

Romans 12:14-15 - Someone's Gonna Pay - 03 February 2013

Now, as you could see we have some boards here that speaks about a subject that may be very real to our hearts today, a subject on vengeance. And in order to do that, I like us to introduce our topic by means of a short little video clip and I hope it will lead us right into what God has for us this morning. (Video Clip plays)

Vengeance ! Is this the most frenetic video you have seen this year, running around, confusing and so on , but this is what vengeance is all about, isn't it? Today we are going to look at some things that will particularly be relevant to you, because we are going to talk about things like hurt and betrayal and insults and slander. And when these things come into your life, your hurt, your pain and there is a sense of injustice done to you and you cry out within yourself, someone's gonna pay! So today we are going to look at a subject on vengeance. And what God has to say about that vengeful spirit when we cry out, someone is gonna pay. Four weeks ago, on 1st of January this year is my son's 5th birthday party, it's his 5th birthday. We decided to have a bigger birthday bash for him and my son loves dinosaurs. It's the flavour of the season for him. It used to be trees and now he is graduated to dinosaurs. So we decided to have a dinosaur themed birthday party. Everything was dinosaurs with the bouncing castle, and you know bouncing castle where the kids jump inside and hop and they have a whale of the time. The balloons are all decorated with dinosaur pictures. We have a dinosaur gift packs for his friends who came. We have dinosaur scientist dressed in a lab coat and all sorts of dinosaur stuff . And we even had a dinosaur cake - its a whole landscape of a cake with volcano lava flowing all over and dinosaurs stuck all over it is. Shawn had a beautiful time, he loved his birthday. I think he really enjoyed it and he was bouncing in the castle before his friends came and he was the centre of attraction when he played the games, when it did those activities and experiments about dinosaurs. He loved his birthday cake - its all dinosaurs and so it was a time for us to sing a birthday song for our son after he had such a wonderful time. So we lit the candles and everybody sang happy birthday to you and he was about to blow his candle when one of his classmates, a cheeky little boy, before Shawn could blow, he already blew and all the candles were extinguished and what happened was like a slow-mo horror flick in front of me. When the face of delight and exuberance suddenly changed. There was first shock and horror, then grief and then anger. I saw his face, an angelic cute little face was suddenly flushed red. His eyes were full of tears and he was furious and within a split second, he shouted at the boy who did this to him You see, it was his moment. It was what

everything was culminating towards. It was the golden moment and the little boy stole it from him. And there was a sense of injustice done to Shawn and he shouted at the boy. Shawn had a good friend, his best friend, his classmate as well who came. Now his best friend was a very nice boy. He tapped Shawn on the shoulder, wanted to console and comfort Shawn and when Shawn saw his friend he AHHH. He shouted at him as well. He shouted at everybody - I don't want this anymore, I don't want this, I don't want the cake. I said Shawn, I lit the candles for you and you can blow it again. And he says No, I don't want. He was throwing a tantrum because someone has ruined a beautiful day for him. There was a sense of injustice done to my son or he felt it. And he was saying this, someone's gonna pay, everything's to go and every one gotta suffer now because I am hurt. And when somebody say something to you about you. Maybe she said this, they said this, maybe your husband was slighting you with his words or your mother in law just say you are stupid. What happens is that there is an insult that comes into your life, you're pained you're hurt and you said you've got to pay for it. You are angry you see, you are bitter, you see, and you want to retaliate. That is vengeance.

I read about an article this week about a man who took vengeance on his wife, or to be exact ex-wife, and what he said is very very instructive because it shows you the psychology of a man when he is hurt. The story is found this week in the news. I read about it. It's about Carlos Diaz is an American who was accused of using a blowtorch, you know a blowtorch they use for welding metal pieces together. He used this, he managed to soak his wife in some kind of gasoline, tricked her to a place, soaked her with it. And used this gas torch to torch her. She suffered burns, of course, 1st degree, 2nd degree burns on her hands, face and so on. And he did this because she threatened to leave him. He did this because she suspected her of adultery and this is why he did so. He said I had to be a man about it. She hurt my pride. He went on to say I couldn't think straight. I want to pass out, it's like just now the video you saw, just frenetic and blur. It's all caught up in rage, you see. I had to do something. I had to. She was my right arm. I did everything for her. I forgot all about my own life. I just work to support her and to pay the rent, and this is what she does? Now, I wanted to give her a little pain. I wanted to change her a little. You see, what Carlos Diaz is saying is - You've hurt me and someone's gonna pay. I've got to take vengeance. I don't think anyone of you today will take a blowtorch and do it to your husband or wife. I hope not. Neither will I think you will take up a cleaver and chop up your husband and make him into curry human. I doubt you're going to do that. I also doubt that you would regularly shout at someone, like my son did, because of you are more circumspect, however, are you aware of the subtle ways you exert

vengeance or you take vengeance on people? What are the subtle ways you exert vengeance? Let me share that with you . Because I've experienced it myself, I do it myself. I'm just articulating what you have done as well.

Have you heard of passive aggressive behaviour? Passive aggressive - what is it? Well, when someone said something unkind, maybe its your mom in law, maybe its your husband, maybe its your church friend. Someone dear to you, someone close to you, someone you thought you could trust and love and he or she said something nasty about you, or behind your back and you know it. What happens now is that instead of shouting and because you are more cultured than shouting, you exert subtle vengeance in that you withdraw from the person. You give him the silent treatment . In your mind, you have a switch that goes - you are out. I am not going to think about you anymore . I am not going near you anymore and I am not going to talk with you anymore. I'm gonna make you pay by ignoring you. And its very common amongst husbands and wives. The wife say something insulting to the husband- you useless bum , you never get the work done. You never do this , you never help out with the family and you know what? The husband instead of quarreling, he switches off and he goes into passive aggressive behaviour. I'm done with you. That's it. I'm useless. I don't care about the family, I am going to get out and therefore he doesn't come home, he hangs out with his friends. He does care about the family because he wanted to prove her right anyway. I am done with you and maybe the wife does the same thing. The husband say something mean and hurtful, and she reacts by saying, all right, tonight you don't come in. You sleep in the living room. In Chinese we say be the captain of the living room. Stay out ! I'm ignoring you . Passive aggressive. Maybe it's seen in the way we talk about people behind the backs, he said something mean and when I talk to someone about him, I'm sure gonna to add some spices to what I'm gonna say. You belittle him. You say mean things about him. Those are the subtle ways that we exert vengeance.

What does God say about vengeance? What does God say when we are hurt? What does God say when you're slandered and betrayed? What does God want us to do? Well, it's very clear in Scripture, in Romans 12, which is the series we are going through. It says- Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. The 1st thing I want to see is that this is the reality of life. Hurt and pain is the reality of life. There is this thinking that when I believe in Jesus, I will be in a bed of roses. The answer is no. When you believe in Jesus, it doesn't mean that you are gonna escape from hurts and pains from people around you . It's going to be part and parcel of your life. In fact, according to the Bible, when you believe in Jesus, when you follow Jesus, you will get even more of this. People will persecute you. The word

"persecute" here is to chase after. It's a picture of a hunter hunting his prey, he is going right after it, and there are people today who are out to get you, you see. Maybe someone in the office is out to get you. Maybe there are people in the social circle that are out to get you. They are envious or whatever it is, there are people that are out to get you. And you know what really hurts today? I don't think it's those physical cleaving, no, I think what is most common as an experience for us in getting hurt is words. Because what they could do to you on the outside is on the surface, but what words could do is to hurt you deep on the inside. And there are people who will do that. So God is saying, this is not something that is a surprise. It ought not be a surprise, there will be people who will persecute you, hurt you, go after you. But beside the reality of this is what is the response to the hurt we should have. What does God have to say? It's very obvious- level 1 or the 1st thing we need to realise is when someone hurts you, do no evil to them. Do not curse them because the instinctive thing when I am hurt is that I will retaliate. When Shawn was robbed of his golden moment, which you can never go back, it is to fight back. It is to say you got to pay, retaliate and Paul is saying, when you are cursed, when you persecuted, do not curse, do not retaliate, maintain the poise and the control. Now some of you could already do this, maybe in your life. You can already experience that kind of a control and poise. You never retaliate, but let me say this. That's not good enough. Not good enough. But that all I can do. Yes, but that's not good enough. You see, because this short little verse says that not only must you not curse them, but you must do good to them, you must bless those who persecute you. So not only must you avoid doing evil, you must actively do good. In fact the tense is keep blessing those, keep doing good to them. Wow, that is something quite different. Now I know that is not really achievable by man, because nobody talks about it apart from the Bible.

Let me share with you some great philosophers and what they think -great in the eyes of the world, of course. Many of you are Chinese people, and the Chinese people realise that there is the great philosopher called Confucius. And Confucius say what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others. Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you. Confucius teaching -is this just Chinese philosophy? No, go to Socrates. This is what he says- What stirs you or stirs your anger when done to you by others, that do not do to others. Similar by another well renowned, a man Socrates. There is another Jewish guy - he is a rabbi, he is a Sifu, he is a teacher of the law. Well known in the past and he says do not do to thy neighbour what is hateful to thyself. You realise something about these 3 men? And what they say about anger and vengeance? Very similar. They all say, do not do, do

not do, do not do . Its level 1. Level 1 forgiveness - when you are hurt, do not to retaliate, that's good enough. But Paul and the Lord Jesus Christ is saying, that's not good enough. Avoiding retaliation is not good enough, you've got to actively do good to those who hurt you. Wah, this is getting crazy. How can I ever do that ? You know when you read the Bible, you can really it like bedtime story and you can just skim through these verses and say - all right these are the verses of the Bible. It's idealistic but its not for me. But this is what God wants me to do. I'm serious, God is serious. So the question is, wow, this is crazy because my natural response is retaliation. God is saying Level 1, come here, do not retaliate And then he is saying Level 2, do good to them. So he is not just saying go into middle ground, where you do nothing. But you go into the positive realm where you bless them. Actually in the Bible, Jesus not only so you need to bless them . Bless means speak well, that's the word - eluogia which means to speak well of someone. Instead of running down someone, you praise him , you commend him, you speak well of him. Jesus not only talk about blessing others who curse us, He talks about praying for those who persecute us , to do good to them, to heal them. And not only to heal them, but also to forgive them. So guys, isn't this mission impossible? How can I move from not retaliating to actually actively doing good for them ? To you it may seem right now quite easy. It's all right, I understand , I can do it . But let me give you a challenge- right now where you are, think about the person who has irritated you the most. It maybe your mother-in-law, it maybe your husband right beside you. This morning as you came to church, you are arguing and you are folding arms and you are saying will never talked with him again! It maybe your boss who just gave you a good scolding and you really angry on the inside. Think about that person and then seek to understand how difficult this command is. God,this is crazy, how can I do it? Now if that is not difficult enough, let me tell you Level 3 forgiveness. So level 1 is don't retaliate. Level 2 is now do good to them. Let me say, level 3 is this - not only do I not retaliate, and I need to do good to them, I want to do good to them. I want the best. I love them and I want the best for them. You say where do you get that,Pastor? Its found in the next verse. The next verse, in verse 15, almost looks like it has nothing to do with verse 14. If you don't see the context. Verse 15 says rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Now what is this all about? You see ,this is a test. This is a superb test for yourself. If you have really forgiven someone, if you really could say I love my enemy. Because the reality that most of us will live in is this. If you have hurt me, I gloat over your sorrows. When you get into trouble. I say "You deserve it all.Ó Or when he has something to celebrate, you are jealous and you sorrow because you say to yourself, how come he gets it and I don't ? It's not fair. I should have it. So the real test of whether you have really forgiven someone is that you asked this

question, will I rejoice when he rejoices? When he gets a promotion, when he and his family is coming back together, when he serving or when he is growing in grace, do I celebrate with him or am I jealous? And when he is down and out, would I gloat or will I support him ?

You see, Paul is saying level 1 forgiveness, no retaliation. Level 2 forgiveness do good to them, level three forgiveness you do it from the heart. You really, really love them. Wow, this is crazy, right? Someone hurt you and instead of going to your conventional methods to take revenge like silent treatment, passive-aggressive behaviour, belittling them, slandering them, you say I am not going to do all that. But I am going to serve him. I'm going to pray for him. Not pray about him. Sometimes we pray about people and we talk about the wrong things. But we pray for him. You speak well of him and you say, I wish you the best from the bottom of my heart. I don't know about you, but this overwhelming sense, this is mission impossible. And that's why I'm so glad that as a church, we did not go to this verses as a subject or topic. We went through the book of Romans as a book study, because the secret, the reason why you can forgive has to be found in what we have studied before. You can't take these verses in isolation, it will be mission impossible for anybody. But that's the beauty of it all. The reason why we today can live a life of blessing and praying and healing and forgiving others is because of what Romans chapters 1 to 12 is all about. It's about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The reason why I can do all these things is because of Jesus and just a little diagrammatic representation for you that you may always remember this. That behind the blessing, behind the forgiving, behind the prayer, behind all these things must be the fact it's all about Christ and what he has done for us on the cross. See this is what the Bible says, for to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to Him who judges justly. Hey, the Bible is saying here. The reason why I would be able to move from level 1 to level two to level three is because of Jesus. You know just now I told you to look at the face. Imagine the face. Don't do that for too long. Look at another face, look at the cross. Remember Jesus, because he is the reason that you can have true forgiveness and love for your enemies. Jesus here, is said to be our example. Hey, do you know who you are if you believe in Jesus? The Bible says, you are a disciple. You know what is a disciple? A disciple is a follower, you say follower of who? Follower of Jesus Christ and what did He do? Well, the Bible says, when he was threatened when he was reviled, he did not revile. When he was suffering, he did not threaten. You follow

Jesus in the way he reacts to hurt and betrayal and insult. He was forsaken by his disciples, he was betrayed by Judas. The Jews who were his people shouted and bayed(?) up for his blood and Jesus forgave them from his heart. He did no evil to them, but he went to the cross for them. He did good for them. The ultimate good that anyone could do. He went to the cross to pay for their sins, someone's gotta pay and Jesus went to pay. And there on the cross from the bottom of his heart, he said Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. And this is what you as a child of God, a follower of Jesus is or are to do.

Why, how can I move from level I to level II to level III. It's about Jesus, it's about the cross. My friends, can I say to you not only did Jesus die as an example for you, he literally died for you. What this means is this, consider, when someone hurt you, it feels really bad, it feels really lousy. I felt that in my life and you don't like that, sure. And that grievance seems to be so big, isn't it? You keep remembering what your mother-in-law, I keep using mother-in-law because, not that I have a bad mother-in-law, please, but it's classic, right? What your mother-in-law said, you lousy woman! And the echo goes in the brain so many times. You stupid man, can't get your job done, your boss' voice keeps coming back all the time you and those scenes I repeat in the mind so many times and you are a gross is really. Hey, you know that he is like É. and those scenes are played in your minds so many times. And you know what? It grows. It becomes really huge, it becomes a big thing, a significant thing for you. And you say, how can I ever forgive him? It's so big! But the Bible tells us, remember the story of the unforgiving servant? Orh, there is this servant who committed criminal breach of trust, squandered and just embezzled a huge amount of money the master gave him. And when the master came back for reckoning, the servant says, please. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me and you know what the master amazingly wiped off the entire debt. I can't remember the exact number but is like many, many thousand lifetimes worth of salary and the master just said - I forgive you. That's it! Now this servant forgiven of his huge, enormous debt goes out, finds another guy that owes him just a little bit, kuching kurak (small in Malay). And he goes there and he wants to strangle him, he wants to kill him and Jesus said, how can this be? What Jesus is saying to you in the story is this - your grievance you suffer may be big too you, but when you put it side-by-side to what Jesus had to suffer in order to save you, it is minuscule.

Now I'm not saying you minimise your pain, it is painful, it's true. But friends, you got to look at Jesus. You look at yourself, you will never be delivered from hatred and vengeance. But when you look at Jesus, there is cure, there is deliverance because you see how much he paid for you, you've experienced grace, and as you experienced

the grace and love, you allow the grace and love to flow through you to those who have done you hurt, you see. And look at the beautiful words, because of the Gospel, your future is secure. Jesus knew his future is secure. Jesus, the Bible says, he continued entrusting himself to Him who judges, justly. Jesus suffered because he will know it's alright. It will be fine. My Father will do right. Today, when someone robs you of something you justly deserve, you feel wronged and you feel that this wrong has to be righted. It will be righted. When Jesus comes again, it will be righted, you will never be disadvantaged. God loves you, he is for you, your future is secure. And in the light of the past demonstration of the love on the cross and he future hope that he's coming for you today, he is coming for you someday. Right here in the present, you will know all these things that happened in your life is not because God forsook you or because you will be lesser off or you will be disadvantaged. God is using these things to chisel away the flesh, to mould you and shape you to be more like Christ. When you see things from the biblical divine perspective , deliverance can take place.

What I'm saying here is this, counsellors, psychiatrists, they tell you, forget about the pain. Counsellors, psychiatrist may say minimise the pain, it's not that bad, you know, it could be worse. The Bible doesn't say that, the Bible says is real. Your pain is real, but you got to bring it to the cross and when you bring your hurts to the cross, there is healing, there is restoration. My friends, what I'm saying here today is what Paul very, very beautifully wrote in Ephesians 4- be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. Who's hurt you today ? Who hurt you today ? And you are giving him the silent treatment. you bearing a grudge within yourself . You're waiting for a chance to pounce, you're waiting for a chance to gloat over his sorrows. Your heart is hardened. Would you pray today, God, give me a tender heart. Not because my enemy deserves it, but because Jesus deserves it. Christ grant me grace to forgive also in Christ. My friends, this morning I also like to encourage you to bring your hurts to the cross. That's where real life begins. There is never real deliverance until we live the Gospel, we bring it to the Gospel. Bring it to Jesus. And let me tell you why God wants you to bring your hurts to the cross, because he wants the best for you. He wants to release you from the prison of bitterness and anger and strife and hatred. You know, it's never nice to live that life. You may not explode at people, but that anger that you suppress, it's like a ball, you know. It keeps rising and you suppress it. It keeps rising and you suppress it. And when you suppress long enough, it leaks out all over your body. It leaks out. The way you treat people , you are snappy at them, the way you talk, the way you email , the way you SMS, its snappy, sharp

because there's anger just leaking out. God doesn't want you to live in that life of angers that hurts you, ruins your spirit. God doesn't want you ruin your relationships, he doesn't, he wants this church. He wants the body of Christ to be United and be glorious, living in harmony.

This is a strange thing. I've been in church, been a Christian long enough to realise that the deepest hurts and sometimes the most difficult to resolve hurts are those within the church. Why? Because expectations are so high. You expect everybody to be like saints that are like Paul and Jesus. You expect everybody to be like angels and so when someone say something mean , it just surprises you. The hurt cuts really deep. But this is where, in particular, we need to bring our hurts to the cross, because Jesus prays for his body to be one. Not broken up into factions and sections. Maybe today you came but you sat in one corner because the guy is in another corner. Hey, God doesn't want your relationships to be broken. God wants you, today, to experience, the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wants you to experience Christianity for yourself in a very, very real ,day- to- day way. That whilst you're hurt, you are not damaged on the inside. That he life of Jesus really flows through you, as you come to the cross ,as you come to the Gospel.

You know this week, Singapore is saddened by the news that a pair of brothers were killed in a road traffic accident by cement truck or vehicle driver. It was a sad thing, but late last night, I saw this little email ,not email, this little newspaper or news article and it really blessed my heart. I want to share with you about Mr. Francis Yap, I, I think by now, everybody knows who he is. I can't imagine anyone of us right here in GLCC being in his shoes. But hey, it maybe one day, because hurt is part of life. What was his response? Fascinating , I think was like 10 PM last night and he went to go on to say, Mr Yap says he has forgiven the 56-year-old truck driver in part due to his faith. Because, as a Christian I must learn to forgive. Now, this is real, all right? It's about this man who was really experience a tragedy. It will be hard from now on for both the driver and us, but we must continue to look forward. Mr Yap said that despite the heart ache, he still has hope and peace because of the cross, because of Jesus in his heart and he believes that one day he will be reunited with his sons in heaven. Because of the cross, because of Jesus. Let me say this to you. My belief, the way we respond to hurt ,betrayal, insults, slender is the way by which the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be proclaimed through this church. I absolutely believe in this statement Live the Gospel you give the Gospel. The Gospel is a mere whimper when the people of God is not living the Gospel. You know we talk about Gospel, we talk about Jesus, but in our lives, we are like the world. We slander back, we retaliate when we are insulted and intimidated and threatened. What difference is God doing

in your life? Can't be seen. So all you say is just a soft whisper but when God's people are living the life centred in the Gospel, living out the Gospel like Mr. Yap is demonstrating. The Gospel we declare shouts out to the world with power. And in GLCC, I believe evangelism is best done when God's people are living out the Gospel 365 days, hundreds of us and flashing the Gospel, living in the schools and hospitals and classes we are in and letting people see Jesus in you. You know what, that glorifies God.

So this morning, it's all about Christ. It's all about Jesus. The reason why I will not resort to subtle forms of vengeance when I'm deeply hurt and I will not just not retaliate, but I would do good. I will do good for the reason why I do all this is because of Jesus, my Lord. And when I do that, and when I allow him to work a deep work in my heart, I experience freedom from hatred. I experience the real life of Jesus. I restore the broken relationships and I glorify God and declare the Gospel. My friends, when you're hurt, someone's gonna pay me. Let me say this, Jesus paid it all. Live your lives in response to what he has done.

Let's bow for a word of prayer. Bring your hurts to the cross as the music plays. I want to afford you this time of reflection and contemplation. Is there someone in your life today that you just can't forgive. You tried to, but you know it's not full. He is still popping up and the feelings of animosity and hatred are still arising within you. You can't rejoice with him if he rejoices, you can't weep with him if he weeps. My friends, I am not surprised as we can never do that until the Gospel of Jesus has its deep work within our hearts. So this morning, by the help of the Holy Spirit, let us bring our hurts to the cross. Maybe there is someone here today you have wronged, you need to right that wrong. Maybe someone has wronged you and you need to speak with that brother but from the bottom of your heart, find that grace in the Gospel to forgive them freely and fully. Maybe there is someone that you have treated badly, silent treatment, gossiping, slandering behind his back or her back. Hey, go to that person right after the service today right when you go home, right when you're back in the office, let the humility of Jesus be seen in you. And so all my friends who are here today for the 1st time, you do not know Jesus, you came with guilt, you wonder if you will ever be accepted by God. Let me say this to you, Jesus loved his enemies. He loved us while we were yet sinners, he loved us while we hated him and he gave his life for me and you. Today, it's all about grace. It's all about the free gift found in the cross of Jesus. Maybe today is the time for you to make a decision to trust in Jesus your Lord. Take that step of faith, believe in him and experience for yourself a life in the Gospel, a radical transformed life in the Gospel. May Jesus be seen in GLCC in each and every one of us, that he be glorified.

And so Father, we come to you this morning thankful for what you have for us in Your Word. May this radical, counter cultural, distinctive Christ- like life be so obvious in us, that you will be glorified and that the world may know we are your disciples. May you through your church here continue to lead generations bring them into a life-changing relationship with Christ. We thank you, we pray all this now in Jesus name. Amen.