

Love your enemies

Except for you and me, there are just a lot of people out there who are hard to get along with. Have you noticed that? And those are the ones Jesus said to love. “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (Luke 6:27).

You may be thinking, “Love my enemies? I have a hard time loving those who love me!” Well, good for you for being honest. It is true—on our own, we can barely love those who are good to us. To love someone who hates us (or whom we hate) is impossible. Until we are born again. Those who accept Jesus Christ into their life as their Lord and Savior are given new, divine desires and abilities. Our old, dead spirit is regenerated and “the love of God is poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Rom 5:5). Having been born of the Spirit of God, the one who trusts Jesus has within himself divine power to love, even enemies. On any given day we may not feel very loving. But whether we feel it or not, the love is there inside us. We live by faith, not by feeling. We believe the Word of God to be true and so we act upon it.

Start with a politician you really dislike. There are probably many to choose from. Then pray, just as sincerely as you know how, for God to really bless him (or her) and prosper him and to help him succeed. (This, by the way, is not an option for Christians—it is the commandment of God—see 1 Timothy 2:1-4.) Your “flesh” will protest that you are being a hypocrite—after all, you can’t stand this person! But Christians place our flesh in subjection to our spirit. We gain mastery over ourselves, and ignore the upset protest of our feelings. Now, as you pray for this one you really don’t like, you will find after about a month of praying daily for him, that it actually isn’t as hard as it once was and that your feelings, instead of being outraged, have now come alongside of your will to bless this one you don’t like. You are now loving your enemy.

Love has little to do with feelings of “like.” Love is the choice to seek the good of someone, whether we like them or not. God does not like the wicked. But He does love them. Jesus taught us to love our enemies, that we might be sons of the Most High God, who is “kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Luke 6:35). There is someone in your life whom you do not like? Well, that is to be expected. It doesn’t mean you are less of a Christian. Feelings of like or dislike are kind of beside the point. We choose to walk in love. Period. Whether anyone else does or not.