



Northside Proclaimer

Proclaiming The Word Of The Lord

1 Thessalonians 1:8

Northside Church Of Christ Welcomes You!

September 20, 2015

How to Be like Your Father in Heaven

Bryan Garlock

Interestingly the Bible says much about the loving treatment of our enemies. This writer finds this subject matter interesting from a humanistic viewpoint because the concept of loving our enemies contradicts the majority view. It “goes against the grain” so to speak. What we mean is the world’s mentality is “an eye for an eye” or an “I’ll show him.” Further, the Bible’s claim for blessing those who curse you is, at its core, a claim of inspiration. For instance in contrast to the Bible’s demands, the Koran speaks to the destruction of one’s enemies and the joy that death and harm brings the destroyer. The Koran, to many, is inspired because it bows to their desires and satisfies their appetite for retaliation. Surely, an honest person can see which of the two is God-breathed versus phony.

As Christians we have been instructed not to avenge ourselves for “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Rom. 12.19). For one not to avenge himself will take, among many things, love and goodwill, patience and self-control and a mind like Christ’s toward his adversary. To reject this list of characteristics is to substitute the proper person, or avenger, with one who has not the right to avenge.

Another thought-provoking aspect of the Bible’s insistence of love toward enemies is summed up in few statements: “...You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind...” and “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt. 22.38-39). One who sincerely loves the Lord truly loves his neighbor. Jesus taught that our neighbor is anyone and everyone (cf. Luke 10.25-37) and “...whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 7.12). Therefore if nothing else was said throughout the Bible about our enemies, principally speaking, we are obligated to love both friend and foe. Fortunately the Holy Spirit has revealed many truths to guide us in this area.

From the beginning loving your enemies has always been an intricate part of righteousness. God required His people under Moses’ Law to “not take vengeance or bear a grudge against” another (Lev. 19.18). He instructed, “If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. 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” (Exo. 23.4-5). Our Father was molding a people after His image, that is, a holy people for a holy God! Therefore hatred, grudges, retaliation, etc. stand in complete opposition to the holiness of God. Notice below that Jesus said we are to do these things, “...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.”

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Announcements

- Remember the shut in's.
- Pray for the church and one another.
- Remember the spiritual sick among us.
- Call or email Bryan to add announcements, thanks.
- If you'd like to volunteer to help with Bible studies with our fair contacts, please see Bryan G.

Chronological Bible Reading Plan

Sep 20 Hag 1-2
Sep 21 Zech 1-7
Sep 22 Zech 8-14
Sep 23 Est 1-5
Sep 24 Est 6-10
Sep 25 Ezra 7-10
Sep 26 Neh 1-5

Jesus taught us to love, pray for, and not hate our enemies. "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect'" (Matt. 5.43-48).

Parallel to Matthew's account, Luke recorded, "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also...If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (6.27-36).

Like Jesus, inspired men taught us to bless those who curse us (Rom. 12.14; James 3.9-10; 1 Peter 3.8-9). One way we can do such is by heeding the words of Paul: "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12.17-21). The wise man said, "If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you" (Prov. 25.21-22). Apparently both writers copied the same source!

Peter declared, "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" (1 Peter 2.21-23). Like Jesus we ought to "turn the other cheek" and trust in the Lord (cf. Matt. 5.39).

Finally, we ought to show love toward our enemies because God first showed love toward us (1 John 4.19). Paul said, "And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him..." (Col. 1.21-22). Elsewhere he penned, "...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us...For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (see Rom. 5.6-10). Give attention to "while we were enemies." When we choose to be friends of the world we are at enmity with God (James 4.4). However, we serve a God who loved us even when we were enemies. Unfortunately this wonderful message has been distorted by the world and false religions such as Islam. Do you have an enemy? Love him. Pray for him. Bless him. Do good towards him. Only then can you be like your Father in heaven. BG