

Praying for Those Who Hurt You

... and pray for those who persecute you ... –Matthew 5:44

Praying for the one who has hurt you or let you down is the greatest challenge of all, for three reasons:

1. You take a route utterly against the flesh.
2. Nobody will ever know you are doing it.
3. Your heart could break when God answers that prayer and truly blesses them as if they'd never sinned.

And yet Jesus' word to pray for such people is not just a polite suggestion. It is a command—one that may seem so outrageous that you want to dismiss it out of hand. Some see it as a lofty but unrealistic goal.

But this is not what Jesus means. He is commanding you to pray that your enemy will be blessed. If, however, you should pray that he or she will be cursed or punished instead of being blessed, just remember that is how your enemy possibly feels about you. After all, have you ever been someone's enemy? Have you ever done something that brought a fellow Christian to tears and brokenness? If so, how would you like that person to pray for you? That God will deal with you? That God will cause you to have an accident? Yet how would it make you feel if they prayed that you would be blessed and let off the hook? That you would prosper as if you'd never sinned? Would you not like that? "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31).

Jesus wants a sincere prayer from you. It is like signing your name to a document, having it witnessed, and never looking back. You are not allowed to tell the world, "Guess what I

did? I have actually prayed for my unfaithful spouse to be blessed." No. It is quiet. Only the angels witness it, but it makes God very happy.

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