

# DEALING WITH YOUR ENEMIES

- By Pastor Greg Hooker

*“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you...” (Matthew 5:44).*

All of us have heard the old expression, ‘If it were easy, everyone would be doing it’! This is one of those passages of Scripture that gives most of us a lot of trouble, present company included! It simply goes against human nature to “turn the other cheek” when someone is hurdling mud pies of hate and disrespect at you. Often our first response is to grab the biggest pie we can find and hurl it right back!

Jesus spoke these words while He was standing on the Mount of Beatitudes near Capernaum. This Scripture is part of ‘The Sermon on the Mount’ delivered by our Lord to a great multitude of people. Let’s break this passage down and see if we can discover how we are to treat our enemies in a way pleasing to Jesus. We find three different ways in which people can be our enemies, and three different ways in which we can respond:

## **I. SOME ENEMIES HATE YOU FROM THEIR HEARTS “...them that hate you...”**

There are some individuals whose hearts are saturated and controlled by intense and often unbridled hate. We recently saw an example of this in the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Connecticut. Twenty-year-old Adam Lanza massacred twenty innocent children and six adults out of sheer hate. Driven by forces of evil and pent-up rage, Adam exploded with abhorrence beyond human comprehension. While no one knows exactly what caused him to commit such carnage, our culture laced with violent movies, TV programs, computer games, illegal drugs and alcohol no doubt contributed.

There are some people who, for whatever reasons, elect to harbor unwarranted hate and malice toward others. Most of which aren’t to the degree of Lanza; but nevertheless they are filled with animosity toward their fellowman. Chances are, you may know someone like this.

**What Should Be Our Response To An Enemy Who Hates Us From Their Heart? Jesus said, “Love your enemies...do good to them that hate you...”**

While we cannot always change a person’s inward feelings toward us, we can do what Jesus taught in our Scripture passage – we can show Christ-like love to them. Reprisal is the natural response of the flesh, but love is the retort of the spiritual man – for we are Christians and have the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts.

Not only should we love in word, but in action also. God instructs us to “do good to those who despitefully use you.” Under no circumstance should we lower ourselves to the same level of our

enemies else we be guilty of sin, too. To do so only produces friction in our own souls, grief of spirit, and discontent of mind.

## **II. SOME ENEMIES CURSE AND USE TERRIBLE INSULTS TOWARD US "...that curse you..."**

One of the toughest things to do as a Christian is holding ones tongue when someone is saying evil and hurtful things about you. Everyone has heard the old saying, 'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.' The fact is, unkind and spiteful words do hurt – they cut like a two-edged sword to the very core of your emotions.

### **What Should Be Our Response To An Enemy Who Says Hurtful Things? Jesus said, "...bless them..."**

We are told not to *"render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing"* Those that claim the name of Christ should seek earnestly to mimic the Lord's actions by offering tender words, gentle language, seasoned responses with mild and soft expressions – as the Bible says, "a soft answer turneth away wrath." Many hard feelings could have been avoided with the bridling of ones tongue. Life-long friendships could have been saved with the words of forgiveness. Enemies could have become alias through the proper use of one's speech.

## **III. SOME ENEMIES CONTINUALLY HARASS AND ABUSE YOU "...despitefully use you, and persecute you..."**

Occasionally you'll encounter an enemy who repeatedly harasses and abuses you. It seems like every time you turn around they are there poking you with insults. Jesus knew all too well what it felt like to undergo repeated harassment and abuse – He was ridiculed, cursed at, made fun of, laughed at, mocked, and ultimately put to death.

### **What Should Be Our Response To An Enemy Who Harasses And Abuses You? Jesus said, "...pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you..."**

Remember what Jesus said while hanging on the cross enduring the worst mankind could hurl at him? He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* Jesus could have called ten thousand angels to free him from the old wooden tree, but He simply prayed for His tormenters! We should never underestimate the power of prayer to change the human heart. Wicked and vile men hardened by a life of sin have been changed through the faithful prayers of God's saints. Prayer has brought the sinner from the brink of hell and established his steps on a journey to Heaven.

Is there someone harassing and abusing you? Take them before the Father on the wings of prayer. You are God's child and your Heavenly Father loves and will protect you! Never resort to vengeance – *"for vengeance is mine, saith the Lord."*

Dear Father, you know how hard it is sometimes to 'turn the other cheek' when people are saying and doing unkind things toward us. Nevertheless, empower us with your Spirit to do just that. Help us to mimic our Savior's response to the enemy through love, good deeds and prayer. In Jesus name, your son, Pastor Greg.