

## **DON'T RETALIATE!**

1 Thessalonians 5:13-15 contains a list of seven characteristics of a healthy church. They are listed by seven Greek present imperatives (commands).

We will study each of the following seven characteristics of a healthy church.

- Live in Peace (5:13b)
- Admonish the Unruly (5:14a)
- Encourage the Fainthearted (5:14b)
- Help the Weak (5:14c)
- Be Patient with all (5:14d)
- **Don't Retaliate** (5:15a)
- Seek after good for all (5:15b)

**Today's lesson will study FIVE aspects of the sixth characteristic of a healthy church – DON'T RETALIATE!**

1. **Today's lesson is found in a complete Greek sentence – “See that no one repays another with evil for evil.” The structure and words of this Greek sentence will help us understand the sixth characteristics of a healthy church.**

The three parts that I wish to examine are **see**; **no one**; and **repay with evil**.

The English word (**see**) is (horao [p.a.impv.2pl] continuous command). Horao means to see with the mind's eye. You might be struggling with a certain math problem and mention it to a classmate who able to show you how to arrive at the correct answer. You get it or you see it or comprehend it now that horao. In this case, it is the intrusion of an evil problem into our life rather than math.

The English (**no one**) is a Greek prohibitive (me [negative plus personal pronoun] tis). It gives emphasis to the idea of NO exclusion and NO exceptions. You will learn that payback is the SOLE and SOUL responsibility of God.

Therefore the third part brings together the command and prohibitive – **Don't retaliate!** - “repay (apodidomi [a.a.subj 3ps] requires obedience and trust of God) another with evil (kakos) for (anti) evil (kakos).”

The rest of this lesson will explain the spiritual advancing believer's responsible dealing with the intrusion of evil into one's life.

2. **The believer is commanded to NEVER engage in retaliation against evil because it is God's business (1 Thess.5:15).**

- “Avoid every kind of evil.” (1 Thess.5:22)
- “Do not repay ANYONE evil for evil.” (Rom.12:17)
- “Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult.” (1 Pet.3:9)

The reason the believer is commanded to NEVER retaliate with evil for evil is because God is the Avenger of evil (Rom.12:17-21; Lev.19:18; Deut.32:35; Prov.20:22; Ps.22:11-13; Isa.51:7-8).

“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord.’” (Rom.12:19)

“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” (Rom.12:21) But you ask, “what do you mean by overcoming evil with good?” (Look at Rom.12:20 as an example) (read more in 1 Pet.3:9-12) (Heb.10:30-36)

**3. The spiritual advancing believer cannot fight evil with the flesh, of old man cosmos diabolicus and expect to defeat it.**

You don't fight and defeat evil for God. You fight and God defeats evil for you. Moses takes on Pharaoh of Egypt but God wins the battle. David fights the bear, lion, and Goliath but God defeats these foes.

“For though we **walk** in the flesh, we do not **war** according to the flesh, for the **weapons** of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the *destruction of fortresses*. We are **destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God**, and we are taking *every thought captive* to the obedience of Christ.” (2 Cor.10:3-5)

Let me use David again after being personally defeated by evil and divinely disciplined and in recovery (1 Sam.25/ Nabal and Abigail incident).

Nabal and David were required to apply Lev.19:18 to their situation – “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.” Both rejected it in the face of controversy. David chose to retaliate against evil (25:17,21). David was mirror imagery of Nabal's evil by repaying evil for evil (25:25-31).

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who has sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from blood shed, and from avenging myself by my own hand.” (25:32-33)

“And about ten days later, it happened that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died.” (25:38)

However, in the case of Saul of Tarsus, the Lord converted him (Acts 9).

**4. The believer is told to fight evil with divine good (divinely powerful) and leave God to battle evil (vengeance is Mine) (Rom.12:14-21; 1 Pet.3:9-13).**

Conflict offers the spiritual mature believer the opportunity to treat the offender in grace and mercy. This was Abigail's advice to David (25:25-34). The Lord did this to Saul of Tarsus because of positive volition.

**5. The spiritual advancing believer is to function under the doctrinal principle of undeserved suffering rather than retaliation regarding the intrusion of evil into his life (James 1:2-4; 1 Pet.4:12-19).**

“And *keep a good conscience so that* in the thing in which you are **slandered**, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to **shame**. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you **suffer** for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.” (1 Pet.3:16-17)

Are you presently being persecuted for doing what you know to be the right thing? (Undeserved suffering)