

Love My Enemy?

It's only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can  forgive

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope. It stands when all else has fallen. How do we get that strong love? The Holy Spirit is the one who gives it to us. We must look to Him when faced with the challenge of loving our enemies.

In Africa I visited a man who was imprisoned and sentenced to death. I asked, "Have you ever heard of the cross of Jesus Christ, where He carried the sins of the world—also your sins?"

He nodded.

"Do you believe in Jesus Christ, that He will be your Savior too?"

"Yes, I love Him, but I have not always been faithful. Politics has taken up my time and attention completely, but now I have brought all my sins to Jesus. He has forgiven me. If I should live any longer, then I will serve Him with all my life."

"Have you forgiven the people who have brought you here, who will have your death on their conscience?"

"No, I hate them."

"I can understand that. I will tell you of one of my experiences."

"During the war in Holland, I helped to save Jewish people. One day a man came to me who told me his wife also helped the Jews and that now she had been arrested: 'She is in the police station and probably she will be put to death. There is a

policeman who is willing to let her escape if we pay him 600 guilders, but I have no money.'

"In the meantime I collected all the money from my friends and all I had myself, and it was exactly 600 guilders. I gave it to him.

"But he was a betrayer. His wife had not been arrested. The enemy told him to find out whether I helped Jewish people.

"So this man thought that at the same time he could make some money. He went home with 600 guilders in his pocket. But five minutes later the enemy came, and my whole family was arrested.

"Later, when I heard that this man had betrayed us, hatred came into my heart, just as it happened with you. I had given him the last money I had. But then I read in the Bible that hatred is really murder in God's eyes.

"How glad I was that I knew what I could do against hatred. The Bible says: 'The blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanses us from our sins. ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:7-9). I brought my hatred to Jesus. He forgave me and cleansed me.

"After the war this betrayer was sentenced to death. I wrote to him: 'Your betrayal caused the death of my 84-year-old father, my brother, his son and my sister in prison. I myself have suffered terribly through your fault, but I have forgiven you everything. This is just a very little example of the forgiveness and love of Jesus. He lives in my heart; that is why I can forgive you. Jesus will also come into your heart and will make you a child of God. Confess your sins to Him. On the cross of Calvary He has finished all for your sins and mine.'

"Later he wrote me: 'I have prayed: "Jesus, when You can give

such a love for the enemy in the heart of someone who follows You, then there is hope for me.” I have indeed confessed my sins to Him. ... I am a child of God.’

“So you see that Jesus used me to save the soul of this same man I had hated so much. Do you know that if you do not forgive, you do not receive forgiveness? You cannot do that, neither can I, but Jesus can!”

That same day the African prisoner sent a message to his wife: “Forgive my murderers. You are not able to do it, I am not able, but Jesus is able. If we are not willing, then we ourselves do not receive forgiveness.”

We never touch the love of God so much as when we love our enemies. But we don’t have to do it ourselves. The Bible says, “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Rom. 5:5, NKJV). God does the job. Hallelujah!

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