

BITTERNESS AND RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

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BITTERNESS

is unrighteous anger

is being angry when you have no right to be angry
and holding a grudge when no grudge should be held

is being angry and holding a grudge
past the point of forgiveness
(if someone sins against you, then repents, confesses,
and makes full restitution, you must forgive him)

is to continue being angry instead of forgiving
or to continue being angry after forgiving
(forgiveness is putting a sin out of sight and out of mind)

keeping your anger past the point of forgiveness is sin
(the paraphrase “nor bear any grudge” in Leviticus 19:18 is
literally ‘and you shall not keep [חַמְאָה] your anger
against the sons of your people’ (RCL);
the same ellipsis occurs in Psa. 103:9; Jer. 3:5, 12;
Amos 1:11; Nah. 1:2)

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger...
be put away from you” (Eph. 4:31).

RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION

is righteous anger

may continue to the point of repentance,
confession, and restitution (cf. Luke 17:3–4)

is holding a grudge until the wrong
has been righted or justly avenged by God
(tribulational saints in heaven hold grudges against
unbelievers on earth until God avenges them—
Revelation 6:9–11)

perfect peace of mind is not possible
until forgiveness or vengeance takes place (Rev. 6:9–11)

there is no forgiveness without full restitution
(*sequence*: sin, restitution, guilt offering, forgiveness
in Lev. 6:1–7; cf. Matt. 5:23–24)

“BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN;
do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph. 4:26).

DISTINCTIONS

- bitterness and righteous indignation are hard to distinguish and are easily confused
- be careful accusing others of being bitter lest you make a false judgment and incur divine discipline (Matt. 7:1–2; Luke 6:37–38)
 - what seems to be bitterness is righteous indignation if no repentance, confession, or restitution has taken place
- the saints in heaven are not bitter in crying out for vengeance but are righteously indignant and seeking justice (Rev. 6:9–11)