

After having shot one of the attackers at the St James Massacre, for many months thereafter I struggled with the idea of whether I, according to Biblical principles, had to love the perpetrators of the crime or whether my hatred for them was justifiable. After all, the Bible tells us to love our own personal enemies, but there is no reference to Christians having to love God's enemies.

The other concept I had to deal with was that of "forgiveness". How could I forgive those terrorists who had ruthlessly murdered the children of God while they were worshipping Him? After all, they had not asked to be forgiven, had shown no repentance and appeared not to have forgiven us for what ever they held against us. Isn't this what Scripture teaches? That we need to ask for forgiveness, repent and forgive others, before we are forgiven!

These unresolved questions in my mind played a major role in my decision not to give any interviews to the press or television. I thought that my ideas would conflict with those being told to the media by most others interviewed. Their standard reply to questions was:

"We have forgiven the terrorists and we love them, but we hate what they have done!"

My first question was: "How can I forgive somebody if there is no sign of repentance and when they have not asked to be forgiven?"

I also did not know whether people could be separated from their acts. Are we not responsible for our sins? Would God let a murderer into heaven one day because He loved the murderer, but hated his sin, supposing he did not repent and come to faith in Christ? How does one explain Psalm 5:5? "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong."

After much reading of the Word and other books and listening to sermons, I believe that I have come to a deeper understanding of these issues from a Biblical perspective.

In his book "War Psalms of the Prince of Peace", JE Adams deals with one such Psalm, namely Psalm 58, which appears to condemn the wicked.

The Psalm is not one to be dismissed by an armchair theologian because, quite frankly, one would like to use it as a bold war cry against terrorists. Rather, we can make this Psalm our prayer.

According to Adams, the lessons of this Psalm are:

"First, the accusation of the wicked. Second, the prayer for the destruction of evil. Third, the rejoicing in God's judgement."

These prayers were not David's personal vendetta. We know that David prayed for his personal enemies, and when his prayers went unanswered, he grieved for them as he would grieve for his own mother (Psalm 35:12-14).

While many people have probably tried to use a prayer like Psalm 58 in their personal capacity against those who oppose them, that is not what this Psalm is about. We must not pray like this against our personal enemies. We need to show Christ's love and forgiveness to our own enemies and not seek revenge.

Only in Jesus Christ can we pray such frightening prayers for God's justice to be made known on the earth by praying for the destruction of the enemies of God. From this we learn that God will bring justice upon the wicked. The righteous will be avenged (verse 10). In Deuteronomy 32:35 God says, "It is mine to avenge, I will repay."

God is setting up His kingdom and He will destroy Satan's kingdom as well as Satan's subjects. God alone knows when and how these subjects are going to be destroyed. We need to pray: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Christ will do it in His time.

We should pray as the Psalmist did, we have to pray against the enemies of God. Those who will not bow their knee to King Jesus should be prayed against, with us asking God to disarm and destroy them. God will bring His judgement upon His enemies and His execution will be

fierce. These prayers are going to be fulfilled. God's mighty hand will sweep them away so that all honour and glory will be given to His holy Name.

The only way in which we can rejoice in God's final judgement is if we are in Christ. If we are not, then we will be with those being destroyed.

This Psalm shocks us, but if we reject it, then we are rejecting God and His holiness. We can find deliverance from the judgement of God only in Jesus Christ who bore God's wrath in our place when He died at Calvary. He was afflicted for our wickedness.

The Psalmist's words become Christ's very own. He accuses the wicked and calls down God's Judgement upon them. He rejoices with those who are in Him. There will be justice on earth as God delivers the righteous and damns the wicked. This powerful Psalm speaks to each one of us. Where do you stand?

How does this apply to the St James Massacre? I believe that the terrorists are not my personal enemies, they would have attacked the congregation whether I was there or not. They are the enemies of God. What will happen if I pray this prayer against them? Only two things can happen, one is that God's judgement and wrath would fall upon them and they be cast into the lake of fire or that by the grace of God, they come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of their lives and then move from being an enemy of God to becoming one of His sons and to me, a new brother in Christ.

I pray and labour so that the latter will be the final outcome, but whatever the result, I need to pray against the enemies of God.

Some have argued that we cannot forgive these terrorists unless they ask for forgiveness, repent (Luke 13: 3) and forgive others (Matthew 6: 14-15), but yet we must have an attitude of forgiveness towards them.

If we look clearly at the verses dealing with these issues, one will see that God imposes these conditions upon us. His forgiveness is not unconditional, rather it is conditional to us repenting, asking for forgiveness and us forgiving others. There is not the slightest hint in Scripture that we too can impose these conditions on others. Our forgiveness has to be unconditional and further we need to forgive seventy times seven times, this is no easy task but by the help of Jesus

Christ our Lord and Saviour, we can accomplish this by the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

One must also not confuse forgiveness with the lack of justice. I am compelled by Scripture to forgive those who persecute me as well as my personal enemies, but the civil government has the God ordained responsibility to punish the wicked and protect the innocent. (Romans 13)

I have totally forgiven the attackers for their wrongdoing and bear no malice or bitterness towards them, as is expected of me by God. "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." Matthew 6:14-15

The terrorists, however, do not enjoy the forgiveness of God for their sin, unless they forgive others who have sinned against them. They need to repent from their wickedness and may no longer pursue their old ways. This is my prayer.

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