

**LOVE YOUR ENEMIES,
BLESS those who curse you,
DO GOOD to those you hate you, and
PRAY for those who spitefully use you
and persecute you
THAT YOU MAY BE THE CHILDREN
OF YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN**
(Matthew 5:44-45).

We live in times of growing hatred and disagreement; one party struggles against the other. Families quarrel among themselves; nations go to war and rush towards destruction. But no one really wants war. All long for peace, rest and progress. Why then do we hinder peace and speak in words of hatred?

Evil dominates a man's soul. We need a new power to change our evil hearts. This power is found in God alone, since He is love. The person who considers God's pardon, reconciliation and mercy does not gain mere empty knowledge or hard facts. Rather he finds creative power offering us a new heart of mercy and compassion.

First of all, God reveals to us our sinful mind. We tend to think we are always in the right and assume we know our claims and terms. As for the rights of others, these do not concern us at all. We are unwilling to give up our rights, and we repay those who do us wrong according to the principle "eye for eye" and "tooth for tooth". Because we hold so firmly to rights which we call our rights, we react with hate, revenge and conflict. Had God dealt with us according to His justice and truth, He would have struck us dead instantly. He was the one who created us and all we possess. We have nothing of our own. All is His, yet we behave like small independent gods robbing our Lord of time, money and honour. We do not submit ourselves to Him as we should.

However, God the Holy One has spared us. He has been merciful and sent Christ to us, who are His enemies, to show divine love for us by His gracious example.

Christ did not stand up for His rights by force, instead, He loved His enemies. He did not show anger when He was insulted, but blessed those who cursed Him. He did not reject the man who betrayed Him, but called him "friend". On the cross He did not call for the murderers' destruction, but forgave them their sins. Whoever studies the life of Christ carefully begins to understand that He is the love of God incarnate. His person marked the start of a great revolution in the world.

Someone who believes in the Crucified Christ understands why God did not demand His rights from us. In His amazing love He placed all our sins and judgement on His beloved Christ. His matchless sacrifice reconciled God's enemies to the Holy One, and cleansed our hearts by the precious blood. An

ocean of divine love flows from the cross, sufficient to transform us, rebels, arrogant and vengeful as we are, into servants of God.

Anyone who comes to Christ by faith is filled with His gentle spirit and changed into the likeness of Christ, in righteousness, holiness and truth. Do not hold back, hurry to be united to Christ, and you will receive a new heart and a right spirit from Him. This will enable you to forgive all who do something wrong to you, as He has forgiven you. You will forget the injuries you have suffered even as God has blotted out your sins from His memory. The Spirit of God will enable you to pardon anyone even as God forgives you. So forgive your enemy today; do not think of yourself first, and you will come to know God your Father as He really is. Then you will pray for those who hate you, love those who curse you, and ask your heavenly Father to fill your enemies with grace and bring them to repentance. You will visit the one who hates you and ask his forgiveness, even if he was to blame. Thus you will teach him humility by taking the first step. You will get rid of your own pride in the process and increase in love.

Should you feel that your love is weak, look to the Crucified One, and ask God in His name to give you more love. "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16). Christ offers real love. He never despises us or seeks revenge. If you despise simple folk, you are not showing love. Unless you feel you are the worst of sinners, your pride is very much alive. Your faith in God will only be as great as your love is strong and enduring. The glory of God will come upon you only when you serve your enemies. The Holy Spirit will free you from selfishness, and Christ will bring you into the fellowship of His followers. Live according to His word:

"Be merciful even as your Father is merciful."

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