

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

(“Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against any of your people.
You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”)
(Leviticus 19: 17-18)

Cherish. What a lovely word. We use it in reference to that which we hold dear to our hearts, to those things or people that we treasure. We associate such wonderful feelings of closeness and appreciation to this word. There used to be a 1970's song entitled: “Cherish.” A refrain: “Cherish is the word I use to describe, All the feeling that I have hiding here for you inside.”

But here in the Old Testament Book of Leviticus the prophet is speaking to the people of his day and he uses the word “cherish” and the special treatment that it calls to mind. But the prophet refers not to an attitude towards a truly appreciated reality or a special relationship with a beloved person. No. The prophet is referring to an attitude that was rather prominent among too many in his community. They were cherishing grudges. Grudges, of all things. The special, dotting, caring attitude towards...keeping alive an attitude of hatred and of wanting to get even with another person, or of trying to act out of spite inflicting maximum damage to the person who has offended them.

Cherishing the desire for revenge. “I have been hurt. I have been on the receiving end of injury or brutality. I have a right to react. I have a right to get even. I have a right to settle the score. And even, to add a little more on to my response just for good measure. Just to make sure that they get my point and realize what they have done.” Jesus references this Law of Getting Even, the *Lex Talionis* (No more than an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth—proportionality). Jesus rejects it. In effect He says: “Don't go there. Take no revenge. Offer no resistance to such slights. Do not turn away.” This way of Jesus is completely different. No other great teacher teaches what Jesus of Nazareth teaches. Why does He teach this? Because it is God's Way and God's Truth. Have we realized that? That is the question of the week.