

Messenger of Truth

"Holding forth the Word of Life" (Phil. 2:16)

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Enemies

"God loves everyone, even His enemies." – Phillip Daniel Watkins (age 7)

"It is better that my enemy see good in me than that I see bad in him." – Jewish Proverb

"I destroy my enemy when I make him my friend." – Abraham Lincoln

"Man has not a greater enemy than himself." – Petrarch

"A merely fallen enemy may rise again, but the reconciled one is truly vanquished." – Friedrich Schiller

What exactly is an *enemy*? Webster states, "One that is antagonistic to another; especially: one seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound an opponent." Also, "One who hates another."

It is discomfoting to say the least that in life we find ourselves faced with the enemy. It is those who stand in opposition to us, who may in fact take action against us. We understand this on the battlefield, but in everyday life there are those who hurt us by their conduct and words.

How are we supposed to respond to our enemies? Certainly Jesus gave some shocking words to His listeners in the Sermon on the Mount:

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).

Wow, talk about a radical idea. Loving your enemies, blessing them, doing good to them, and even praying for them. But deep within you may have thought about throttling them, or doing some type of harm.

What makes the Lord's words even more interesting is that He uses a form of the word *agape* that is translated "love". In the minds of some they see it as a stretch to love an enemy like a brother; but our Lord takes it beyond that with the highest form of love. The Jewish people readily accepted the idea of loving their neighbors in that manner, but *enemies* was a whole different matter.

How about you? How do you feel about your enemies?