

Love your Enemy

Recently we gathered letters that had been written to us over the years, which had helped us spiritually. We came across this gem. We must have written about someone who, we thought, was damaging our reputation and witness. Perhaps we expected some understanding sympathy! If we did - it wasn't forthcoming. The answer came, 'You have an enemy. Isn't God good, now you can learn to love your enemies.' We doubt very much that we had seen the goodness of God in the situation.

The words of Jesus, 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you',¹ are quite familiar to some of us but they are not ones we easily recall when we are slandered and unjustly accused. It is more likely that righteous indignation, or perhaps, we should say, 'unrighteous indignation', makes us swell at least a centimetre all around. A Sister was reminded of a Pastor whom she had heard speaking many years ago. His church numbered thousands and he was very popular. One day he was told that he had an adversary. He promptly went around to this person's house, knocked on the door and when it was opened, hugged his foe and said joyfully, 'I am so happy, now I have an enemy to love!'

David Alton in his book about North Korea tells the story of Dr James Chin-kyung Kim. As a young boy he fought for South Korea in the Korean War. There was carnage – just 17 survived out of his unit of 800 men. One night, on the battlefield, he read John's gospel and vowed that he would devote his life to peace and reconciliation. He promised God he would, "work with the Chinese and North Koreans, our enemies".² He never forgot his promise. He became a successful businessman and then founded a university in South Korea. When this flourished he founded another in China. Then, he went to North Korea with the same aim. Instead he was arrested, as an American spy, and sentenced to death. When he was commanded to write a will he gave his captors all he had left, his body, to be used for medical research. He wrote to the US government, 'Revenge will only bring more revenge and it will be an endless cycle of bitter hatred. Today, it will stop here and the hate will not see a victory. I am dying for the love of my country and people.' Even the government of North Korea was moved by his words and allowed him to return home to China. He made no complaints about what had happened. Two years later he was asked back to North Korea and asked if he would found a university in their country. Dr Kim's conditions were all met. They included his choosing the site, full ownership of the land and bringing in foreign professors. He discovered later that on this site had once stood a church dedicated to a missionary who had been central to the story of Christianity in Korea. In this he saw God's hand. Those who know anything about North Korea's repressive regime would acknowledge that this was a miracle and it happened because one man was obedient to God and chose to love his enemy. Please pray for North Korea, its young leader, Kim Jong Un, and all those held in its notorious prison camps.

What of ourselves? How do we love in such a way? St Augustine has wise words. "As the Lord viewed you, you too must view your enemies, those who oppose you, raging, biting with words, frustrating you with their slander, harassing you with their hatred. You must remember that they are human beings; you must see all their actions against you as merely human works, while they themselves are the works of God. That your enemies have been created is God's doing; that they



hate you and wish your ruin is their own doing. What should you say about them in your mind? ‘Lord, be merciful to them, forgive them their sins, put the fear of God into them, change them!’ You are loving in them not what they are, but what we would have them become.”³

As to ourselves, the Lord can keep us in love and peace whatever our circumstances, however the world may rage against us. In our own limited way, as we have walked with the Lord through the years, we know this to be true.

¹ Luke 6:27-28 NIV

² Building Bridges. David Alton & Rob Chidley

³ Restless Till We Rest In You. St Augustine – compiled by Paul Thigden