

Series: Psalms

Title: What to Do to Enemies

Text: Psalm 35: 11-18

Date: April 26, 2018

Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Psalm 35: 11: False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not. 12: They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

The speaker says false witnesses rose up and charged me with things that were not in my thoughts, words or deeds. We know this is written concerning Christ when it says, “*False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.*”

Matthew 26: 59: Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; 60: But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, *yet* found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, 61: And said, This *fellow* said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. 62: And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what *is it which* these witness against thee? 63: But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. 64: Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. 65: Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. 66: What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. 67: Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote *him* with the palms of their hands, 68: Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?

In thirty plus years of being in the faith I have never seen or heard of God’s true preachers and God’s true people rejecting a professing believer because of error in doctrine. I have never heard of God’s people slandering someone who professes to believe the gospel of God’s grace simply because they do not agree with one another on some aspect of doctrine. God’s people do not go on websites and slander other professing believers. Those who have experienced the power of God’s grace continue preaching and supporting the gospel and wait on God to work in the hearts of those who oppose us.

However, I have seen a handful of preachers who separated themselves and told professing believers not to associate with us. I have seen men who do so change their doctrine from what they once preached and suddenly refuse fellowship with the very men they once called their brethren in Christ. While men refuse those who once were their brethren they align themselves with those they once claimed preached lies.

I have experienced, and I have heard of brethren experiencing, the wrath of unregenerate men who reject us for trying to show them the truth of the scriptures concerning Christ and him crucified.

Nothing hurts and frustrates us like being accused of something we did not do. It is common for believers to be falsely accused because of the hatred men have for Christ and his gospel. Even when we declare the gospel, they accuse us of saying things we never said.

But remember they did it to our Lord. And so did we when we were dead in trespasses and in sins. Throughout his life on this earth, and at last on the cross, Christ said, "*They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.*" Christ only did good when he walked this earth. He healed the sick: made blind to see, lame to walk, deaf to hear, cleansed the lepers. Christ fed multitudes with a few fish and a few loaves. He preached the Gospel and saved the souls of many. Yet, we rewarded Christ with reproaches and persecutions, and at last with the shameful death of the cross. You and I who now believe by his grace once hated Christ and his gospel and despised those who tried to tell us the truth.

So, brethren, we should not think it a strange thing, as though some new thing happened to us. Depraved sinners persecuted the prophets, even Christ himself. And we did the same while dead in our sins.

Subject: What to Do to Enemies

Proposition: We learn what to do to our enemies by how Christ dealt with us when we were enemies in our minds, hating him and persecuting him.

CHRIST TREATED US AS OUR NEAR KINSMEN

Psalm 35: 13: But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom. 14: I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

Christ says, "*When they were sick.*" How sick were we? We were blind and deaf to everything spiritual. From our mother's womb we came forth lame, unable to work righteousness, to justify ourselves or even to come to Christ believing on him. We were diseased with the leprosy of sin. In our nature we got from Adam, we were dead in trespasses and in sins. Colossians 1: 21 describes us as "*alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.*"

Yet, Christ says, "*when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth.*" Sackcloth was a rough garment made of camel's skin worn to signify humility and mourning. In order to recover God's elect, who were Christ's

enemies, the Son of God came down from heaven's glory and clothed himself with the sackcloth of humanity like unto his brethren.

What should we do to those who are enemies of Christ and of us in their minds? We should humble ourselves in the dust, mourning for them, knowing that is what Christ did for us when we were in the same condition.

When faced by his depraved elect who hated him by nature, Christ said, "*I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*" We tend to not understand what a true fast is in the scriptures. There is much more to a true, spiritual fast than merely depriving the body of food.

However, it is simple to understand a spiritual fast if you consider what happens when men fast physically. In a fast, the flesh is starved—Christ said, "*I humbled my soul with fasting.*" But in a spiritual fast, while the flesh is denied, the believer feeds his spirit—Christ said, "*And my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*" Where you find Christ fasting in scripture, you also find him engaged in prayer. What was he doing?

Though Christ knew no sin, when faced with his enemies, in his flesh, Christ was tempted in all points as we are. He was touched with all the infirmities caused by sin that you and I are touched with though he knew no sin. But instead of leaning on the arm of the flesh, Christ fasted. He denied his flesh. While he did so, he fed his spirit in prayer to the Father. He says, "*I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.*"

Therefore, Christ walked in the Spirit rather than reacting to his enemies like our sinful flesh reacts. So he declares that the fast he chose is to do to his enemies that which was righteous and holy.

Isaiah 58: 6: *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?* 7: *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?*

The reaction of our sinful flesh is just the opposite. The self-righteous fasted physically but they did it only in an attempt to merit God's favor and to exalt themselves over other sinners.

Isaiah 58: 3: *Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours.* 4: *Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high.* 5: *Is it such a fast that I have*

chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? *is it* to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes *under him*? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD?

The reaction of self-righteous flesh is to smite our enemies with the fist of wickedness and exact upon men grievous rules and regulations that are impossible to bear. Sinful flesh does so to make their voice to be heard on high in an attempt to make the enemy obedient rather than humbling the flesh, praying to God in spirit and waiting on God to make his people obedient in the heart.

Christ did not do that. He denied his flesh even though there was no sin in his flesh. Still, he humbled himself before the Father, praying the Father for his people. Therefore, toward his enemies, Christ said, “*I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.*” As he fasted and prayed, he mourned over us as his friends and brethren, when all his elect were enemies to God by wicked works.

Instead of condemning us with the fist of wickedness, instead of yoking us with the curse of the law, Christ “*loosed the bands of wickedness and the heavy burdens, and he let the oppressed go free, breaking every yoke*” by laying down his life for us on the cross and delivering all his people from the curse of the law.

While as yet we despised him in our fallen sin-nature, he sent us the gospel and “*dealt his bread to the hungry.*” Sinful flesh casts out enemies. But Christ “*brought us—the poor that are cast out—to his house?*” Sinful, self-righteous flesh sees the enemy in the nakedness of depravity rejecting the gospel and hides from men who are our own flesh. Christ found us “*naked and covered us in his own righteousness.*” Christ “*hid not himself from his own flesh.*” Now, by his finished work, Colossians 1, describes his redeemed, regenerated, believing people this way,

Colossians 1: 21: And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22: In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:

Brethren, Christ is the brother indeed born for adversity—a friend at all times. Even now, when we in our flesh act as though he is our enemy, he comforts us “*as one who mourns for his mother.*” (Pro_17:7; Isa 66:13; Joh 15:13-15)

So what do we do to those who are enemies in their minds, rejecting Christ, rejecting us, rejecting the gospel? Brethren, let us heed the word of Christ our Master and our Savior and do more than unbelievers do. Let us go above and beyond toward those who are our enemies. Christ said,

Matthew 5: 43: Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44: But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45: That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46: For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47: And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? 48: Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Every believer has an old nature and a new nature: so we are in a warfare between our sinful flesh and the new spirit created within by the Holy Spirit.

Sadly, just as we are very diligent about feeding our physical flesh, so we are diligent to feed our sinful flesh. Physically, when we miss a meal, our flesh reacts. We have to eat for the sake of our physical flesh. But sadly the same is true when it comes to feeding our sinful flesh.

But we need to feed the spirit. We ought never go days without feeding the inner man. Instead, we ought to set aside time to starve the lusts of our sinful flesh, by spending that time feeding the inner man by hearing the gospel preached, by studying God's word, by going into our closet in prayer. And this we should do for our enemies. It is impossible to walk in the Spirit and feed the lust of the flesh at the same time. Notice, how Paul says that. He says as we walk in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God prevents our flesh from doing the sinful things we would.

Galatians 5: 16: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* 17: For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18: But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Think about this in terms of when we are slandered by those who oppose Christ and his gospel. We tend to feed our flesh by reacting in a fleshly, sinful way. We should fast. I do not mean literal fasting from physical food. But we should starve our sinful flesh, by feeding the inward man with the gospel, the word and prayer. If we do so then in regard to our enemies the fruit of the Holy Spirit will produce the fruit of that fast which Christ has chosen. As we humble ourselves and deny our sinful flesh to react, we will give our enemies the gospel or bring them to God's house to hear the gospel and thus choose the fast Christ has chosen,

Isaiah 58: 6: *Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?* 7: *Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house?*

You see, brethren, a spiritual fast is a reversal of our normal pattern. Instead of feeding the sinful flesh, you feed the spirit and depend upon Christ to set his people free through the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another way to consider what a spiritual fast is is to consider when we are asked to do something for our brethren that will require sacrifice, changing our plans, going out of our way. Our sinful flesh does not want to sacrifice for brethren. It is the old man of sin that does not want to be inconvenienced by brethren, especially not by our enemies. So if we say “no I can’t help” then we are gorging our flesh rather than fasting and depriving our sinful flesh. We are doing what our sinful flesh wants. Fasting is starving the flesh by walking in the Spirit and doing that which goes against our sinful flesh. Christ said, *“Is not this the fast that I have chosen?...when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”*

So when our old sinful flesh flares up, before we feed that mangy mutt, remember Christ broke our every yoke, fed us and clothed us and brought us to his house not by treating us as an enemy but as a friend, as a brother, with the love and kindness of a son who mourns his mother. We never know but that one treating us like an enemy may be one of God’s elect. It may be one for whom Christ died. The Lord may be using us to bring them to his house where the Spirit of God will quicken them through his gospel. May God help us to not feed the flesh but look to Christ.

COMMIT ALL TO CHRIST

Psalm 35: 15: But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: 16: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. 17: Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. 18: I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

Do you see what Christ did when his enemies falsely charged him and nailed him to the cursed tree? He committed his cause to God his Father, *“Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.”*

When faced by an enemy of Christ, look to Christ and commit all to him like as he committed all to his Father.

1 Peter 2: 19: For this *is* thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20: For what glory *is it*, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer *for it*, ye take it patiently, this *is* acceptable with God. 21: For even

hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 22: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously: 24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. 25: For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Christ committed his cause to God our Father. He said in the first verse of our Psalm, “*Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me.*” This is part of a spiritual fast. He not only did not lean to the arm of the flesh, also he said, “*my prayer returned into my bosom.*” It is not just praying to say a prayer. It means he committed all to the Father. And God our Father faithfully delivered our Substitute once he had accomplished the redemption of his people and declared God just and the Justifier.

Yes, brethren, it may get worse before it gets better. It did with our Substitute on the cross. But when God has fulfilled his purpose between you and the enemy who opposes you, as he did in justifying all his elect on the cross, Christ will deliver you from your enemy. He very well may do so by calling that one who is an enemy to life and faith in Christ.

By this gospel, Christ is doing what he promised the Father he would do, “*I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.*” You and I believe because Christ entered our newly created heart and praised God our Father so that in his Light we beheld the glory of God. So not only does Christ’s resurrection declare to us that God is faithful to judge righteously and deliver us, the fact you and I believe is proof that God is faithful to judge righteously and deliver. He raised Christ and gave him the glory as the GodMan to enter our hearts and give thanks in you who make up his great congregation and brought us to praise God, giving him all the glory, among the much people that make up his church. So we know, without a doubt, that God judges righteously. So we have every encouragement to commit our cause to Christ like as he committed his to the Father.

THE LAST THING

So what do we do when opposed by the enemy?

First, let us humble ourselves in sackcloth remembering that we too were once an enemy of Christ in our minds and could do nothing but despise Christ, his gospel and that one who declared the truth to us. Therefore, let us fast, starving the old sinful flesh, and let us feed the inner man in spiritual things. This way we will choose the fast Christ has chosen which is to love your enemies and do good to them. You never know they might be one of Christ’s redeemed.

Secondly, since you and I both know we cannot do this of ourselves apart from Christ our Strength, rather than revile again, commit your cause to Christ that judges righteously. “*When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*” As we fast and prayer returns into our bosom let us do the same, committing all our cause to Christ.

Lastly, when Christ has delivered us from our enemy let us speak to our brethren doing what Christ did, “*I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.*” In the great congregation, amongst our brethren, let us give thanks and praise where it is due, to God our Father and his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, giving God our Savior all the glory!

Amen!