October 2015

We are in the business of redressing injustice and often focus on the victims’ plight. We empathise with them and address the hurt and damage done. We pray for them and work towards their healing as well as attempt to bring about justice which often takes the form of a punishing, in some way, the perpetrators/aggressors/abusers. It is also sometimes easy for victims and their supporters to turn aggressors. It is only human. Our biggest challenge may be to be compassionate to the enemy.

Our Christian and Good Shepherd way calls us to transcend the merely human and to look to the “enemies”, who are also God’s creation to be restored as his precious children.

You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons (and daughters) of your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:43-45a).


Choosing to love and pray for those who persecute or mistreat us can be mystifying, yet this is what we are called to do by Jesus because it is, in fact, a powerful way to fight the enemy. We are to love all people regardless of how they treat us or our loved ones. There will always be some who set themselves up as enemies against us, yet they are people in need of a saving relationship with Jesus and an understanding of His Lordship in their lives. The Word of God calls us to love them, praying that they too might enter into His kingdom!

We could bring to mind those considered enemies and ask for the grace to see them in a new light. Read, study, apply and pray the truths from God’s Word that our enemies might be drawn to Jesus’ kingdom.

It is crucial that we take the word of God seriously. The section about enemies is one area that is tough to grasp. We are in a world where so many live for themselves and worse still, exploit others for a living.

Having the ability to love and forgive our enemies is counter to our own sense of reasoning. Yet, God teaches us that if we see our enemies in trouble or in need, we help them no matter what.


Exodus 23:5 - If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

Acts 7: 60 - And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Mark 11:25 - And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."
Knowing the True Enemy

Scripture says that our chief enemy is Satan. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). We should, therefore, recognize that behind our flesh and blood enemies Satan is at work. And he can be conquered only by the power of God through persistent prayer.

St. Paul understood this concept more than other disciples or believers. He had persecuted the followers of Jesus, and had many put to death. He had considered all believers to be his enemies. But when God got Paul’s attention on the road to Damascus, which ultimately led to his salvation through Jesus, he grasped the mercy of the Lord. He understood that the followers of Jesus were not his enemies, as God gave him tremendous insight about his real enemy--Satan.

Paul went from being an enemy of God to a child of God through a personal encounter with Jesus. He described the difference, from his personal experience, to the Philippian church: "For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven" (Philippians 3:18-20a).

Like Paul, each of us was at one time an enemy of God: "Since we now have been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled shall we be saved through His life? Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation" (Romans 5:9-11). Because we have experienced the mercy of God, should we not also extend it to others?

Let us examine our hearts to be sure that we are not allowing the devil to have a foothold in our lives where we have acted against others in a manner unworthy of Christ. With repentance and godly sorrow, ask for His forgiveness and seek the forgiveness of those we may have hurt by words or actions. Are we serving the cause of Christ, or doing the work of the enemy of our souls? We have known people who hurt or persecuted us or the people we serve. God calls us to forgive them and help our ‘clients’ forgive. Pray the Father to help us see these enemies through His eyes. Ask Him for a forgiving heart.

Jesus Prayed for His Enemies

Jesus had enemies…and they crucified Him. Yet, He had the ultimate victory. Because God loved the world so much that He sent Jesus to die, His Son did not leave the earth without praying for those who were responsible for His death. Jesus, who asked us to love and pray for our enemies, demonstrated the ultimate gift of love while hanging on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). Jesus prayed for His enemies...how can we do less?

To love our enemies is one amazing command of Christ. In our flesh, we naturally want to retaliate or fight back when we are treated unkindly or persecuted. Jesus preached forgiveness and mercy: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). His life demonstrated grace, that ours might also. "Pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44b). Because of God’s mercy, we were saved. We must extend His mercy to those who are still enemies of God, so that they might also receive what we have been given.
Overcome Evil with Good

“Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but do what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21). How will the adversary come into God’s kingdom—through revenge, or by loving acts and prayers for them?

How to Pray for Your Enemies

Our Lord is the “God who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.” (Romans 4:17b). It is hard to imagine that our enemies could ever turn away from evil and come to Christ, but He has called us to pray for them. What seems impossible to us is possible with God (Mark 10:27). What greater love could there be than to pray for God to draw them into His kingdom?

Remember the people considered as enemies: here are some of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The human abusers</th>
<th>The task masters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The human traffickers</td>
<td>The hatemongers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The drug traffickers</td>
<td>The money grabbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex traders</td>
<td>The kidnappers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The terrorists</td>
<td>Corrupt leaders, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here are some passages from Colossians that can help us pray on their behalf:

Pray that God will rescue them from the dominion of darkness and bring them "into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14).

“And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in himself, through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him” (Colossians 1:21-22).

Pray God will make known to them His glorious riches through the mystery of Christ (Colossians 1:27). Pray that they may "know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2-3).

Pray that they will "put to death whatever belongs to earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5).

Pray that they will rid themselves of "anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from [their] lips" (Colossians 3:8).

Pray that they will become God's children, holy and dearly loved, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (Colossians 3:12).

Pray they will come to know and possess the love of the Lord (Colossians 3:14).

Pray that they will come to know the peace of Christ and that it will rule in their hearts (Colossians 3:15).

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