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You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

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Series: Prayer: God's "Secret" Weapon

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You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies

Our gracious Father,

We love You. We praise You. We thank You for being with Tom and guiding him and guiding his voice as he spoke and for guiding his steps as he went and for bringing him back safely. Thank you that the fruit will remain.

And we thank You, Father, for this beautiful day. We thank You for the opportunity to look into Thy Word on another somewhat difficult subject. We pray that Your Spirit would be our teacher.

We pray for our Alf as he labors there, and we pray that You'd continue to uphold him and just give him a spirit of enthusiasm and strength.

We pray for those in our midst this morning, Father, who are struggling, who are lonesome, who are tired or sick, who are struggling with situations they really are not sure how to deal with. We come into Your presence to call upon You to be the Comforter You are, and we thank You in advance.

In Jesus' sweet name,

Amen

Well, I pray that the experience will not soon be forgotten. We've been walking alongside Jesus these past few weeks as He taught as He demonstrated the miracle of this thing we've come to call prayer. You may remember, it's been a number of weeks ago now, but we began our journey by walking with Him through Gethsemane. And we watched when, in agony, sweat drops of blood fell from His precious brow, He prayed as His chosen ones slept. Oh, how He prayed! And he set the tone for us to understand what prayer is all about.

Then we journeyed with the Master, you recall, up to a mountainside where He sat His disciples down and, tenderly taking the heart of God and weaving it into principles, He taught them how to pray, and He taught them how not to pray, as well.

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

We learned in our study that there is something about that Name. We learned that God has a pattern of prayer—a pattern so simple and yet so profound that in our effort to make prayer into something that will minister to us rather than something that will honor God, we've come to overlook the utter simplicity of it.

He taught us how to pray one day at a time. He taught us what it means to have a Father who is in heaven. He taught us what forgiveness is and He taught us how to pray for deliverance from the evil one.

And then we began to walk behind the Master, you remember, as He unveiled the greatest privilege ever granted to man. He allowed us to stand beside Him as He spoke person-to-person, man-to-man, with His Father. He spoke of His glory and the glory that He would transfer to us so that we can give it back to Him, so that He could give it back to His Father.

He spoke of the unity He desired in the body even as He and His Father are one. He spoke of how the Father could keep us even as He had kept the eleven. And then He spoke of sending us out into the world while keeping us from becoming part of the world. What a time, what a conversation, what a God, what an example!

So we have walked together now for some 17 lessons already. We've watched and we've looked as the Master Himself taught us about prayer. We're going to be moving on now and looking at specific instructions from Scripture about how to pray and who to pray for. And we'll be looking in a little bit of time at Paul and how he prays for the church and for us.

But this morning, God willing, I would like to turn now from the philosophical to the practical, from the principles to the practice, and we will make it work. In the next few weeks we're going to talk specifically about how to pray for our enemies, how to pray for our leaders, how to pray for our children, how to pray for those who are involved in spiritual warfare, how to pray for the world, how to pray for revival, how to pray for each other, and how to pray for ourselves. And my prayer is that it will be a profitable journey.

It only seems right to me, though, that we begin with the most difficult prayer subject of all for two reasons. One, if we can make it work here, we ought to be able to make it work anywhere. And second, it seems to me that this may be a giant hurdle over which

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

we must vault to reach the stratum of spiritual riches that really await us when we learn to pray.

Now the truth of what we're about to deal with this morning is a tough subject, and some of you might struggle with this. I think that's good; because until we learn to understand the reason for the struggle, we may be missing the greatest blessing of all. The truth is what the Scripture tells us it is. If we really want to learn how to pray, we have to begin by learning to pray for our enemies. You begin there and when you are through, you will have begun to gain the heart of God.

Satan has made this commandment virtually indistinguishable in our age. First, he's confused us about who our enemies are and convinced us we probably don't have any. And, second, he's convinced us that these other commandments that accompany this one, really don't apply in this age. But, Beloved, they have never applied more because never has the world more desperately needed to see the reality of what this principle can bring into play.

So as we begin our journey this morning, we will be walking through a sea of potential landmines to test the waters of Truth where enemies are concerned. (Now I thought I would have you hold up your hand, but I know that you won't.) How many of you here have enemies? (We have one or two honest people.) You all do. They may not be the same people all the time; you probably wouldn't call them enemies if you met them on the street. In fact, you may even deny to God that they're your enemies. But you must come to see what that word enemy means and what the Word says about it.

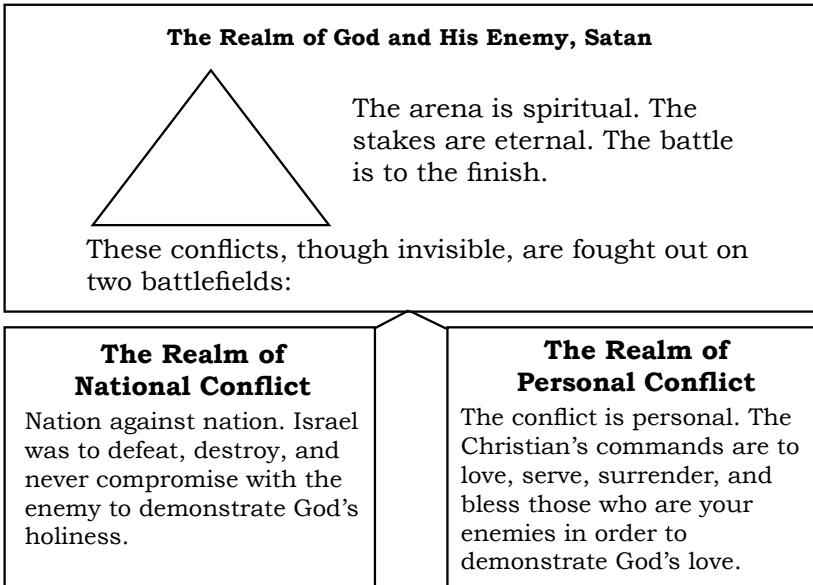
Now the word enemy is interesting. The word enemy means adversary or foe. All are basically the same word. It appears nearly 400 times in Scripture and is a dominant theme. You say, "Why is that?" It is because the focus of the message of the word is reconciliation, restoration and redemption. And the theme of this world is contention, division, animosity and strife. Now what's so confusing about the issue of enemies is this. Sometimes the Bible describes the enemy as a person, sometimes it describes the enemy as a nation, and sometimes it describes it as an individual. What is confusing is that sometime is it depending on which of the three Scripture is talking about. The commandments are totally different.

For instance, the Jews were told to destroy their enemies.

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

The psalmist asked God to make mincemeat out of his enemies. God often spoke of a specific enemy who masqueraded as all of His enemies. But in between those usages of the word were instructions to love your enemies, to bless your enemies, to honor your enemies, to serve your enemies. How do we get around that? Well, we decided the way we get around it is to ignore it and that seems to work, but it's a big mistake.

I want us to look at an overview this morning of the domain of God and enemies and see what it looks like. Perhaps this will help us to understand.



The source of all enemies is found in the heavenlies. His name is Satan. His name, incidentally, is actually used interchangeably in Scripture with the word adversary, which the dictionary describes as enemy or opponent. So, actually, the enemy is a person—one person. He has an agenda to perform and he has a host of troops to help him carry out his agenda. His agenda is to separate man from God, and man from man. He does this by using a tactic known as conflict. He uses man's natural desire to rebel against authority and man's natural desire to be like God, and he provides scenario after scenario in which conflict ensues. He has two primary battlefields as we see in the illustration above. They are the nations at war and individuals in conflict. But they

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

must not be confused the one with the other.

Satan will do anything to accomplish these goals. He will foster prejudice, rivalries, jealousies, animosities, and misunderstandings to see his agenda advance. He started by separating God from man when he went to Eve and said, "Listen, God doesn't have your best interest at heart, and besides that, He has no right to tell you what to do." And Eve said, "You know, you've really got something there."

Eve agreed and came out from under God's protective umbrella of love and became her own god. When she did, she lost it all. Adam didn't want to be left behind so he did the same. Then Satan, having now injected the serum of self-sufficiency into the human bloodstream, began the process of using man's conflict with God as a tool to develop chaos with his brother. He whispered to Cain, and Able wasn't able to whisper anymore. And the battle was on.

Brothers killed, lied, stole, and deceived to take power from each other. Neighbors fought with neighbors. Parents fought with children. And then, as you see on the chart, Satan took the next step; he developed animosity between the nations. Wars began to erupt. Bitter hatred built its roots so deep that 6,000 years later, the earth is still dripping with the blood of helpless bystanders as ruthless dictators perpetuate the same hatred that has festered generation after generation. And, folks, it isn't over. It won't be over until the Messiah comes and begins His reign. Between now and then, the battle will only intensify. It will build and build and build until it seems like the world is about to explode. Then Jesus Will Come.

So there are two separate arenas in which Satan has declared war. The first is nation against nation. The second is person against person. Now, first, what are national enemies? When God chose tiny, insignificant Israel through which to reveal His mighty power, Satan, in vicious retaliation, began to inject people after people with the venom of hatred for the Jew. No people who have ever lived have been hated like the Jew. They've been slaughtered, tortured, destroyed, and scattered, but still they stand. They've been ridiculed, scorned, ignored and attacked. Still, the whole world stands amazed and stands in fear when this tiny nation of people decides to declare its right to exist. This world, as we know it, will end when Satan finally ignites his demonic hosts to such

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

fiery bitterness that he gathers the nations against this one little nation and attempts to overpower it, and hoping to destroy the God who owns it.

Of course, Satan won't, because he can't. And at that moment in history, Scripture tells us, God himself will appear, and the briefest war in history will culminate in the greatest victory ever won. National conflict is the hallmark of Satan's kingdom. And throughout the ages people have cried, "peace, peace", but there is no peace. God has a plan for national security. Now listen, it is carefully outlined in the Word of God. It is not to love your enemy. It is not to turn the other cheek. It is not to lay down your arms and surrender. It is a call to defend your borders, know your enemy, and when necessary, fight to the finish. The cost is high, but peace is worth the price. That's the scriptural principle.

Nations have tried to bypass those principles or apply personal principles to national animosity and have always failed. The reason is that the heart is "deceitful and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). Now that doesn't mean war is inevitable. There are many treaties that can be signed and have been through the years where both sides, rather than suffering loss of life, agree to coexist while pursuing their own agendas. And sometimes the agendas are intertwined or they have common goals so that those nations can live together in peace.

But listen, Beloved, because war on earth is only a reflection of the war that is being waged in heaven, all treaties are temporary. That is why the greatest battles of history have been and always will be, fought in two arenas. Now you think about history.

1- Wherever the Jews are, there will be hatred and war will be inevitable.

The reason is they represent God, and Satan hates that. He still wants to destroy the Jew. He always has and he always will.

2- War will always break out whenever a government arises and attempts to remove an awareness of Jesus Christ from the mainstream of human existence.

It may be a totalitarian dictator who wants to squelch the concept of there being a God who is greater to the people than he is. Or maybe it's a false religion that takes over a nation and dominates it so that Christianity has no freedom.

Those are two areas. There will always be war and the battle

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

is not between two nations, it's between Satan and God and the battlefield just happens to be in the halls of government. That's where it's found. And wherever the name of Jesus or wherever the Jews are at stake, there will be war. There will be temporary peace but, under the surface, the bitterness will boil. Remember that God will not let his name be trampled under foot. Satan cannot stand to see the gospel set free. You think the battle is over because the Iron Curtain fell. Nobody loved it; it's only changing stages. There may be a temporary peace to lull the nations into a false sense of security. But Satan will not give up until he finally attacks God head-on. And then the end will come.

Conflict—it will always be a part of society until Jesus comes, but there's a different kind of conflict that goes on in the midst of global conflict. It has a totally different set of principles attached to it, and that's what I want to talk with you about this morning. It involves the heart of man. Once again it takes place in the wars between Satan and God. It takes place in the heavenlies, but the stage in which this drama unfolds is in homes in churches, in schools, in the neighborhoods, in families, in relationships, in businesses, in sports arenas, in courtrooms, in board rooms. Wherever two people are, Satan attempts to bring conflict between the two or between the two of them and anyone else. Because so long as man is at war with man, or at odds with man, or in conflict with man, Satan can take our eyes off of a God of peace and off of the peace of God.

Satan loves to attack the church. He loves to divide the brethren, and he loves to dredge up old wounds and rub salt in them. He loves to capture the realms of entertainment, psychology, sports and government, and He does it by justifying all human failure by transferring blame to another. It leaves in its wake a father angry with son, a daughter at odds with her mother, and siblings at odds with one another. But at the heart of his crusade is one issue: keep the kingdom from coming on earth as it is in heaven.

So love becomes conditional. Divorce becomes optional. Unity becomes unattainable. We sit here on planet earth, and we buy the lies and blame them on the physical issues that spawn them rather than realizing the real enemy is not the bank, or the boss, or your husband, or the president, or the guy that ran into you, or the freeway, or the repairman who charged too much and fixed too little.

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

The real enemy is Satan. He is seeking to destroy your walk with God. He is seeking to destroy your testimony before man by bringing into your life something known as enemies.

Now who is your enemy? We've already decided we have some. Who are they? It is anyone or any group that deprives you of a right you think you have or of the acceptance you think you deserve. Those are your enemies. Your enemy is the post office when it doesn't deliver the mail on time. (No comment.) Your enemy is the car manufacturer when your pride and joy turns out to be a lemon. Your enemy is your father if you determine he abused or mistreated or ignored you. Your enemy is your husband or your wife if they cheated on you or failed to do what you expected them to do.

Your enemy is the pastor of that church who didn't visit you when you were sick. Your enemy is the teacher in school who gave your child an unfair grade. Your enemy is the TV network that broadcast programs you can't stand. This may get personal. Your enemy is the guy on the street who makes fun of your Christianity, or the guy at work who laughs at your morals, or the woman across the street who whispers behind your back because you homeschool your children.

Your enemy is your competitor who lies to get deals, knowing you won't do the same. Your enemy is your supervisor who makes deals behind your back and gives them to your non-Christian buddies. Your enemy is the guy who cuts in front of you on the freeway and runs you off the road. It is the woman in front of you in the grocery line who has three more items than the sign allows. Your enemy is the attorney who, to satisfy greed, caused you to go through a frivolous lawsuit.

I know you may not categorize them as enemies, but these are people you do not love. They may be personalities or they may be performances that cause you grief. They are people that you think took from you rights you assumed you had, or destroyed the reputation you assumed you had. And the result is that you don't necessarily want something good to come to them. Maybe you think about it constantly; maybe it's an obsession with you. Or maybe you shrug it off and go on to something else. But the truth of the matter is you don't love them, you don't bless them, you don't do good to them, and you surely don't pray for them, except maybe that they'll get theirs.

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

Whether you know it or not, Satan has a foothold in your life until you begin to see them as potential enemies for whom you are to pray. God put them in your life for two reasons: 1) to test your response and develop character and 2) to extend your prayer list and test your obedience.

So God commanded you to pray for them. First, you must identify them. We just did that. Now you do whatever he told you to do so that you can accomplish those two objectives He has in mind. He wants to change your concept of love and He wants to intensify your understanding of prayer.

Now there are three categories of enemies, Beloved, and we're going to look at those this morning. 1) There are those from your past that you've never forgiven or never let go of. 2) There are those in your life now who are persistent sandpaper. They never seem to let up. It may be your mate, your boss, your kids, your neighbor, or your brother, somebody whose very name causes your skin to crawl. 3) And then there's the day-to-day intrusions in life caused by men and women who may not be constant irritations; but at a given time and place, they caused you grief and harm, and you didn't like it.

Now the question I'm asking you is: are you praying for them? Huh? You see, until we learn to turn all three categories into new prayer lists we aren't really ready for the rest of this study on prayer. And until we begin to see that they are not the problem—Satan is, we'll always be focusing our anger on the wrong places and seeking solutions in the wrong way. That's why Jesus was so insistent where this principle was concerned. He wanted us to understand you and I have only one enemy. There's only one person on the face of this earth behind every evil move, every inconvenience, every type of persecution, and every vengeful act. The people may cooperate. They may need prayer. They are either blind participants or willing tools of the enemy; but in either case, they need to be prayed for. And guess what! God let them cross your path so you would pray for them. It's a privilege.

Prayer is a privilege. And if praying for your enemies is a privilege, then the more conflict Satan brings into your life, the more reason you have to rejoice, because he's just adding to your prayer list and deepening your character. Somebody cursed you at work? New prayer opportunity. Mistreated at home, poor thing? New prayer opportunity. Snubbed at church? New

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

prayer opportunity. Neighbor started a nasty rumor? New prayer opportunity. Husband or wife persists in ungodly behavior? New prayer opportunity. Every move Satan makes to destroy you, he's only helping you learn to pray. So every time he gives you an enemy, he gives you someone to wrap arms of intercession around and someone to sing blessings to God about. He has given you someone new to love. Praise God and begin to pray.

The entire New Testament, Beloved, is an admonition to love as Christ loved, and as He so loved us. Scripture says that while we were yet his enemies, Christ died for us. He was not altering God's plan for national security; he was solidifying God's plan for personal ministry. It was for you to give your life away to those who do not deserve it, don't appreciate it, and may, in fact, be giving their lives to destroy yours the way Paul was in the first century before his conversion.

Matthew, Chapter 5, Verse 38, we all know the passage. We don't like the passage and we may ignore the passage, but it's in the Bible.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. (Matthew 5:38-42)

Then we continue with verse 43,

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

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;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans [unbelievers] the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:43-48)

Now Jesus is making one statement here and he's amplifying that statement with an explanation. The statement is love your enemies. The explanation is, first of all, a description of who they are.

WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES?

Those who:

- 1- Curse you (pray against; wish you evil).
- 2- Hate you (imply ill will, not love or appreciation).
- 3- Despitefully use you (act with insolence, disrespect).
- 4- Persecute you (pursue with animosity; cause to flee).

You have that on the chart above. There are four categories of people in three commandments. Now we've memorized that verse and almost everybody in here can give you that verse from memory. The problem is very few of us can give it from experience.

We spend our time seeking out a certain group of people to love. Jesus said it, and the reason is we're not like everybody else. We're a called-out group, as we learned last week, and indwelt by the Spirit of God. And as such, we're not called to love the lovable alone.

Jesus said unbelievers can do that and they do a neat job of it, in verses 46 and 47. He said I have four groups of people for you to love.

WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES?

1- Those who curse you.

Now those are those who just can't stand you. You and I know that there really shouldn't be anybody like that because you're so neat. But all of us have somebody that we really don't understand. They just really want what's worse for us. They may even pray for us to be harmed. They may pray to God or they may pray to the father of lies, but their dislike for you is so great they don't want you to succeed. The literal meaning of this word curse

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

is a Greek word that means to pray against or to wish evil upon.

2- Those who hate you.

The Greek word, hate, means to imply ill will in words or conduct, to fail to love or appreciate. These are the guys that snub you at parties, turn down your invitations to come to dinner, sit on the other side of the room when you walk in. They just don't like you. And the harder you try, the worse it gets.

3- Those who spitefully use you.

The Greek word means to act with insolence or disrespect. It may be employees who do what you tell them to, but they do it with a smirk on their faces and a growl under their breath. They want to take credit for what you do and then blame you for doing it wrong.

4- Those who persecute you.

That word literally means from the Greek to pursue with animosity until one flees. They let you know they have no use for you. It may be an in-law who didn't want you in the family, or may be an ex-mate that doesn't want your present mate in the family. It doesn't mean just to be persecuted for righteousness' sake; it's any form of aggressive behavior that's aimed at you.

So those are the four categories describing people you meet who are your enemies. Some of them just wish you'd go away, and some of them would like to help you go away in a wooden box. Jesus is telling us what to do about them.

He said I want you to love them. It's a word which encompasses all of the meanings of the other three words just as the word enemy encompasses all of the words curse, hate, spitefully use and persecute. The basic attitude toward these people who don't appreciate us and don't like us and don't want us around is that we are to love them. The Greek word here is the word agape. It is unconditional love; it reaches beyond any kind of worth or response. It loves in spite of and maybe even because it is not wanted. It takes three basic forms in this passage.

HOW DO WE LOVE OUR ENEMIES?

We Are to:

- 1- Bless them (speak well of; invoke God's blessings).
- 2- Do good (do things of beauty and love).
- 3- Pray for (intercede; ask God for good on their behalf).

HOW DO WE LOVE OUR ENEMIES?

1- We are to love them by blessing them.

You know what that means. It means that you speak well of them and that you invoke God's blessings on them. Every time Joe Smith tries to lie about you at work and hurts you, you stop and ask God to bless him. You say, "Why would I do that?" Well, for several reasons. For one thing he has been a blessing to you. You say, "Oh, sure he has." No, he has. Matthew 5 tells us,

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

(Matthew 5:10-12)

So they blessed you by reviling you or persecuting you. They didn't know it, God knew it. Hopefully you knew it. So you ask God to bless them, not necessarily by giving them grief; only God knows what they need. You seek their success is what the word means. You want them to succeed even at your expense.

2- You do good to them.

What else do you do? You do good to them. The phrase means to do things of beauty, things of love. You find ways to serve them. You meet their needs so they can see Jesus in you.

3- You pray for them.

The word means to intercede. You bring their special requests before Him in a way that will both honor God and bring them joy.

You say, "Wait a minute, Kelfer, this is not natural." Absolutely,

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

it is supernatural. It can only be done by the Holy Spirit, as you choose to let Him. But, listen, your prayer life can be totally transformed to a level of such unselfishness that the first ones you pray for are the ones who take advantage of you, malign you, use you, revile you, seek to hurt you—those you love. And you begin by asking God to reveal His agape love through you so that you can bless them, and do good for them, and intercede for them. It is the exact opposite of what the flesh wants to do.

You don't resist them by striking back. When they hurt you you turn the other cheek. When they ask for something you give them more. The more you demonstrate that quality of love, it says that it is so powerful, so indisputable, so inconceivable that they will have to give the glory to God. You may never know it, that's not your business. Your business is to obey.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLE

Now let's apply it. Let's take those three categories of people and let's look at them: those from our past, those who are presently bringing grief into our lives, and those who were just kind of passing through.

1- Those who have been our enemies in days gone by.

It may be a relative of a friend or a friend who abused you or refused you or took advantage of you. Maybe it's a school teacher who made you feel rejected and you've lived your whole life as though you were a failure. Every time their name is mentioned your jaw tightens and you get a knot in your stomach, and you smile that Christian smile but inside you want to get even. What are you supposed to do? Love them.

If they are still alive you're to ask God to bless them. You are to find ways, if possible, to do good to them, and you need to intercede for them. Maybe what they did was atrocious. Satan meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. You may be in the kingdom today because of the insecurities they spawned into your life. They blessed you. Their persecution or the evil they projected on you gave God the raw material to humble you so that He could exalt you in due time. You praise God and you bless them. Hard, isn't it?

What if they are dead? You ask God to forgive you for the bitterness in your soul and grant you a joyful heart every time their name is mentioned. You ask Him to give you a more sensitive

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

heart so the things they did won't be repeated in your life as you act out your anger, and you don't dwell on what they did. You don't relive it; it's over, it's past. I wish sometimes the psychologists and psychiatrists of our generation could understand that principle. You don't dwell on it; you don't relive it. It is a God-allowed experience to create in you a need that only He can fill. You move on. You pray for others who are experiencing the same kind of hurt that you experience and guess what? You got a new prayer list, use it.

2- Those who are your enemies today.

The in-laws who act like outlaws. Fellow employees who say nice things to your face and then try to get you fired. Your son or daughter who tells you what a great parent you are and then tells their friends what a rotten home they came from. Your competitor who wants to hit you when you're down. That pharisaical church member who judges you by standards he would never want to be imposed upon himself. They are all your enemies. They may love you to your face, but you know and they know that they can't stand you.

That is prayer list number two. You're to pray for them every day. You ask God to what? Bless them and to give you the ability to love them. And the more they pursue their hatred, the more diligently you seek to love. You pray for their success even at your expense. And if it happens, you ask God for the grace not to be surprised and not to be bitter. You seek God's mind for ways to be a blessing to them without fanfare or super spiritualization. You look for good qualities in their lives and you thank God for the good qualities, and you let them know you appreciate them. You don't need to be a hypocrite. If you ask God, He will give you the capacity to love them.

3- Those who pass by and through your life who hurt you as they pass.

It includes the drunk who runs a red light and demolishes your car. It includes the delinquent who sprays your house with graffiti. It includes the kid who cuts in front of you on the freeway and forces you off the road. It includes the store clerk who insults your intelligence and belittles you. It includes the people you probably will never see again. The most normal thing to do is to boil inside and you either tell them off or wish you could. The next most normal thing is to try to forget it ever happened. The

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

least normal thing to do is to love them, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them.

Now listen, God probably brought them into your life to allow you a chance to shine as a light in a dark place. He probably allowed them to injure you, insult you, ignore you, or endanger you so that as you turned the other cheek, went the second mile, began to love them and prayed for them, a supernatural God would make Himself known. And even if you never knew it, He may only have brought them across your path so somebody would pray for them. What an honor. What a creative God, this God of creation we serve.

So you already have a prayer list, folks. You start with your enemies. We all have them. They are those from days gone by that we can't forgive or forget. They are those ever-present thorns in our side to make our lives miserable. And there are those OTE's (one-time enemies), who passed through our lives on their way to eternity, whom God allowed to hurt us or to offend us, or frighten us, so that somebody would love them and somebody would pray for them before it's too late.

They're all our enemies. They're all ours to love. And they're the beginning of a list of people for whom we must pray regularly. Why? Because God said to. And remember, Beloved, when God tells us to pray for somebody, they will be blessed, and you will be blessed, and the kingdom will be blessed, as well. And all we need do is obey.

TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES

Oh, to love our enemies.
How unnatural; how strange, how odd
To pray for, love and bless the ones
Who defame us and our God!

Bless the ones who hate *me*?
This just can't be true.
Oh, dear God I hate them!
(And I enjoy it, too.)

But, my child, the Master says,
This is God's *higher way*.
As you choose to love your enemies,
I'll teach you how to pray.

You Want Me to Pray for My Enemies?

Let's pray.

Our Father and our God,

We come to worship You, and to praise You and thank You for adding to our prayer list, by blessing us, even with those who persecute us, say all manner of evil against us falsely, those who revile us, those who hurt us.

Thank You for the privilege of having them come into our lives. May our prayer lives never be the same again as we learn, by Your grace, to pray for our enemies even as You commanded.

In Jesus' name we ask it,

Amen.

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