



THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

AVOIDING REVENGE: LETTING GOD HANDLE JUSTICE



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INTRODUCTION

Jim's hands were shaking. He's a big guy, the kind of man who has spent forty years framing houses. His knuckles are a map of scars and hard labor. He doesn't usually say much. He lets his work do the talking. We were sitting on my back porch, the sun dipping low, as he was trying to tell me about his business partner. The man had run off with the final draw on a big job. He took everything. The lumber bills were still sitting on Jim's desk, unpaid and mocking him.

"I want to break him," Jim said. He didn't look at me. He was looking at the dirt between his boots. "I want to watch his life go up in smoke. I want to be the one holding the match."

I get that. I mean, I really get that heat in the gut. It's a hunger for a specific kind of justice that feels like it'll fix the hole in your chest. You think if you hit back—if you settle the score—the weight will lift. But it doesn't. You end up tied to the person you hate. You wake up thinking about them. You go to sleep rehearsing the fight. They already took your money; now they're taking your soul. It's a rot that starts in the basement of your heart and works its way up.

God is the Judge. We say that in church, we put it in our creeds, but we don't really believe it when the lumber bills are unpaid. We think we have to do His job because He's too slow or maybe too soft for the mess of the real world. But our scales are broken. We want absolute justice for the guy who wronged us and a whole lot of mercy for ourselves. That isn't justice; it's just more sin.

Ever since the Fall in the Garden, this world has been a wreck. People steal. Partners lie. Parents fail. And so many more messes. It's the friction

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of living in a fallen place, and it leaves you in a chasm. I told Jim he had to quit. "You're trying to do a job you weren't hired for," I said. "God said vengeance belongs to Him. Let Him have it."

That's a relief if you actually trust Him. It means you don't have to stay awake being the debt collector for every wrong you've ever suffered. Nobody gets away with anything. Every sin is paid for—either Christ took the fire for it on the Cross, or that person is going to face it themselves. God's scales are perfect. Ours are a mess.

Jim asked how to let it go. He felt weak, like he was rolling over. But listen to me: it takes more courage to be quiet than to scream. Forgiveness isn't a feeling. It's a decision. It's the stewardship of your own heart. If you let the bitterness stay, you'll rot. You'll become a hard, mean man. Your kids won't want to be near you. You'll be a slave to a thief who isn't even thinking about you.

Look at the Cross. God didn't just "let it go." He poured the fire on His own Son. If you won't forgive, or if you won't honor the paths God laid out for you, you're saying Jesus wasn't enough. You're saying your justice is better. That's a scary place to stand.

It took Jim a long time. We had coffee every week. Some days, he was fine. Some days, he saw a picture of the guy, and the fire came back. But he started to trust the Judge. He focused on the work he had left. He realized his life was still a gift. He wasn't a victim. He was just a man following the Shepherd. Drop the grudge. It's too heavy for your shoulders. Let the Judge do His job.

1

THE MYTH OF PERSONAL JUSTICE

We all have that heat in the gut. It's that primal, jagged hunger to even the score. When someone rips the rug out from under you, or when a partner walks away with the life you spent decades building, your first instinct isn't to pray. It isn't to reflect on the sovereignty of God. It is to strike back. You want to see them feel the same cold weight in their chest that you're carrying. You want to be the one who balances the books. We call it "justice" because that sounds noble. But if we're being honest, most of the time it's plain, old-fashioned bloodlust. We think that if we can make them hurt as much as we do, the world will somehow be right again. But it never is. That's the myth. The idea that you, with your trembling hands and your clouded mind, could ever be the one to deliver a perfect stroke of justice is a fantasy that will eventually eat you alive.

This itch to grab the gavel didn't start with your bad business deal or your broken marriage. It started in a Garden. When we look at the Fall in Genesis 3, we usually focus on the fruit or the serpent, but the real rot was the desire for autonomy. "You will be like God," the lie went. And they bought it. The part about being like God is being the Judge. The moment Adam and Eve took that bite, we didn't just lose our innocence; we lost our place. We stepped off the creaturely path and tried to climb onto the throne. We decided that we should determine good and evil, and, by extension, that we should be the ones to execute the sentence. Ever since then, every human heart has been a small, self-appointed courtroom. We spend our lives putting people on trial in our heads. We act as the prosecutor, the jury, and the executioner, and we wonder why we're so exhausted. It's because you and I were never hired for that job. You weren't built to carry the weight of the moral universe on your shoulders.

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But we try anyway. We nurse these grudges like they're precious heirlooms. We think that if we keep the anger hot, we're somehow protecting ourselves or maybe holding the other person accountable. But have you ever noticed what a grudge does to your marrow? It makes you hard. It makes you brittle. It turns you into a person who can only see the world through the lens of what was taken from you. Traditionally, we talk a lot about total depravity, and usually, we apply that to the people who hurt us. We see their sin clearly. We see their greed, their lies, and their vanity. But the hardest pill to swallow is the total depravity of the victim.

Now, don't get me wrong. Being a victim is real. People do evil things, and the pain they cause is a visceral, heavy reality. But being a victim doesn't make you holy. It doesn't make your heart a pure source of justice. Because you are fallen, your own "justice" is almost always tipped by your ego. Your scales are broken. When someone sins against you, you don't want a fair trade; you want a surplus of pain. You want to tip the scales. You want them to suffer more than you did. Your "righteous indignation" is often a mask for a cruelty that you've managed to justify because you were hurt first. This is the reality of the human condition. We are so broken that we use our own wounds as an excuse to wound others. We think that because we were treated unfairly, we now have a license to be judge, jury, and executioner. But a sinner cannot judge a sinner with perfect weight. Your hands are too shaky, and your heart is too deceptive.

And then there is the weight of the sword. We live in a world that tells us that we have to stand up for ourselves at all costs, that if we don't seek revenge, we're being passive or weak. But the Bible speaks a different language. It speaks of a God who is so sovereign and so holy that He doesn't need your help to settle the accounts. Romans 12 and 13 are a bucket of cold water on the fire of our resentment. "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. That is not a suggestion. It is a declaration of ownership. God has claimed the right of vengeance for Himself because only He is righteous and judges rightly. He is the only one who can look at a human life—with all its history, hidden motives, and complexities—and deliver a stroke of justice that is actually just.

When you try to take that sword into your own hands, you are committing a double sin. You're sinning against the person you're trying to hurt, yes.

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But more importantly, you're sinning against the office of God. You're telling Him that His justice is too slow, or that His judgment isn't quite severe enough. You're saying that you know better. And that is a terrifying place to stand. The Bible is clear: God has given the sword of justice to the authorities, to the civil magistrates, to the systems He has put in place to keep the world from descending into a total bloodbath. He hasn't given it to you to use on your back porch or in your office. When you try to be the debt collector, you are overstepping your vocation. That is the vocation of the governing authorities who do not hold the sword in vain. God calls them His avengers and servants, who carry out God's wrath on wrongdoers. There is a time to work with these authorities when someone wrongs us. But Scripture teaches that we should handle wrongdoing between brothers within the confines of the church. We ought not sue them in court. There are times we must simply overlook a wrong. But wisdom sometimes requires reporting a serious wrongdoing to the governing authorities and leaving it with them. This is especially true when a person has a history of repeated offenses, and there is concern that they will simply turn and harm another after us.

Think about the relief that comes with actually believing that God has given to others the vocation of being His avenger in this world. If you trust that God is the Judge, you don't have to stay awake at night figuring out how to make someone pay. You don't have to be the one to watch their life go up in smoke. You can actually step out of the courtroom in your mind. This doesn't mean that what happened to you doesn't matter. It doesn't mean that the lie or the theft was "okay." It means that the ledger is in better hands than yours. That may be with God alone. Or with the elders of your church. Or with the governing authorities, as wisdom dictates. That wisdom is often discerned by your motivation for choosing one of these options. Is it to hurt or to help not only other would-be victims, but also those who did the harm?

Nobody gets away with anything in God's world. Not one cent, not one cruel word, not one betrayal is forgotten. It will all be accounted for. Either Christ took the fire for that sin on the Cross, or that person will face it themselves before the white throne of a holy God. Either way, justice is done. Your job is to be the creature, not the Creator.

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The friction of this life is constant. You will be wronged again tomorrow. Someone will cut you off, someone will lie to your face, someone will take credit for your toil. And the heat will rise in your gut again. But the "Theologian of the Pavement" (everyday theology) knows that the only way to walk the long, narrow path without losing your soul is to keep your hands off the sword. It takes more courage to be quiet than to scream. It takes more strength to trust the Judge than to try to be Him. Forgiveness isn't about letting the other person off the hook. Forgiveness acknowledges that the hook is God's, not yours. It's about the stewardship of your own heart.

If you refuse to let go of the myth of personal justice, you will eventually become the very thing you hate. You see it all the time—men who were cheated twenty years ago and are still talking about it like it happened this morning. Their faces are set in a permanent scowl. Their children avoid them. They have become a monument to a debt that hasn't been paid. They are slaves to a ghost. Is that what you want? To be a hard, mean man who is shackled to a thief?

Look at the ancient paths. The saints of old didn't survive persecution because they were better at revenge than their enemies. They survived because they knew they followed the Shepherd who had already conquered the grave. They knew that their lives were hidden in Christ, and therefore, no one could truly take anything from them that wasn't already being kept by God. They understood the sovereignty of God not as a dry doctrine, but as a visceral shield. If God is for us, who can be against us? And if God is the Judge, why are we trying to steal His gavel?

Drop the grudge. It is too heavy for you. You weren't made for the sword; you were made for the basin and the towel. You were made to follow the One who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. That is the pattern. That is the only way to keep your soul intact in a world that wants to tear it to pieces. Let the Judge do His job. He's better at it than you are, and His scales don't shake. Trust in His providence that allows the friction, and trust in His grace that covers the chasm. You are just a man, a believer, walking through the dust. Keep your eyes on the Cross, where the ultimate justice

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and the ultimate mercy met in a way that our broken scales could never imagine.

The myth is that you will feel better once you strike back. The truth is that you will only feel empty. The hole in your chest can't be filled with the ruins of someone else's life. It can only be filled by the peace of a God who has already settled the greatest debt of all—your own. When you realize how much you've been forgiven, the debts of others start to look a lot smaller. Not because they don't matter, but because the One who is coming to judge the living and the dead has already promised to make all things new. You don't have to be the match-holder. You don't have to be the executioner. You can just be Jim, or whoever you are, sitting on a porch, breathing the air of a world that is still, despite everything, held in the hands of a Sovereign King.

We walk the pavement with scars on our knuckles, yes. But we don't have to use those knuckles to bruise others. We use them to hold onto the Word. We use them to serve a neighbor. We use them in prayer as we entrust our cases to the only Court that matters. That is the fortitude of the Christian life. That is the weight of honor and the end of the myth of personal justice. It is a long obedience in the same direction, away from the Garden of Grudges and toward the City of God, where every tear is wiped away. For in that city, the scales are always perfect, and the King is always just.

2

THE IDOL OF "GETTING EVEN"

There is a specific kind of rot that sets in when you decide that your peace is contingent on another person's remorse. We call it "getting even," but what we really mean is that we've built an altar to our own pain. It is an itch in our soul that believes relief can come only if we see the other person brought low. But daily Christian life is littered with people who spent their best years waiting for a balance that never came. They are waiting for a phone call, a letter, or a look of genuine regret from someone who has already moved on. In that waiting, a chasm opens—a prison that doesn't need iron bars, only a heart that refuses to move until it hears the words "I was wrong."

We tell ourselves that we are holding them accountable by staying angry. We think our bitterness is a weapon, but that is the vanity of the fallen heart. While you are losing sleep, the other person is likely sleeping just fine. Your anger isn't a weapon against them, but a weight on you. You were given a heart to love God and serve your neighbor, but you've turned it into a small, dark room where you replay the same five minutes of your life over and over again. This is the friction of the Fall. If your soul is shackled to their remorse, you aren't free. You are a slave to their indifference.

But there is a deeper terror: the mirror of the enemy. We don't like to talk about this, but the mirror doesn't lie. When you spend your nights sharpening your tongue and rehearsing the cutting words you'll say, you are actually sharpening your soul into the shape of the very person you despise. Bitterness is a sculptor. It slowly carves away your kindness and your capacity for joy until you look exactly like the one who hurt you. You hate his cruelty, but your heart is becoming cruel. You think you are

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seeking justice, but you are really practicing the same darkness that was used against you. If you keep staring at the darkness long enough, you start wearing it.

Yet our "rightness" is often a disguised form of vanity. We are fallen creatures, and our scales are always tipped toward ourselves. When we seek to "get even," we aren't looking for equity. We want a surplus of pain for the other guy. We try to play God because we don't want Him to handle the accounts. We think His providence is too slow or His grace is too wide. We want a world where everyone gets exactly what they deserve right now—except for us. We want mercy. But for the man who cheated us? We want the fire.

The Bible offers a way to let go of this anger that isn't a psychological trick. It is a rugged, theological surrender. It is the recognition that God alone is God and you are not. Letting go means acknowledging the debt is real, but handing the invoice to the Judge and Redeemer of all the earth. This is not weakness; it is the ultimate form of faith. It takes no strength to be angry. A fool can be angry. But it takes the strength of the Holy Spirit to be quiet and stay in the dust, trusting that the Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.

We must look at the cross. This is where the idol of "getting even" is finally shattered. At the cross, we see what justice actually looks like to a holy God. It looks like the blood of the Innocent. If you want justice, look there. If you want mercy, look there. But don't you dare stand at the foot of that cross and tell God that His justice isn't enough for the man who cheated you. When you realize that your own debt required the death of God, the debts of others start to lose their power over you.

The stewardship of a broken relationship is not about winning; it is about faithfulness. When you let go of the idol of control, you are finally letting yourself be free. You are stepping out of the courtroom and back into the light. You are deciding that you would rather be a son of the Father than a judge of the world. Peace starts to grow here—a peace that doesn't make sense to a world obsessed with the scorecard.

On a Tuesday morning, this looks like choosing not to bring up that old hurt when the conversation turns to the past. It looks like praying for the

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soul of the person you want to hate—not a flowery prayer, but a heavy one that asks for God's holiness to deal with them and His mercy to deal with you. You are not a victim of a thief; you are a ward of the King. And the King is not poor.

Drop the grudge. It is too heavy for you. Choose the death of your pride and the life of the pilgrim. The road is long, but it leads to a home where the scales are finally, perfectly, and eternally still.

3

VENGEANCE

We tend to treat the "heavy" words of Scripture like they're abstract museum pieces. We look at a word like "vengeance" and want to sanitize it. We want to turn it into something polite, something that doesn't smell real. But the Bible doesn't do that. It doesn't play games with the vocabulary of our pain. When Paul writes in Romans 12 that "Vengeance is Mine," he uses a word that carries weight—visceral, jagged weight. He isn't talking about a mild disapproval. He is talking about the holy, terrifying right of a Sovereign God to settle the accounts of a broken world. He's talking about God vindicating us for harm done.

For the person sitting on their porch with a heart full of shadows, this is not a threat. It is a relief. It is the greatest relief you will ever know. To hear God say, "Vengeance is Mine," is to hear Him say, "You can put the sword down now." It is the moment you realize that the Judge of all the earth saw exactly what happened in that dark room. He saw the way the money was taken. He saw the way the lie was told. He saw the smirk on the face of the man who thought he got away with it. And more than that—He saw what you *didn't* see. He saw the motives. He saw the hidden betrayals. He saw the full scope of the rot. And He says, "I have it."

We stay awake because we think we're the only ones who remember. We think that if we stop being angry, the sin will vanish into the ether, unpaid and forgotten. But we know that nothing is forgotten in the providence of God. Every deed is recorded. Every tear is stored. When you hand the vengeance to God, you aren't saying the crime didn't matter. You're saying that the only One who can properly handle the crime is the One whose scales never shake. You are trusting that God is a more efficient, more holy, and more terrifying judge than you could ever dream of being. You are stepping out of the courtroom and letting the Master of the Universe take the bench.

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The Grit of Forgiveness

But then we get to the word that makes everyone flinch: forgiveness. We've turned this into a light, flowery thing—something that involves "letting go" and finding your "inner peace." But that's not the forgiveness of the Bible. Biblical forgiveness is made of grit and bone. It is not a feeling. In fact, if you wait until you feel like forgiving, you'll be sitting in your bitterness until they lower your casket into the dirt.

Forgiveness is a decision to leave the debt at the foot of the Cross. It is a legal transaction of the soul. You look at the person who owes you your reputation, your money, your childhood, or your peace—and you look at the debt and say, "I am not going to collect this from you." You aren't saying the debt isn't real. You aren't saying it was "okay." You are saying that the invoice has been moved. You are taking the bill out of your pocket and nailing it to the tree where Christ bled for your own depravity.

This is the hardest work you will ever do. It is the "stewardship of the chasm." You have to decide, every single morning, that you are not going to be the debt collector today. When the memory comes back, and the fire starts to rise in your gut, you have to look at that fire and say, "No. That belongs to the Lord." It is a rugged, constant surrender. It is the realization that if you insist on collecting the debts of others, you are essentially telling God that His mercy toward you was a mistake. You are saying you'd rather live in a world of "eye for an eye" than a world of "grace for the broken." Forgiveness is the decision to live in the latter, even when it hurts like a limb being set.

Coals of Fire

And then there is the practical friction—the "how-to" of the pavement. Paul tells us to feed our enemy and give him drink. He says that in doing so, we will heap "burning coals" on his head. Now, some people use this as a sneaky way to seek revenge—they think if they're "nice" enough, they'll get to watch their enemy suffer. But that's more vanity. That's revenge in a Sunday suit.

The "coals of fire" are about the weight of conviction. When you respond to evil with a quiet, rugged good, you create a friction that the world cannot understand. You are showing them a grace they didn't earn and don't know how to carry, forcing the enemy to confront the reality of their own sin without

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you ever lifting a finger. This is the "Theology of the Pavement" in action: refusing to let a toxic soul dictate the marrow of your character.

Handling those who hate you isn't about being a doormat; it's about being a wall. A wall of integrity that refuses to crumble. Sometimes "doing good" means the grit of a firm, hard boundary that protects the innocent. Sometimes it means the silence of a man who knows he has the perfect comeback but chooses the Cross instead. You don't have to attend every argument you're invited to. You are a steward of your peace, and you don't owe your soul to anyone but the King.

The Stewardship of the Broken Path

We walk these ancient paths because they lead to a place where the debt is finally settled. The vocabulary of vengeance and grace is the only language that fits the grit of our lives. We are fallen men living among the fallen. There is sweat and blood, but there is also the Cross. That tree is the final word on every grudge—the place where God's holy vengeance and His mercy kiss. You don't have to be the judge because the Judge was already judged for you.

Jim finally saw that holding the match made him a slave, not a master. He let the Lord handle it and went back to his framing. The scars remained, and the bills were still there, but the rot in his chest was gone. He was no longer a victim. Instead, he was a man forgiven enough to let a thief walk away. He could leave him with God.

Drop the language of the courtroom for the vocabulary of the Covenant. Let the Judge do His job while you walk the pavement. The road is narrow, and the grit is real, but the Shepherd is with you. His scales are eternally, perfectly still.

4

THE LOGISTICS OF LEAVING IT TO GOD

It's one thing to agree God is Judge from a Sunday pew. It's another to see the man who lied about you in the grocery store on a Tuesday. The "heat" rises—heart hammering, hands itching for a fight. This is the friction of the Fall; your biology rebels because the world is broken. We often mistake this heat for fuel to settle the score, but the pavement of mercy requires a different logistics.

Your first job isn't to talk or even to offer instant forgiveness. It's to acknowledge God's sovereignty over your heart rate. He is in that grocery aisle as much as He was at Sinai. Mercy is the rugged decision not to let your biology dictate your theology. You don't need a scene or a fake smile. Sometimes the most faithful act is to just keep walking. Your reputation isn't yours to defend. It's a gift from God. If He allows it to be smeared, He has a purpose in the muck. Breathe and remember: you are a ward of the King.

Boundaries vs. Bitterness

Now, we need to talk about the theology of the fence. There is a specific kind of confusion in our circles: we think "forgiveness" means letting the wolf back into the sheepfold. We think that if we don't allow ourselves to be hurt over and over again by the same person, we're somehow being "un-Christian" or "bitter." But that is a misunderstanding of the ancient paths.

Forgiveness is about the past; boundaries are about the future. Forgiveness is the decision to leave the debt at the Cross. It's the refusal to be the debt collector. But a boundary is the stewardship of your own life and the lives of those God has put under your care. If a man steals from

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your business, you leave the vengeance to God—but you don't give him the keys to the safe the next day. That isn't bitterness. It's wisdom. It is the recognition that we live in a world of total depravity, and sometimes the most loving thing you can do for a sinner is to make it impossible for them to sin against you again.

The trick is to build the fence without letting the rot of hate grow on your side of it. This is where most of us fail. We build a boundary, but we line it with the barbed wire of resentment. We think we're protecting ourselves, but we're actually building a cage for our own souls. Bitterness results from letting the person who hurt you live in your head rent-free. It's the "vanity" of thinking that by staying angry, you're somehow winning.

How do you tell the difference? A boundary is quiet. It doesn't shout. It doesn't need to be defended with a twenty-minute speech about how much you've been wronged. It's a "no." It is the decision to stop the cycle of harm. Bitterness, on the other hand, is loud. Even when it's silent, it's screaming. It's the constant rehearsal of the crime. It's the hope that the other person suffers. If you find yourself enjoying the thought of their failure, you aren't practicing wisdom; you're practicing hate. And hate is a fire that will eventually consume the person who carries it.

The redeemed life is a life of decisiveness, and it is never more necessary than when you are deciding where the fence goes. You have to be honest enough with yourself to know when you're protecting your soul and when you're coddling your pride. Boundaries are meant to preserve the peace of the Kingdom, not the vanity of the ego. When you set a boundary from a place of grace, you can do it with a steady hand. You don't need the heat of anger to build a fence; you need the light of the Word.

The Vocation of the Peacemaker

We often confuse "peacemaking" with "peacekeeping." A peacemaker ignores the rot to keep the room quiet, but a peacemaker deals with the grit so true peace can grow. Your job isn't to fix the other person, for you weren't hired to be their Holy Spirit. Your vocation is simply to be faithful in the mess. This is liberating. If you move in grace and they spit in your face, you haven't failed. Success is measured by obedience, not results. We are stewards, not the Master of the harvest.

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When dealing with the "toxic," faithfulness looks like prayer—not flowery wishes, but the visceral prayer of the soul. You start by praying for the Judge to be the Judge: "Lord, deal with this person according to Your holiness." It is a terrifying prayer that aligns your heart with the truth. They are in God's hands, not yours. Then, you pray for their heart to be broken by the same grace that broke you. You do it as a duty because the Master commands it. When you pour the water of intercession on the fire of your hate, the heat starts to dissipate.

This is the ultimate "Theology of the Pavement." You stand in the dust, looking at the man who tried to break you, and choose his ultimate good over your immediate satisfaction. It is the death of the "I." It is the moment you realize that you and the thief are both made of the same dust, both under the same curse, and both in desperate need of the same Savior.

The Stewardship of the Wounded Heart

The road is long. The scars on Jim's knuckles aren't going away. The hole in your chest might never fully close this side of the resurrection. We live in the "already but not yet." We have the peace of Christ, but we still have the friction of this world.

The logistics of leaving it to God aren't about avoiding hurt. They are about finding a way to stay faithful while you hurt. It is the stewardship of the wounded heart. You are a man or a woman walking a narrow path, and you have been given a specific set of trials to navigate. This betrayal, this loss, this chasm—this is the ground God has called you to work.

Don't waste your energy trying to fix the past or force the future. Just be faithful on Tuesday morning. When the heat rises, give it to the Judge. When a boundary is needed, build it with wisdom. When the enemy is mentioned, take them to the throne in prayer. This is the grit of the Christian life. It isn't "vibrant" or "transformative" in the way the marketing people say.

It's heavy, it's slow, and it's often very quiet.

And it's the way of the Cross. The way the Shepherd walked. As you walk it, you will find that the weight of your honor and the weight of your grief are being slowly transformed into a weight of glory that this world cannot

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understand. You aren't a victim of your circumstances, but a participant in the providence of a King who never wastes a tear.

Drop the gavel. Pick up the basin. Let the Judge do His job, and you do yours. The pavement is hard, but the Word is sure. And one day, the friction will be gone, the dust will be cleared, and we will see that the path we thought was a mess of thorns was actually the road home.

5

THE FINAL COURTROOM

We all carry this nagging fear that bad guys win. We see the thief who dies rich and the parent who goes to the grave without ever saying, "I'm sorry." Something in our marrow tells us that if we don't settle the score now, the world is unchecked evil. We mistake silence for escape. But that is the vanity of a soul that has forgotten the Cross. In God's world, no one "gets away" with anything. Not one cent. Not one betrayal. We live under a Sovereign Judge whose scales aren't tipped by the years. The final courtroom is a visceral reality, and every sin has a price tag. Either Christ took the fire on the Cross, or the sinner faces it on Judgment Day. There is no third option. No sliding by.

The Cross as Justice

We usually talk about the Cross as this light, happy symbol of love. But for the believer, the Cross is the most terrifying display of justice in human history. It tells us that God's hatred of sin is so heavy, so absolute, that He would rather crush His own Son than let a single debt go unpaid. When you realize that, the "need" for personal revenge starts to look small and pathetic. If the person who hurt you is in Christ, then their sin was already punished with a severity you couldn't imagine. If they are not in Christ, then they are heading toward a courtroom where your puny attempts at "getting even" will look like a child throwing a pebble at a mountain.

Realizing this is the only thing that allows you to breathe. It's the relief of knowing the books are being kept by the One who actually knows how to count. When you see the person who ruined your reputation or stole your toil, you don't have to be the one holding the match. You don't have to stay awake as the debt collector. The debt has already been transferred to a higher court. This isn't simply "letting it go"; it's recognizing who the

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real Authority is. No one gets a pass. The moral arc of the universe doesn't only bend toward justice—it is held there by the iron grip of a Sovereign King.

The Reward of the Quiet Spirit

And this is where the peace starts to grow—the reward of the quiet spirit. We spend our lives in a state of high-alert friction because we are waiting for an apology that is never coming. We think our peace is a hostage held by the person who hurt us. "I'll be fine," we say, "once they admit what they did." But what if they never do? What if they die convinced they were the victim? If your soul is waiting for their "I'm sorry" to feel whole, you are a slave.

But the quiet spirit finds a peace that doesn't depend on the other person. It's a peace that comes from the floorboards up. It's the faith that says, "The Judge sees. That is enough." There is a rugged dignity in the man who can walk through a room full of people who believe a lie about him and stay quiet. He isn't quiet because he's weak, but because he's anchored. He knows that his reputation isn't something he built, so it isn't something he has to defend with his own sweat. It belongs to God.

Finding this peace is an act of stewardship. You are deciding that your heart is too precious to be a storage unit for someone else's trash. You are choosing to leave the debt at the foot of the Cross, not because the other person deserves it, but because you deserve to be free of the weight. The "quiet spirit" isn't about being a doormat. It's about being a rock in the middle of a storm. It's about knowing that the final verdict has already been written by a Judge who loves you, and nothing a thief or a liar says can change the ink on that page.

Resting in Providence

This leads us to the hardest part of the pavement: resting in providence when life is plain unfair. We want to believe that if we follow the "ancient paths," our lives will be smooth. We think that "faith" means the business succeeds and the family is happy. But the Bible never promises a smooth road. It promises a sure Shepherd.

FIELD GUIDE

Providence is the belief that God is as much in the theft as He is in the gift. He is in the cancer, the betrayal, and the chasm. This may be hard to fathom, but it is the truth of the sovereign God who controls the waves, the role of the dice, and even the evil one. We don't worship a God who is surprised by the "unfairness" of life. We worship a God who orchestrates the friction to shape the soul. When life is unfair, you have to ask: "What is the Master doing with this?" He's likely killing your vanity. He's stripping away your reliance on your own strength. He's forcing you to look at the "Master's Gold" and realize it was never yours to begin with.

Trusting God in the mess isn't a feeling. It's a muscle you build by lifting heavy weights. It's the decision to say "Thy will be done" when your own will is screaming for blood. It's the realization that you are not the center of the story. You are a character in a drama written by a King who is using every bit of the grit—the unpaid bills, the failing mind of a parent, the partner who ran off—to prepare you for a weight of glory that you can't even imagine yet.

The Final Verdict

So, what do we do with the Jim's of the world? What do we do with the hands that shake on the back porch? We tell them the truth. We tell them that the sword is too heavy for them and the gavel is not theirs to hold. We tell them to look at the Cross and see the ultimate settlement.

Drop the grudge. It is a rot that will turn you into a ghost of a man. The person who hurt you has already taken enough. Don't give them your future, too. Let the Judge do His job. He is never late, He never misses a detail, and His scales are perfectly balanced.

We walk the pavement with scars on our knuckles and dust on our boots, yes. But we walk with a quiet heart. We walk as people who know that the final courtroom is already in session, and the King is on the throne. We are servants, stewards, walking the narrow path home. And in that home, the friction will finally be gone. The tears will be wiped away by the same hand that took the nails. The debts will be forgotten because the Price has been paid.

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Rest in that. Stay in the duty. Stay in the grace. The road is hard, but the Judge is good. And that is the only theology that can actually survive the pavement.



CONCLUSION

I knew a woman once who lived inside a lawsuit for twenty years. Her life was a mountain of depositions, legal fees, and a heart that had become as hard as a kiln-dried brick. She had been cheated, no doubt about it. The injustice was real and documented. She told me she felt like she was the guardian of the truth—that if she stopped fighting, the lie would win. But after two decades, she walked into my study, sat down, and said she was dropping the case. She hadn't won a cent. In fact, she'd lost a fortune in time and peace.

"Why now?" I asked.

She looked at her hands—hands that had been clenched into fists for a generation—and she opened them. "I realized I was winning the argument but losing my soul," she said. "I found something better than being right. I found the ability to sleep again. I found the Sovereignty of God."

That is the "Open Hand." It is the final movement of the soul that has stopped trying to grab the gavel. It is the quiet heart that realizes God's justice is surer than yours. When you finally walk away from the battlefield of your own resentment, you aren't surrendering to the enemy. You are surrendering to the King. You are deciding that the "Master's Gold" in your life is your faithfulness, not your vindication. You are acknowledging that if God allows a thief to take your money or a liar to take your name, He still owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He can restore what the locusts have eaten, but He won't restore a heart that has turned to stone.

The road we've walked in these pages is rugged and narrow. Whether it's the grit of honoring a failing parent or the friction of a business partner's betrayal, the answer is always the same: Look at the Cross. See the

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ultimate justice. See the ultimate mercy. And then, for heaven's sake, drop the grudge. It is too heavy for a creature like you. You weren't made to carry the sword; you were made to carry the light.



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