lord, deliver me from this lust of always vindicating myself; I must get people to understand." Our Lord never explained anything; He left mistakes to correct themselves.

Oswald Chambers

**THE HARDEST RIGHT TO GIVE UP  
IS THE RIGHT TO BEING RIGHT!**

Oswald Chambers

**NEVER DEMAND JUSTICE, BUT  
NEVER CEASE TO GIVE IT!**

Oswald Chambers

The Apostle Paul knew a Conqueror whose call was not to arms, but to repentance, whose weapons were love and hope and peace.

F.T. Lord