

# A Horse Named Accountability

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On November 5<sup>th</sup>, Election Day, we saw one of the greatest political comebacks of all time. Former President Donald Trump defeated Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential race by racking up an impressive 312 electoral votes compared to her 226. And, as of November 26, the former President led Harris nationally in the popular vote 77,016,743 to 74,536,675. Not since President Grover Cleveland won a second non-consecutive term in 1892 has any other President done likewise. Additionally, the Republicans took control of both the United States House and Senate, giving them control of both the Executive and Legislative branches of the federal government.



Winning both the popular vote and the electoral vote, along with Republicans gaining control of the House and Senate, conveys a mandate to the President-Elect Donald Trump. That mandate is to reverse America's downward course and repudiate the evils of the Biden Administration. America has spoken, sending a clear message to the incoming Trump Administration that we want them to:

- Protect children from butchery and experimentation at the hands of so-called doctors and therapists,
- Protect women from biological males invading their restrooms, locker rooms, and sports,
- End the crippling effects of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) on every aspect of our society,
- Build up our military and return it to its mandate to protect our nation from enemies and threats,
- End the unrestrained flood of illegal aliens violating our wide-open borders,
- Cut our out-of-control federal budget and trim the size of the federal government,
- End the weaponization of the federal government against patriots, Christians, and political opponents,
- Make America energy independent again,
- Support and defend Israel, our greatest and most important ally in the Middle East,
- Hold crooked, corrupt and incompetent government officials accountable for their gross abuses of power.

Donald Trump's historic win has sparked a lot of excitement among conservatives and handwringing among liberals. Those on the right are celebrating and looking forward excitedly to Donald Trump's return to the White House while those on the left are trying to overcome their shock and dread of Trump's return. As a conservative, Bible-believing Christian, I, and many like me, share the excitement and anticipation, unlike those who are neither.

Conservative radio and television personality Andrew Wilkow, reveling in Trump's victory and giving voice to many in the MAGA movement, has called for Donald Trump to ride into Washington DC next January "on a horse named Vengeance." This creates an interesting mental picture, to be sure, and makes for an entertaining and satisfying thought. I mean, who wouldn't like to see an armor-clad President Donald Trump, sword in hand, astride a powerful white horse named Vengeance galloping into Washington DC to do battle with the dragons, trolls, and assorted monsters infesting the fetid, malodorous swamp? Still, we must ask ourselves, is this biblical?

The Bible speaks a lot about vengeance. In fact, the word appears 39 times in the King James Bible. In nearly every case, vengeance is depicted as belonging to God, not man. Consider, for example, Romans 12:19 where the Apostle Paul writes:

*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*

This is a cautionary statement. It is a warning about seeking vengeance on our own and a strong encouragement to let God balance the books when it comes to retribution. In fact, putting this verse in context makes it very clear what God's advice to us is when we have been mistreated or victimized.

First look at the preceding verses in Romans 12:14-18:

*<sup>14</sup>Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. <sup>16</sup>Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. <sup>17</sup>Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. <sup>18</sup>If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*

What Paul advises here is, admittedly, not easy from a human standpoint. We need God's help to do this because our human nature cries out the opposite, "Curse them which persecute you: curse, and bless not!" In our own conceits we believe we know what to do better than God. We want to recompense evil for evil and we are more often concerned with vengeance rather than whether what we do appears honest in the sight of others or not. Simply put, we want to see them suffer for what they have done to us. In doing so, however, we may actually cause God to turn away from bringing vengeance on those who have wronged us. After all, in Proverbs 24:17-18, King Solomon warns:

*<sup>17</sup>Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: <sup>18</sup>Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.*

Still, God recognizes our limitations and knows that turning the other cheek is not always an option. Sometimes we find ourselves in situations where, despite our best efforts, it is simply not possible to live peaceably with some people. Consequently, that is why Romans 12:19 reminds us, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord," comes in. We, as Believers, are to turn the situation over to God and allow Him to handle it for us.

Instead, we are to do as the Bible says in Romans 12:20-21:

*<sup>20</sup>Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. <sup>21</sup>Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Now, if the verses before verse 19 seemed hard to do, these verses seem beyond human ability. However, God has a two-fold purpose here. First is to frustrate and confuse our enemies. After all, they know that if the situation were reversed, they would seize any and every opportunity to make us suffer. The second reason is to prevent us from being overcome with evil ourselves while pursuing vengeance. As an older, seasoned pastor once said to a younger pastor who was dealing with someone who had wronged him in the ministry, “Be careful that you do not become what you are fighting.”

Paul’s discussion on vengeance does not end with the end of Romans chapter 12, though. Romans 13:1-4 continues the discussion of vengeance with this added information:

*<sup>1</sup>Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. <sup>2</sup>Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. <sup>3</sup>For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. <sup>4</sup>But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*

At first, this might not seem relevant. After all, it is a discussion of the legitimacy of human government and our obedience to it. However, it makes it clear that one of the functions of human government is to provide a vehicle for God to carry out vengeance on evildoers. Look at verse four again where God says that the government official is “the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” This means that God does not always rely on natural means, such as storms, earthquakes, disease or other natural means of wreaking vengeance on evildoers. Sometimes He uses His ordained authorities.

Consider, for example, King Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar was an example of a human authority, whom God allowed to come to power, and then used to carry out His vengeance on the Hebrew nation who had disobeyed His commands and rejected Him: Ezra 5:12, summarizes it like this in a letter to King Darius:

*But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.*

The idea that Nebuchadnezzar was God's tool of vengeance is brought out by the prophet Jeremiah who, in Jeremiah 25:9, 27:6, & 43:10, quotes God as referring to him as "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant."

So, if God does not want us to personally seek vengeance, why does He sometimes use human authorities to deliver vengeance? Well, let me present two reasons. The first is to reign in our sin nature, which can easily run amok and out of control, by constraining us within the rule of law. The second is to bring about accountability. An example can be seen in Exodus 22:2-4, which deals with a thief breaking in:

*<sup>2</sup>If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. <sup>3</sup>If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. <sup>4</sup>If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.*

Now, while the homeowner is within his rights to use deadly force to defend his family, home, and possessions, he does not have the right to act as a vigilante and seek vengeance the next day if the thief gets away. Instead, the homeowner is to go to the local authorities and present his case. The authorities can then investigate the matter, making sure that the right person is being held accountable, and then render a just judgement within the bounds of the law rather than on the basis of emotion and passion. In doing so, the government authority can not only function as "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," but he can also be used of God to bring about accountability as the thief is forced to make restitution for his crimes.

Another example of accountability can be found in Deuteronomy 19:16-20, dealing with false witnesses:

*<sup>16</sup>If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; <sup>17</sup>Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; <sup>18</sup>And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; <sup>19</sup>Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. <sup>20</sup>And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.*

In this case, the false witness is found guilty of breaking the Ninth Commandment, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (Exodus 20:16)." He is then held accountable by having done to him what he sought to have done to the one he bore false witness against. (This would end a lot of frivolous lawsuits if we could do this in our courts today!) Here, however, we see a side benefit of the false witness being held accountable for what he has done:

*“And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.”*

The thought that future crimes can be prevented by the public spectacle of evildoers being held accountable for their evil deeds is reflected in the wise words of Solomon in Proverbs 21:11:

*When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.*

Paul also makes a similar observation in 1 Timothy 5:20:

*Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.*

Unfortunately, accountability has a limited shelf life. When the guilty seem to get away with their crimes there is no deterrence. In Ecclesiastes 8:11, King Solomon warns:

*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*

Then, all God’s people can do is cry out to God as does the Psalmist in Psalm 94:1-3:

*<sup>1</sup>O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself. <sup>2</sup>Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud. <sup>3</sup>LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?*

So, while I can understand the very human desire for Donald Trump to ride into Washington DC on a horse named Vengeance, I would much rather he ride in on a horse named Accountability. But, even if he does not, remember that Jesus warned in Matthew 12:36:

*But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*

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