

Love Your Enemies

1. Wrath of the Sons of Thunder - Lk 9:51-56

- A. What provoked such a response by James and John?
 - 1. Natural trait: Named “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus (Mk 3:17). They were proud, pugnacious, assertive, maybe belligerent.
 - 2. Intellectual: Pharisaic interpretation of Law (Mt 5:43). But no law of God *ever* taught hatred of others. See Ex 23:4-5; Pr 25:21-22.
 - 3. Cultural: Longstanding hatred of Samaritans. They were seen as defilements upon the land; interlopers.
- B. They were insulted when rebuffed by the Samaritans and ready to kill them. The fact is we will be snubbed, insulted, betrayed, slighted, slandered, ignored, envied - and that from **Christians!** The world will treat us less kindly!
- C. One of the truest tests of character is how we will react to those who have mistreated us. We have a *choice!*

2. Reacting to Our Enemies

- A. The biggest danger is reacting in kind, of letting the behavior of others pull us down to their level. 1 Pet 2:20-23 - Jesus did not revile/threaten but “*committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.*”
- B. What does it mean to “turn the other cheek”? - Mt 5:38-42.
 - 1. Does it mean to be totally passive? To let any and all abuse go unchecked?
 - 2. Jesus Himself issued withering rebukes, confronted opponents, revealed evil motives - even physically “cleaned house” in the temple. Paul blinded an opponent, challenged city officials in Philippi, used prerogatives of Roman citizenship, and verbally attacked those who denied his apostleship.
 - 3. But neither resorted to violence or abuse to defend himself; each sought the spiritual good of their enemies.
- C. A higher calling - Mt 5:43-48.
 - 1. We are to love, bless, do good to and pray for those who mistreat us. This is in accordance with the nature and character of God whose children we claim to be.

2. *Anyone* can curse, gossip, give in to impulse to retaliate. But it takes *special character* to absorb mistreatment and return a blessing.

3. Healing the Hurts

A. How do we get over the ***hurt***?

1. Not trying to minimize the hurt we suffer at the hands of others.
 - a. Confide in a friend and have it spread all over the congregation.
 - b. Invest money with brother and lose it.
 - c. Adultery committed with spouse.
2. Holding a grudge, keeping distance, building walls all imprison us to the offense. Know many people imprisoned by past; cannot forgive self/others for mistakes.

B. In a word, ***forgiveness*** is the key!

1. Sample prayer of Jesus - Mt 6:9-13. The **one** element He singles out for emphasis is *forgiveness* (v 14-15).
2. Jesus forgives His enemies even as they nail Him to the cross - Lk 23:34. Many who wrong us act in *ignorance*.
3. Our **own** sinfulness/forgiveness is the basis for forgiving others - Mt 18:21-35.

C. Make forgiveness ***active***: Seek reconciliation - Mt 5:23-24; Mt 18:15.

Conclusion: Don't define yourself by the slights, snubs, mistreatment or mistakes of others. Instead, define yourself by the strength and character of faith by forgiving and moving on. Build a bridge with your "enemy"; do all you can and move on so that your soul will not be jeopardized.