


HALL GREEN HERALD



REVENGE FOR THE VICTIM

Think about the following statement. 'If we do not find ourselves wishing to call down a curse of divine magnitude on some perpetrators of evil, this may reflect our lack of spiritual sensitivity, or our good fortune in not being confronted by evil of such measure, or it may reflect our moral indifference. Love and forgiveness of enemies should not be invoked to

sanction an easy and careless disregard for justice.'

Some of the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament have been called imprecatory psalms because the psalmist calls upon God to punish the evil doer. For example, 'happy is he who repays you for what you have done to me', (Psalm 137:8-9). In Psalm 109 the psalmist 'demands' justice from God in the strongest of terms! Such requests are usually voiced in the aftermath of war or as a result of some other atrocity. The cries of the psalmist

do not seem to square with the New Testament teaching about loving and forgiving our enemies as found in Matthew's Gospel 5:48-42. 'But I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.'

The answer to the problem lies in understanding that the psalmist is not engaged in seeking personal revenge but is handing over a situation to God. He is the only One powerful enough to deal with the matter and alone has the prerogative to dispense justice of such

magnitude. This is in line with the teaching of the apostle Paul. 'Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone. 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' (Romans 12:17-21). The psalmist is reassured that when divine justice is dispensed it will be exact and always thoroughly deserved. So the impenitent war-monger, proven criminal, or the predatory male who commits offences against children will each be dealt with in the divine court of justice whatever sentence may be imposed by the right rule of law on earth.

Scripture declares all power resides in God and that in relation to governments He presides over them and those who exercise power within them. In Psalm 82 God declares to earthly judges who hold authority from Him to note, "As I defend the cause of the weak and the fatherless; maintain the cause of rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" so *must* you!

People are wrong to think that Christianity teaches we must be soft on crime and deny victims justice. It is not the case. The opposite is true. Whether crime is committed under the guise of a just war or in peace time it is not incompatible with Scripture to meet the victim's cry for justice now!