

# Love Your Enemies and Seek to Do Them Good

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This man hated God. And he just thought it was the greatest thing to try to provoke this godly woman. She was God fearing. She was a holy woman. And he was a wicked man. Of course, he was old. He'd be there at home with her while her husband's off at work. And he would just try to provoke her and he would speak in foul, wicked language. He'd try to make her life hard. He tormented her. Foul, perverse language; insults, mocking... he knew she was a Christian. And he was just trying to get her to blow her testimony. He just tried to jab at her. And on the inside, she was angry. She would have to leave the room and weep. He was trying to provoke her. She was exasperated.

You know how it can be, if you try to go to your husband in a situation like that and it's his dad. Well, it's not that bad. Well, whatever happened, she wasn't able to get the kind of help she was obviously looking for from her husband. So she went to her pastor. She said, pastor, here's this situation... you know what the pastor told her? Every time he provokes you, return kindness. Every time he tries to get you; every time he speaks wickedly; every time he tries to provoke; every time he's cruel; every time he's unkind; every time he acts wickedly towards you return his evil with kindness.

And I'll tell you, that good woman by the help of Christ, she went back there and it wasn't easy. She felt provoked inside. There'd be tears. There'd be hurt. Inner turmoil. But she sought to return good to that man. And I can't remember in the story how long that went on; how much time went by, but I can tell you this, there was one day he did an especially wicked thing to her, and she went over and she began to cook cookies. She turned away from all her other chores and all her other household work. She cooked those cookies. You know what? They were the favorite kind of that old man. And she put them on a plate, and as graciously as she could, she came over, and she set that plate down on the table in front of him.

And you know what? That old sinner couldn't take it anymore. He fell out of that chair on his face on the floor and he just wept. And she hadn't seen that coming. She didn't know what was going on inside. Every time she was returning that kindness to him, it was grating on his conscience. It was stabbing him. And it was hurting - it was like a burning coal in there. And finally, this was too much. It just broke that wicked old man. Like burning coals...

And you know what? The testimony is that that man was converted. That man repented. That man saw in the example of his godly daughter-in-law something. He asked God to forgive him. He asked that lady to forgive him. He was broken. He's in glory now! Because she lived like that. Brethren, let me tell you something. This is the Word of God. This is for real. One of the reasons we don't know more of this is because we don't live more like this. That's a reality.

Folks, it's not because it isn't true. It's not because it doesn't work. It's because we are far more often avenging ourselves than trying to show love and kindness when we're wronged. We tend to do what Jesus Christ did not do. You know what? We get offended. We get hurt. We get wronged. What happens? This little thing comes up in us. We want to get even. And even

though we may not strike out in a way that is just manifestly visible, what do we do? By our words, by our actions, by our avoidance, we give these little subtle deals. Well, I just won't talk to them. I'm just going to avoid where they are. And it may not be just the outward strike, but we've been offended. We're going to respond. We're going to make it known. We're going to get back. We're going to somehow deal a blow for the blow we feel like we've received.

Brethren, are you really hearing this? That's the thing. Are you hearing this? Can you imagine what it would be like for this church if every time somebody grieved us, offended us or hurt us, we immediately responded with a loving action? A loving gesture? Folks, when someone wrongs us, we know it. Right? Folks, enemies are called enemies because they do the things that only enemies would do. And that doesn't mean that sometimes that enemy isn't another Christian.

Basically, we can size up an enemy this way: It's not just a lost person that does this evil. It's anybody that strikes out against us. And the fact is, that even when it's an enemy that strikes out against us, we can leave that vengeance to the Lord. The Lord will repay. You say what? He's going to repay them? Not if there is a child of God, but there's going to be payment. Christ will take that payment. Which you should be glad of that because He's taken yours too, and you've offended other people. But I'll tell you what, an enemy is anybody that comes against us. It's anybody that mistreats us. And I mean it's a true mistreatment. It's a true offensive deal to us. It's a true persecution to us. It can come from any quarter. And bottom line, enemies do what enemies do. And we feel what enemies do. This isn't a mystery to us. If anything in our life gets our attention, I mean really gets it, it's the actions of enemies against us. We feel it.

And you know what Paul says? He comes in right there and he says, OK, I can say this to you: It isn't something you have to wonder whether it happened. When you feel offended, when you feel hurt, you know you do. And what he's saying is, right at that point, take that hurt, and return in love. It takes the grace of God. Natural man cannot do this. What did God say? What is the promise? He says we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ. If you're a true child of God, I guarantee you, this will be conformed into your very image. It will be stamped in there. By the grace of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you can do this. Folks, take every offense, every hurt; let their wrongdoing to you be an immediate prompt in your life to love them.

Are you really hearing what I'm saying? Look, if you're not hurt right now, you're thinking, I can do that. But when you've been hurt, it's not so easy. And I can imagine in a church like this, as the church grows... OK, let me give you an example. OK, we've got a sister. Sister hears some ladies got together for coffee. How come I wasn't invited? And by the way, who was it that planned that thing? Who was it that did the inviting? They didn't invite me? I'm hurt. Well, you know what? Next time I have a gathering, I'm not going to invite her. You know what? You'll laugh, but I know the way people think. And I know what hurts people. And you know what? In a church where a lot of sinners, saved though many of them may be, try to live together and function together, we hurt each other.

And look, we could be talking about enemies out there, but there are things that people do in here as well. And the thing that I'm saying is, whether it's an enemy out there or whether it's somebody in here, you hear down through the grapevine, so and so said such and such about you. Well, that hurts me. Well, you know what? Rather than saying by my retaliatory

words, or by my avoidance or by my silence to that person I'm going to get them back, you know what you do? You say, "that hurt." Now, Father, show me specifically how to do and act a specific manifest act of love toward that person.

If we have a church that's functioning like that, guess what? We don't have people like I've heard some people that have left the church because they didn't feel like they were being given enough attention. You know what you do when you get hurt because you don't feel like you're getting enough attention? You specifically according to this don't retaliate by I'm going to show them - I'm leaving! That's exactly the opposite of this. What this is is saying if somebody does strike out against me like that, then I'm going to return love. If somebody offends me, somebody comes against me, I'm going to do this. Folks, take every hurt, every wrong, every unkindness, every attack, every provocation, every offense, every criticism, every crushing, mauling, biting, wounding thing, and make it specifically an occasion for doing that person good.