

Plain Talk about My Enemies

Luke 6:27-28

Jesus words, "Love your enemies," are more than radical. They have caused some followers of Jesus to conscientiously object to war. Some, like Ben Salmon (1889-1932) were sentenced to death by the U.S. government for refusing to register for the World War 1 draft (later commuted to life with hard labor). Some pacifists use Jesus words in this Sermon on the Plain to never pick up a 'sword' against an enemy. However, the Bible says only that there is *coming* a day when Jesus will reign on this earth and "*will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will **beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore***" (Is. 2:4). That day is *not* yet here. Paul says "*If you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers don't **bear the sword** for no reason. **They're God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment***" (Romans 13:4).

There is now a dichotomy between the nations of this world and Christ's kingdom (which is not yet of this world). Until Christ reigns, nation use weapons to preserve peace and to punish the evil doer. Christians call this theory of governments bearing weapons for the purpose of justice – **The Just War Theory**. Augustine claimed that, while individuals should not resort *immediately* to violence, God has given the sword to government for good reason (Rom. 13:4). Christians who serve their government should not be ashamed. "*What is required is an inward disposition. The sacred seat of virtue is the heart.*" Augustine

"We the people..." begins the American Constitution, the document that forms our government. "We the people..." are the government. "*The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants.*" - Thomas Jefferson. There's a difference between allegiance to the Constitution and allegiance to Christ. One can be both a soldier and a saint, but a Christian who soldiers for his government should be careful to identify himself as a US citizen. This is why there is separation of church (ekklesia) and state. "If an enemy dies on the field of human conflict, the one who kills should be identified as a soldier of the state, and not as a follower of Christ." Why's this an important principle?

A Christian can have enemies, but can never be the enemy.

An enemy is an individual or group of individuals who are forcefully adverse and threat to bring you physical, emotional, psychological or financial harm. **How can followers of Christ love our enemies?**

I. We believe in the personal, all-powerful and always good God - "*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose*" (Romans 8:28). Temporal afflictions in body, reputation, estate, or even death itself, all work together for the good of God's people. The Jews of a man named Nahum (his nickname was Gamzu), because after everything that happened to him he used to say, "*Gam zu l'tovah*", "this is also for good."

II. We believe in the final, just and punitive judgment – "*It is mine to avenge; I will repay,*" says the Lord." "*On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head*" (Romans 12:19-20). Those burning coals can be two kinds of coals! They can be the burning fires of hell or they can be the burning fires of repentance.

III. We believe in the unique and compelling Christian way of life – "I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Our obedience to Jesus' plain talk will transform lives. The Son of Hamas came to Christ because of it.