

Praying for Our Enemies Part 1

By Mary Kane

Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God
Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.
Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.
Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you,
and revile you, and cast out your name as evil,
For the Son of Man's sake.
Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!
For indeed your reward is great in heaven.
For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.
Luke 6:20-23.

Please read Luke 6:24-28 (Given the amount of important information packed into this section of scripture we will take a couple of days to unfold all that God has to teach us. Today we will be concentrating on verse 27).

In verses 27-28, Jesus gives us 4 different directives. Please list them on the lines below.

1.

2.

3.

4.

To Whom are these commands given (verse 27)?

Jesus gave these commands to those *who hear*. Last time I checked most people have ears to hear, so I think we all are included in this command. The word *hear* used in this verse does not mean just being able to hear sounds or words. A baby is able to hear sounds and words but is not always able to act according to what was heard. The word *hear* used in this text means being able to hear with understanding and in turn acting upon what has been heard. "

Let's consider each of the four commands one at a time.

1. Jesus says we are to love our *enemies*.

If we are supposed to love our enemies, we better know exactly who they are. The original word for *enemies* in verse 27 is *ecthros*. *Ecthros* means "hated or hateful in an active sense, hostile, an enemy, adversary, the devil. *Ecthros* is a scary word as it can apply to enemies of the cross as well as believers (see James 4:4 and 1 John 2:15)! It is possible to be saved and willfully or ignorantly work against the kingdom of God. Matthew 10:36 says that "...a man's enemies may be of his own household." As a child of God, I do not want to be an enemy of God.

According to what we have just learned, we have a few very different kinds of enemies: Satan, the enemy of God, unbelievers who hate us for belonging to God and believers who are not following God. The Bible informs us that different strategies are to be used in dealing with our enemies. When Satan is concerned, we are called to put on the full armor of God, and pending on the circumstances do one of three things: flee from him, stand our ground and let God fight for us, or go to battle against the enemy in the strength, power and Spirit of the Lord.

What about unbelievers and believers who don't follow God, how are we to deal with them (verse 27)?

Concerning unbelievers and those who do believe but aren't walking with Christ, we have a different strategy—the "L" word. Love. And through this love, we are to do good to our enemies. But what kind of love is this? Is it the kind that the world pushes—here today in a flame of passion and gone tomorrow with the next person that catches your

eye? The world can never give us anything that will accomplish the eternal. Then, are we to love our enemies with a doormat type of love that puts up with any kind of abuse? That type of love is not healthy. The kind of love we are to have for our enemies according to verse 27 is *agapao*.

Many of you are probably already very familiar with this Greek word. This love *only* comes from God and is not for the faint of heart. *Agapao* means to esteem, to love, indicating a direction of the will. *Agapao* is a choice we make. We decide to *agapao*. We don't sit around trying to drum up *agapao* feelings. *Agapao* is different in this regard from *phileo* which is a type of love that involves our feelings. Here is the important part: *agapao* does necessarily mean that we do what will please our enemies, but that we choose to show them favor and goodwill, not because they deserve it, but because God showed us His favor and goodwill. Sometimes truly loving someone means we do the hard things such as rebuking or correcting.

As we can see, *agapao* is not always easy, comfortable or convenient, but it is often necessary to bring others to Christ. Interestingly, we are never told to *phileo* our enemies. We should do what we can to bring our enemies to a saving knowledge of Christ such as praying for them, but are never to befriend them or take them into our inner circle when they are living apart from Christ. We need to carefully choose who we allow to "build in" to our lives.

How much success have you had in your life loving your enemies?

In my own power I've had very little success. In fact, I'd say it's impossible for me to love and be kind to those who are nasty to me. Would God command us to do something that is impossible for us to accomplish? Yes, He would! Because with Him and through Him all things are possible and those He calls to love their enemies, He will equip. How do we get this *agapao* love that only comes from God? Please read Galatians 5:22. The first attribute listed in this verse is love which transliterates as *agape*, a form of *agapao*.

How do we get *agapao* love?

We get *agapao* love when we allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives. Please understand that *agapao* is a result of the fruit of the Spirit not works of the flesh. Our own efforts will never produce one speck of *agapao*. We can help this process along by reading God's Word, getting rid of ungodly habits, and choosing God's way over our own way. Basically, He must increase and you must decrease.

Now let's look at directive number 2:

2. Do good to those who hate you.

Once we are filled with *agapao*, we are to do good to those who hate us. As with *agapao*, we are incapable of doing "good" to our enemies on our own; this ability also comes from God. The original Greek word for *good* is *kalos* which means: good, honorable, suitable, excellent, comforting etc. *Kalos* also means "so that there shall be no room for blame" (*BLB*). We are to our enemies with fairness and honor, and our actions should be such that not even our enemies could find fault with us.

In contrast, what do our *ecthros* (enemies) spend their time doing according to verse 27?

The Greek word for *hate* transliterates *miseo* which means "to hate, to detest, to pursue with hatred, to persecute. With *miseo*, our enemies decide to persecute, hate and work to destroy us. In return, with *agapao* we decide to love, work for the good, show favor and confront in order to bring our enemies to a relationship with Christ.

Just as love is an action and not only a feeling, *hate* is an action and not only a feeling. Feelings left unchecked will later turn into actions. I would like to point out that in my opinion, Satan and unbelievers may actively and purposefully persecute and work against Christians; however the actions and motivations of believers who persecute us may be completely different. Some of the persecution that comes from believers who aren't walking with Christ may arise from ignorance and a wrong world view.

Let's take a moment to recap what we have learned:

We have enemies: Satan, unbelievers, and believers who don't walk with Jesus and they spend their time persecuting believers with hostile actions, malicious deeds and hateful attitudes.

In closing, in order to combat and conquer the hatred of our enemies Jesus calls us to love our enemies. Good against evil. Blessing against cursing. Prayer against abuse. Love against hate. And love conquers all. The victory at the cross shouts this wonderful truth! At the cross we see God doing what He *does* best—loving; and we see Satan doing what he *does* best—hating. Satan came to steal, kill and destroy. But Jesus came to restore, save and recreate!

What was stronger that dark afternoon at Golgatha, the hate of Satan as he hoped to destroy Christ or the love of God as He offered His One and Only begotten Son? Love won that day. And as God used love to conquer the enemy, we are to use love to conquer our enemies.

We will finish this study in Part 2!

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