

WHO IS MY



Who is my enemy? When we as disciples of Jesus hear of, or are asked this question, our thoughts immediately go to the scripture found in Ephesians 6:12 where it tells us, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”* We are taught that our enemy is and are the forces

of darkness and never people (flesh and blood). This is absolutely correct. However, for many of us, this doesn't always seem to ring true. Even to many of us who are “teachers and preachers” of the Word.

Recently, I had heard of a conversation between two believers where one had mentioned something about the other being a friend to the first believer's “enemies” and how upset they were with this. Now, I know that many of us immediately would take the “self-righteous road” and say that that first believer would be and is a hypocrite. However, before any of us “casts the first stone” we should take a good hard look at our own “glass houses.”

As believers we are very familiar with the “greatest commandment” – to love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul and your mind. The second is like unto it – we are to love our neighbor and others, as well. These have been discussed by Jesus, the Apostles in their writings, as well as many, many teachers and preachers throughout the Christian era. I myself have written discussions concerning these topics. Therefore, we will not go into that in this discussion. However, I do desire to discuss another commandment that Jesus taught His disciples at that time and to us as His disciples, today.

That command is found in Matthew 5:43-44 which states, *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.”* ⁴⁴ *But I say unto you, **Love your enemies**, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you...”* It is also found in Luke 6:27-28, *“But I say unto you which hear, **Love your enemies**, do good to them which hate you,”* ²⁸ *Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you...”*

Wow!! If we thought “loving our neighbor” was difficult, what about this one that Jesus commands of His disciples. I know what some of us may be thinking. Jesus doesn't “technically” say that this is a commandment. However, if we look at the scripture we see that it reads, *“But I say unto you...”* Who is making this statement? Jesus. If Jesus is making this statement then it is not going to be a suggestion for us. No. Unfortunately, or we should say fortunately, it is a command given by Jesus, Himself.

One thing we need to immediately clarify is that the Jewish scriptures never tell us to *“hate thine enemy.”* As previously stated, the Mosaic Law commanded that *“you shall love your neighbor.”* Unfortunately, some teachers and rabbis in the days and times leading up to the time of Jesus had added an “opposite application” of this commandment which was really a misapplication and misinterpretation of the actual scripture. Their reasoning was that the Law only stated that they were to “love their neighbor.” They came to the conclusion that this meant only their fellow Jewish people. And only those fellow Jews that met their standards of what a good Jew should be. These would be the “neighbors” that they were to love.

Anyone outside of **their** definition of “neighbor” would therefore be considered their “enemy.” According to **their** interpretation, the Law said they needed to “love their neighbor” – their fellow “upstanding” and if I may add, fellow self-righteous, Jews. Having come to this conclusion they therefore taught that through the “letter of the Law” they would technically have the legal “spiritual right” to consider anyone else their enemy and therefore “hate” them. This would include of course Gentiles (the Romans especially) but also Samaritans (this is what the parable of the Good Samaritan really addresses), publicans and harlots, etc.

That is why Jesus qualifies His teaching with the statement, *“you have heard it said...”* It was not God’s Word but rather man’s misinterpretation and adding to the Word. Now, before we say “bad rabbis” let us take a good, hard look at the Body of Christ today. The same thing is being done by many who are considered to be in leadership and teaching positions – they are adding or giving a new “revelatory and enlightened” interpretation of the scriptures. This, I believe, is a form of heresy and it is in circulation within the Body of Christ, today!!! HmMMM.....

As we continue, I think it is important for us to get a good working definition of the term, “enemy.” Strong’s Concordance gives us the Greek and the Hebrew definitions. The Greek comes from the word *“echthros.”* This word is an adjective (a descriptive word) which is applied to one who is hated, odious and considered hostile by another person. The Hebrew comes from the word *“ayab”* which also means to be considered hostile by someone. Another Hebrew word used is *“ar”* which refers to someone or something who is considered one’s adversary or foe. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as *“one who is antagonistic to another; one seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound an opponent; something harmful or deadly.”*

If we notice, in all of the above mentioned definitions, the term enemy is imposed upon someone or something by the person who is saying that that someone or something is their enemy. It doesn’t necessarily mean that they are an actual enemy. It is from the perspective, or we could say, the attitude of heart, of that individual making that decision to make someone or something their “enemy.”

In Matthew 5:43-44 and Luke 6:27-29, Jesus also gives us some of the “character traits” of those that we would think of as our “enemy.” He tells us that these may be people who - curse you, hate you, despitefully use you, persecute you, smites you and takes your cloak (steals) from you. Jesus then makes a very profound statement that truly separates the true disciple from one who is just trying to look like a disciple of His. He states in Luke 6: 32-36, *“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”*

In the above scriptures Jesus teaches that as His disciples, we are to not act as sinners. HmMMM... That is interesting. He teaches that sinners actually do good to those that do good to them and lend to those who they know will pay it back. What is the difference if we as His disciples do the same as sinners do? He is implying that we are to be different. We are to be His true disciples. In Matthew when Jesus goes into this teaching of “loving your enemy” it is in the midst of what we know as the “Sermon on the Mount.” Just prior to this “love your enemy” section, He teaches that, as His disciples, we are to be like “salt” and we are to be as “light.”

The concept that He was teaching concerning salt and light was that when either salt or light is brought into a situation they change things. They are “change makers” and “difference makers.” As disciples of Jesus and children of the Most High God, we are to be “difference makers” and be different than the world and all of its carnal thinking and behavior. Our lifestyle and manner of behavior must be noticeably different from the way “sinners,” do things. If we take it to the next step, Jesus was stating that if you “hated your enemy” than you are no different than the unsaved because that is what they do – love those that are just like them but yet hate everyone else and consider those others as an enemy.

The apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Romans another way of dealing with those that you may think of as an “enemy.” He writes in Romans 12:20-21, *“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”* Paul is actually quoting from Proverbs 25:21-22, which states, *“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.”*

This is a very peculiar scripture that we read in both Romans and Proverbs. We can understand (even though we may not agree with it at times) the part where it tells us that if our “enemy” hungers or thirsts that we should give them food or drink. However, what does it mean when it says that in doing so it will be as “heaping coals upon our enemy’s head?” Well, actually, it is referring to two types of situations that people would understand in those times and in their culture. One has a “natural or physical” application and the other has a “spiritual” application.

The natural application is taken from ancient Bible times. Hot coals as we know would be used for both, keeping one warm as well as for cooking. If someone (Person A) would be in need of hot coals for whichever reason, another person (Person B) who had coals that were hot and useful would give some of their hot coals to “Person A.” The process of doing this would be that “Person B” would either place their burning coals in some kind of container (pottery and such) or a piece of material that would not burn. Then they would assist in placing the container upon “Person A’s” head which was the common method of transporting things at that time, as well as in many cultures today. Hence “Person B” would “heap the coals” upon “Person A’s” head thereby actually showing and expressing an “act of kindness” to “Person A.”

In reference to using this phrase in the context of loving and doing good to one considered your enemy, it would mean that you would put your “flesh” aside and show an act of kindness to the one you consider your enemy, thus choosing to consider the one who you had looked upon as your enemy to now be your neighbor. It would be a complete change of the attitude of your heart towards that individual. You would now be fulfilling the commandment of “loving your neighbor.”

The “spiritual” application comes from the idea of the burning coals that were from the “Brazen Altar” in the Temple. We see in Isaiah 6 that the angel took a burning coal from this altar and placed it upon Isaiah’s lips. This was an act symbolizing the “taking away of sin” and forgiveness of that sin. Malachi 3:2 refers to as the *“refiner’s fire.”* In reference to heaping coals upon your “enemy’s” head, it would be inferring that you chose to have a total “change of heart” towards that person you had considered to be your enemy. It meant that you have forgiven the one you had considered to be your enemy and would now choose to look upon that person as “your neighbor,” thereby fulfilling the commandment of “loving your neighbor.”

Wow!!! I know what we are all thinking – easier said than done. Hey, I’m right there with you. Yet, this is what Jesus taught His disciples and Paul reiterates to us in His writings. Nobody said being a disciple of Jesus was easy. If they did then they were lying to you and you need to “heap coals upon their head.”

In the scriptures we see that Jesus and Paul were exhorting the true disciple to walk in actions of kindness and doing good – to your neighbor and to anyone you would consider your enemy. The scriptures truly are referring to a radical change of **your heart** – not the other person’s heart but **your heart**.

This is what makes the born again child of God be the “salt of the earth” and the “light to the world.” This is what makes us different than the unsaved. This is what makes us “difference makers.” This is what the world should see and what makes us truly disciples of Jesus. This is what the unsaved should see and marvel at while at the same time provoking them to jealousy to have this same attitude of heart within

their lives. This is the purpose of “loving our neighbor” and “loving our enemy.” It is to provoke the unsaved to either accept Jesus or it will totally drive them away from Him because it reveals who Jesus truly is.

It is the same attitude of heart that Jesus had. He loved those that hated Him and persecuted Him. He forgave them as we are so vividly reminded of when one of His last words on this earth, as He was breathing His last breaths of life, when He said for all to hear, “*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*” Even to this day the love that Jesus expressed throughout His life and while upon the cross either drives people to their knees accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior or it drives them away.

I know that what we have discussed is very difficult and I know that there are many different scenarios – not just individually but civically when it comes to the topic of someone or something as being an enemy. Please, be assured that I am not saying that we are to condone sin and minimize wrongs done to ourselves or others. I am not saying to ignore injustices when they are committed against you or others. However, hatred towards others should not be found within the heart of a true disciple of Jesus. Hatred is the total absence of love and therefore, the total absence of God. The only thing we are to “hate” is sin, itself. The attitude of our heart must be love towards others. The same kind of love that God continued to have towards each of us even while we were at enmity with Him. Paul states in the scriptures we discussed to “*overcome evil with good.*” This can only come forth from an attitude of heart that now loves with the same love that God, the Father and Jesus loved us with.

Yes, we are to bring correction. Yes, we are to bring discipline. However, as we know, the scriptures tell us that correction and discipline should be done from a heart that is acting in love and desires to see the other party set free from the real enemy who is controlling and manipulating them. Yes, there are times when we are to not have or be in fellowship with those that are doing things contrary to the things of God. However, we are still to have the attitude of heart of love towards them.

We must remember that we cannot do any of the above in our own understanding and in our own strength. It can only be accomplished by and in the power and might of the Holy Spirit who dwells within every believer. The Holy Spirit was promised to every believer by Jesus. Jesus told His disciples that it was imperative that He “go away” and do what He did on the cross and on that Resurrection Sunday. In doing so, Jesus “opened the door” for a new dispensation to come forth. It allowed for the Holy Spirit to now come and dwell within every believer and dwell within the Body of Christ so that we would be Christ-like.

Jesus was making a strong point concerning who we are and the attitude of our heart as His disciples. You and I are not responsible for other’s hearts and the choices they make or do not make. That is between them and God. What you and I are responsible for is our own heart and walking in His truth. That is always just between you and God and your relationship with Him. As I have discussed in previous writings, I believe loving God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength is the highest form of worship. If we say we love God than we are to love our neighbor as part of our worship unto Him. We must grasp the fact that one part of fulfilling the commandment of loving your neighbor is actually, loving your enemy.

There is a promise given to those who choose to walk in this manner of behavior and in this lifestyle in which the scriptures instruct and as Jesus taught and role modeled. Proverbs 25:22 promises that, “*...the LORD shall reward thee.*” Likewise, Jesus also gives us a similar promise concerning this as found in Luke 6:35 as He teaches, “*... your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest.*”