

# Enemies

Christians are taught to be at peace with all men (Rom. 12:18). They are to love their neighbors as themselves (Matt. 22:39). They are to be good moral people; a benefit and blessing to those around them (Rom. 12:9). Even with such godly attitudes and actions, Christians have enemies.

To say Christians have enemies shocks some people. They think if a Christian has enemies, then something is wrong with the Christian. They believe one who follows Christ ought to be well-loved by all men. However, just the opposite is true--they will not be well-loved by all men. Jesus said, "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake" (Matt. 10:22). He also said,

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also (Jn. 15:18-20).

Jesus had many enemies, and they conspired to kill Him. It should not surprise us that those who follow in His footsteps have "adversaries" and "opponents" as well (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14; Titus 2:8).

The New Testament tells us about the enemies a Christian will have. Some of them we expect, others we do not. Yet, we need to be aware of them, study what God says about them, and be prepared to deal with them.

No doubt, all would readily see that the devil is an enemy of the child of God. He is the "adversary" who seeks to devour our souls (1 Pet. 5:8). He uses his "devices" against us to turn us from God (2 Cor. 2:11). Yet, the devil does not do this directly; he has agents. We are told of his ministers who "transform themselves into ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). That's right, the devil uses men to do his bidding. Often these are religious men--well loved religious men. Billy Graham would be one example.

Those who oppose the gospel are also enemies of the Christian and the one he is striving to convert. When Elymas withstood Paul and Barnabas, Paul said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you

enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?" (Acts 13:10). Many times a denominational preacher has corrupted a member of his church after that member has been taught the truth by a Christian.

Sometimes, the enemy may be within our own family. Jesus said, "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household' (Matt. 10:35-36). A father and son can be alienated from one another for many years because one adheres to the gospel while the other refuses. Mothers have been known to kick their daughters out of the house because the daughter was baptized (cf. Mk. 16:16). Many tears are shed in such situations, but the love of God sustains His child.

Sadly, enemies can be found among the brethren. Paul, in dealing with the circumcision, said, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). Those of the circumcision did not deny the Christ nor His church. They did not refuse baptism. Their morals were impeccable and their zeal unsurpassed. Yet, they were enemies of the cross. There are enemies of the cross among the people of God today. This should not amaze us, as enemies from within are dealt with frequently in the New Testament (Acts 20:28-32; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 4:1-5; 1 Jn. 2:18-19).

When the truth is taught and lived by, enemies will be made (cf. Matt. 10:34). Don't be shocked. The world will hate the children of God. Those of the world hate the truth and consider those who teach it as its enemy (cf. Gal. 4:16). Even with the mistreatment and animosity from his enemy, the Christian is to love and do good to him (Matt. 5:44-48; Rom. 12:20-21). This may be very difficult at times, but remember that while we were enemies of God, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8; cf. Col. 1:21; Jas. 4:4).

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