

**JEREMIAH 33:3 "CALL TO ME" GROUP BIBLE STUDIES – LEADER'S STUDY -
LUTHERAN HOUR MINISTRIES**

LESSON #2 – A CHRISTIAN'S CALL FOR REVENGE

A CHRISTIAN'S CALL – In September 2001, they discovered a lot of bodies at the World Trade Center Towers in New York. Then, cases of anthrax had been diagnosed. The FBI went public with a series of warnings that predict the possibility of another wave of terrorist attacks. Our young men and women are fighting in Afghanistan and there are protests against America all around the world. This lesson asks, "can a Christian call upon God to give him revenge?"

THE PRAYER – Dear Lord Jesus, if there was anyone Who experienced unfairness and inequity it is You. Unfairly You were beaten, tried and crucified. Yet, even from the cross You asked the Father in heaven to forgive them in their ignorance. If that is what we are to do, dear Lord, You will have to teach us how. Grant us grace to do what is right. In Your Name. Amen.

ILLUSTRATION - I remember, years ago, when I was called into the kindergarten room at our school. The teacher was having a difficult time keeping a straight face as she dealt with a situation. She had turned her back for just a second when a blood-curdling scream was made. She turned to find a little girl pulling the hair of the boy in front of her. Gently the teacher released the girl's hand and said to the still smarting boy, "There, there. She didn't mean it. She doesn't know how bad that hurts. Let's forgive her." The teacher didn't manage to make it back to her desk before she heard another scream. This time from the little girl. Turning round, she demanded to know, "What happened?" The little boy calmly said, "Now she knows what it feels like teacher." I can understand that attitude.

I can understand the attitude of the newspaper ad which ran in the *Business Farmer News*, of Scottsbluff, Nebraska: In the column under For Sale or Trade it says: Will trade one white wedding gown size 16--never worn. Will trade for 38 caliber revolver.

Most of us can understand the old Chinese proverb which says, "If thine enemy wrongs thee, buy each of his children a drum."

SATAN'S SUMMONS – In the above paragraph, I said, 'most of us understand.' Maybe that's not so. It wasn't so long ago that the Gallup Poll asked American adults what they would do when they were wronged. I can tell you that 48% of Americans said they would chose forgiveness over revenge. Only 8% said they would try to get even. Maybe you can guess the percentage of those who said they would:

48% discuss the problem	45% overlook the offense	9% do something nice for the other fellow
25% pray for the offender	14% would keep resentment inside	27% pray for comfort

The Gallup Poll apparently did not ask, "How many of you will lie on a Gallup Poll questionnaire?" I would like to have seen that percentage. You see, I think Satan wants us to seek revenge.

THOUGHT: Have you never savored the luxury of indulging in nasty ways of getting even with those who have, in a real, or imagined way, injured you? Have you never spent an afternoon mulling over how unkind the rest of the world is, and how sweet it would be to have the unlimited power and the untimed opportunity to break them of their sinful streaks? As followers of the forgiving Savior, we know that such thinking is probably not proper ... but it's also not easy to give up the idea of retaliation. Payback feels so good - revenge tastes so sweet. Well, if you have ever been in that position, no matter what the Gallup poll may say, I don't think that you are alone. Examine these Bible verses and answer the questions which follow:

SCRIPTURE SEARCH 1 –

TEXT	QUESTION	ANSWER
Judges 16:28	What did Samson pray for?	Revenge and death upon his enemies.
Psalms 10:15	What does the Psalmist want?	An accounting for the wicked.
Psalms 31: 17-18	What is asked for here?	That the wicked be put to shame and die.
Psalms 35: 7-8	What should God do here?	Evil-doers should be entangled in their own traps.
Psalms 35:26	If you gloat, what should God do?	Clothe you with shame and disgrace.
Psalms 55:15	What should happen here?	Death may come suddenly on the Psalmist's enemies.
Psalms 69:27	How rough can our prayers be?	He wants names blotted out of the book of life.
Jeremiah 18:21	What does the prophet want?	Famine; infanticide; mourning, etc.
Galatians 1:8	What does Paul pray?	False preachers be condemned.

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FIRST APPLICATION: Some people reading those passages would say, "Things were different in the Old Testament. Back then God's people could 'get away' with praying for bad things to happen to their enemies." These folks would say, "Jesus' arrival has given us a new, radical way to respond to injustice. Instead of demanding vengeance; we look out for other people's rights. Because of Jesus, we are to do good to those who have wronged us." We share that a Christian's desire is not to keep score...but to love and forgive. It's a great idea to love your enemies and do good to those who persecute you. Is that what these NEW TESTAMENT TEXTS say happened:

TEXT	WHAT WAS ASKED FOR:
Acts 13: 10-11	That Elymas would be blind.
2 Timothy 4: 14	The Lord would repay Alexander for what he had done.
Revelation 6: 9-10	The martyrs ask God how long it will be before their blood is avenged.

Which takes us to the point of the lesson. We are to call to the Lord. Is it all right for us to call to the Lord for revenge on our enemies? If the martyrs who are already in heaven are asking for God to avenge their death upon the evil of this world, why can't we ask the Lord to punish the world's terrorists and frustrate their plans? Is it necessary for us to turn the other cheek no matter what anyone does to us? There seems to be a contradiction here. The Old Testament people get to pray for revenge on their enemies, and we, New Testament Christians, are to be nice guys. It doesn't seem fair. Just what is:

CHRIST'S CALL - SCRIPTURE SEARCH 2 -

TEXT	WHAT IS THE EVIL DONE TO US	HOW ARE WE TO ANSWER
Mt. 5:39 -41	We are struck on the right cheek If they take our tunic If they kidnap us one mile	Supposed to turn the other. We give our coat. We stay with the kidnapers for a little longer.
Mt. 5:43-44	If they persecute you.	You should love them.
Romans 12:14	If someone persecutes you	Bless and don't curse them.
Romans 12:17-21	If someone does evil	Overcome it with good, not evil.
1 Cor. 4:12 -13	When we are cursed When we are persecuted When we are slandered	We bless We endure We answer kindly
What is the result according to this text?	We are the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.	

ILLUSTRATION & THOUGHT - Years ago, an episode of the old "Amos and Andy" television program showed Andy very upset with a guy who punched him in the chest every time they met. Finally he had enough. He said to Amos, "I'm going to get revenge. I put a stick of dynamite in my vest pocket. The next time that guy slaps me, he's going to get his hand blown off." That sounds like us. We don't like getting slapped; and we can't do anything serious to stop it without causing some major problems.

What are we supposed to do? Call to the Lord for revenge ... or for strength to endure?

We proudly proclaim the direction for our prayers is simple. We are to do, and pray, for that which is going to glorify the Lord. There are times when standing up against evil is the action that which will advance the Lord's cause and bring a temporary defeat to wickedness. But there are other times when patient endurance is the deed which will glorify the Savior. In times like these we must ask, "Is this prayer going to bring praise and glory to Jesus Who suffered all so that I might be saved?" If so, pray it. If the prayer is only for our own satisfaction and vengeance, then let it lay.

THE WAY OF PRAYER – Dear Lord Jesus. You were a Savior of action Who stood strong against evil and hypocrisy. You also went as an uncomplaining Lamb to die on the cross. May we do what is right, when it is right, so others may see, in our actions, Your great love. In Your Name. Amen.