

Scriptures and Doctrine :: Appropriate Affection Toward the Enemy of God

Appropriate Affection Toward the Enemy of God - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/5/16 10:50

Appropriate Affection Toward the Enemy of God

A consideration of the existence of proper 'Methods' and 'Motivation' in Evangelism, written for the Truly Converted.

by Aaron Ireland

Quote:
 -----**John 3:16-17** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

Mat 7:13-14 "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because **strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.**"

"Then said Evangelist pointing with his finger over a very wide field, **Do you see yonder Wicket-Gate?** The man said, No..." - John Bunyan (Pilgrim's Progress)

Most Christians suffer conflicting emotions when it comes to sinners. We are torn between compassionate longing for our loved ones to be saved, and a vengeful desire to see the 'hideously wicked' come to justice before God. We cannot grasp that God can reserve the 'Lake of Fire' for those who have done something as trivial as 'lying', while at the same time extending mercy to paedophiles and murders. How do we reconcile this? The purpose of this essay is to answer this question as clearly as possible, so that the reader may know how to express the appropriate affection toward sinners.

Quote:
 -----"If we loved the world the way God does, we'd never have to worry about loving it the way we shouldn't." - Vance Havner (The Christian in the World)

We require here an understanding of God's love, in contrast with worldly affection. Worldly affection says, "I want to be with you and do good things for you because there is something about you that I like." This is the definition of the Greek word 'phileo'. Phileo is not a bad thing. When we direct this 'phileo' affection to another it is often one of the greatest compliments that can be given, as it implies that there is something worth loving in the receiver of the affection. Phileo could be well translated as 'friendship'.

God's love on the other hand is unconditional. It seeks the good of all, whether ally or enemy. The Greek word for this kind of love is 'agape'. In the King James Version, this word is often translated as 'charity'. Charity in modern usage is to extend a gift with the expectation that nothing whatsoever shall be given in return. Its sole focus is the benefit of the receiver, at the expense of the giver. It is the kind of love expressed to the beggarly, and implies a degree of poverty in the recipient. This is the kind of love that God loves the world with. Agape is the hardest expression of love to give, because it costs us all and the most humiliating to receive because it refuses repayment. So in other words, where phileo affection is geared towards the self esteem of the receiver, agape charity would be considered insulting toward all but the truly humble (John 15:13; Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 1:23; James 4:6).

Quote:
 -----**Mat 5:43-46** "Ye have heard that it hath been Said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 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; **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.** For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?"

Literally, Christ is saying here that we are to love our neighbours and love our enemies equally and that we are to follow God's example as he "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust"

. This kind of love does not stop short of extending crumbs to starving dogs at the expense of seeing our own children go hungry, in spite of it being "not meet" to do so (Mat 15:22-28; Mark 7:25-29).

Quote:
-----**Psalm 73:12-14** "Behold, these are the **ungodly, who prosper in the world**; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For **all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.**"

I have heard many claim that "things happen when we pray", but I once heard a Baptist minister say, "When we don't pray things happen". When as Christians, we are obedient, things just tick along harmoniously, and we are almost ignorant that things could possibly be another way, but when we disobey, whether by commission of evil or omission of good, the things start to fall apart. Bear in mind that at times the 'harmony of God' will appear chaotic to us and the 'erosive' will appear stable, because the long term effects may not be evident. It is like this, God punishes His own children for being naughty (Heb 12:4-7) and not only leaves those that are not His children unpunished (Heb 12:8) but gives them over to their sin (Rom 1:21-25).

Asaph put it this way, "Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches" while contrasting himself, as a godly man, by saying, "all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning" (Ps 73:12-14). It is hard to consider this principle of prosperity for the wicked and chastening of the righteousness while at the same time maintaining a view of God as 'good'. The reality is that this consideration is absolutely essential and without it, His goodness can never truly be seen (Ps 73:1). We can even go as far as saying that it is impossible to actually "see God" without being chastened by Him (Heb 10:12-14). This is what is known as "seeing him who is invisible" (Heb 11:27) as opposed to ignoring that which "clearly seen" (Rom 1:20-21). The question that begs to be asked is that if only the 'chastened' can actually 'see God', would that mean that the 'god' that the 'given over' acknowledge is really an idol?

Quote:
-----**"How many are hearing me now whose minds are either a battlefield or a playground for all kinds of things.** And I'll tell you that if you've graduated from Playboy and Sports Illustrated and other kinds of worldly things that our minds love to fasten upon, they will, **if you give them no other alternative, even fasten upon things spiritual and religious so long as they can be occupied.**" - Arthur Katz (And They Crucified Him)

Thus the basis of idolatry is the natural principle that says, "Nature abhors a vacuum". Like the Israelites in the desert, we create a god after our own image to replace the One who took too long on the mount (Ex 31:2). Like Saul we invent alternative plans when our Samuel stretches our patience (2 Sam 13:8-13). Note that in both these examples the idolaters considered what they were doing to be valid expressions of worship to Jehovah. Man cannot tolerate his own ignorance and would rather believe a lie than not know something.

Therefore, the real crime of the sinner is not the actions of his behaviour, as much as the setting up of his own god to serve. Whether this god is 'named' or not, or even if they call him Jesus or Jehovah for example, by ignoring the plain revelation of Christ in scripture they are effectively putting their own words in His mouth. So in other words idolatry could be defined as an attempt to make the 'invisible' characteristics of God 'visible' by the device of man (Acts 17:29), rather than seeing Him by the revelation of His Son (Luke 10:22). Unfortunately for the idolater, in prior "... times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness ..." (Acts 17:30-31)

Quote:
-----**Job 42:3-6** "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. **I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.**"

As we have already seen, purity of heart is conditional on enduring suffering (Heb 10:12-14; Mat 5:12; Ps 73:1). In fact earthly suffering, put into context of eternity, is temporary punishment with the view to avoiding permanent suffering. This principle exposes the darkness of "loving the world" (1 John 2:15). In light of this, we can see that any attempt to express our love toward sinners by shielding them from the suffering that comes from realising the truth of their "enmity with God" (James 4:4) is actually removing the possibility of them having the opportunity to "see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Is 6:10). In other words, our idea of 'loving them' i

s effectively signing their death sentence.

Jesus is the answer to every need. The only problem is that that most sinners are unaware of the existence of their need of him, after all they are not so bad. They conform to the requirement of 'their god'. And why would they want to go against someone who changes the standard of morality based on their own hearts desire. Something may be 'sinful' today, but tomorrow it is good because, "I want to do it!" The benefits of being their own boss far outweighs any desire to submit to Someone that they consider to be a "hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not sowed" (Mat 25:24) who actually requires something of them.

Quote:
-----Mat 15:15-17 "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for **flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.**"

If sinners are ever to see their need of Christ, then we are going to have to 'show it to them'. It is not enough to 'tell them'; they must be 'persuaded'. How can we persuade a sinner of his sinfulness when he is convinced of his own righteousness (Prov 16:2)? It is a woeful thing to call evil 'good', light "dark" and truth 'lies', as it insures the wrath of God, not only for the action, but also for those of the people inspired to do likewise (Is 5:20-24, Mat 5:19).

The tragedy is that sinners will never know their state unless they are confronted with the Holy Standard of righteousness (Rom 3:20;7:7). Our testimony to the world must be consistent with that of the Holy Ghost, who reproves "... the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ... because they believe not on (Christ); ... because ... ye see (Christ) no more; (and) ... because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11). In other words, our message must convince them that they will stand in judgement for submitting to the "principles of this world", rather than "trusting in Christ", who they can't see. The problem is that "flesh and blood" cannot reveal this to us (Mat 15:17) because the "gospel be ... **hid to them that are lost**: In whom the **god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor 4:3-4).

Quote:
-----**Gal 3:22-24** "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the **law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.**"

So what is the answer? We need to use the only prescribed means "to bring us unto Christ". That is the Law (Gal 3:24). After all, we know that "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8), but that would make no sense to those who have not the "knowledge of sin" which comes to us "by the law" (Rom 3:20), due to the fact that "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom 4:15). The sinner needs to be brought to the realisation that 'his sin' is actually 'sinful' (Rom 7:13).

Paul's personal experience of this principle at work is seen in his words, "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had **not known** lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom 7:7). For Paul it was, a matter of realising that what he thought to be a healthy desire for recognition and success in his 'patriotism', God considered to be 'lustful covetousness'. He knew of the 'existence of sin' but was ignorant of his own 'participation in sin'. He could point out the 'misdeeds of the publican', while at the same time boast of his 'consistency of fasting and tithing' (Luke 18:10-13). He could justify his persecution of the church by citing his "zeal for God" (Phil 3:6) but he had to face the fact that his zeal was "not according to knowledge" (Rom 10:2). Once he was confronted with the question, "Why persecutest thou me?" he could come to no other realisation than that "... it is hard ... to kick against the pricks" (Acts 9:3-6), for he "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish (his) own righteousness, (had) not submitted (himself) unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3).

In other words, he had to realise that when he was presented with vacuum of his own ignorance "of God's righteousness", like the good Pharisee that he was, he had 'chosen' his own Talmudic substitute and 'allowed' it to persuade him that his actions were justifiable and even profitable for the furtherance of his beloved Judaism. He could even claim that his behaviour was evidence of his own (dare I say it) 'righteousness'. Until he could count this replacement, and every benefit that he had received from his submission to it, "as dung" he could not "win Christ" (Phil 3:7-8), who came not "to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mat 9:13). Thankfully, that is exactly what he did.

Quote:
-----**James 4:2-5** Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? **whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.** Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?

We must never forget that sinners have deliberately chosen to be the enemies of God (John 3:18), and therefore we need to choose sides: For God and against them, or for them and against God (Ex 32:26-27; 1 Kings 18:21). The enemy of God is our enemy also. James relates "friendship with the world" to adultery (James 4:4). John tells us clearly, "all that is in the world, the **lust of the flesh**, and the **lust of the eyes**, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16). These two statements make up the clearest definition of what it is to "love the world".

A lot of evangelism is based on the benefit of people. For example: receiving family members and loved ones to fellowship with (lust of the eyes); desire to not be 'unevenly yoked' to a prospective marriage partner (lust of the flesh); and then there's the 'numbers game', with the associated prestige of being known as a successful evangelist (pride of life). When we consider this in the light of 1 John 2:16, we have to face the fact that our motivation is often "not of the Father, but is of the world". If this is the case, then we also have to face the fact that, for the most part, our evangelism is as adultery in the eyes of God and that we are setting ourselves up as His enemy.

Quote:
-----**Col 3:1-2** If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **Set your affection** on things above, **not on things on the earth.**

When I first came to the place where I could honestly say that this mindset went from being a 'titillating concept' to a becoming a deep 'revelation of God's truth' that had invaded the very DNA of my being, I could cry with Asaph, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me" (Ps 73:16). I had just been witnessing to someone who was 'open to spiritual things' but was 'resistant to the truth of Jesus Christ'. In response to him asking why God would send someone to hell, I laid out a flawless exposition of the Ten Commandments in order to show him that, he not only shared the same values as God and had to admit that they were the perfect expression of fairness, but that he had violated every one of them making him a hypocrite. To this he could only reply, "I see where you are coming from, but I still don't think it's right." As I left the encounter, I clearly made it known to him that he had just deliberately rejected God's right to rule over his life, and that unless he repent he would perish (Luke 13:3).

Driving away with tears streaming down my face I sobbed in prayer, "Father, if the sole reason that you want me to preach the gospel is so that sinners won't be able to plead ignorance on the Day of Judgement, then fine. I'll do it. Just don't expect me to like it." All of a sudden I had a deep sense of the loving sorrow of my Jealous Saviour, as He seemed to say to me, "How do you think I felt when I was on the cross?" The intention of my witness is that the hearer be saved. However, more often than not, the effects were that the sinner succumbed to the temptation to deliberately reject the gospel and choose to follow their imaginary god (John 3:18-20).

Then the rest of Asaph's words became clear, "**Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.** Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction ... For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: **thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.**" (Ps 73:17-18,27) Since then I have had a sense of "holy empathy" toward the victims of sin and a "righteous indignation" toward the proponents of it, always mindful of the fact that the number one victim of sin is God (Ps 51:4).

Quote:
-----**2 Pet 3:9** The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

It is not about comforting God by punishing the sinner, but comforting God via providing comfort to the mortal victims of sin, and comforting God by meekly "instructing those that oppose themselves" (2 Tim 2:21) with their own sin of the opportunity to be reunited with God through "repentance from dead works, ... toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ ... and (doing) works meet for repentance." (Heb 6:1; Acts 20:21; 26:20). In other words, we love God through people

e because loving our neighbours is "like unto" loving God with our whole being.

Quote:
-----**Matt 22:37-39** Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And **the second is like unto it**, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

We must get the idea out of our heads that evangelism is about 'protecting good people from a bad God', who wants to send them to hell. As we have seen, if we use a 'method' for evangelism that seeks to comfort the sinner rather than alert him of impending judgement, we are displaying our hatred of them by hiding them from the God who not only wants to save them (John 3:17) but is the only means of salvation from that judgement (John 14:6). And if our 'motivation' is based on personal affection or gain, then we are displaying contempt for God that is comparable to adultery.

Quote:
-----**Rom 5:6-10** "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, **while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us**. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, **when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

We are not to be motivated by a desire to spare sinners from hell, but that God would have his "many sons" gloriously reconciled unto Him (Heb 2:10). I recently walked through shopping center when I heard a lady cry out, "Oh no!! Somebody's taken her!!" She had turned around to find her daughter missing in a crowded walkway. Everyone turned to see if they could find her, when another lady said, "It's okay. She'd just wandered off." The two year old was 'disobedient' in exploring out of sight of her mother in a crowded shopping complex. There would be no need to punish her if someone had taken her during her 'rebellious adventure', as the consequences could be potentially life shattering. Note that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8) in like manner to predators of children awaiting their separation from their parents.

Quote:
-----**Isaiah 6:5-7** "Then said I, **Woe is me! for I am undone**; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, **this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.**"

The sinner is lost and hell is too good for them. They have chosen not only to be the enemy of God (John 3:18), but by implication, they are our enemy also (2 Cor 6:14-15). In spite of this, we are to love them, as we are to love our other enemies (Mat 5:43-46), even being prepared to be "accursed" in their place (Rom 9:1-3). It is God's business as to whether or not He extends mercy to them. Like that frantic mother, our Father in Heaven is seeking one whom He can send to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Is 6:8; Luke 19:10). Once we've seen the holiness of the Lord (Is 6:1-3), realising the impurity of the world and our participation in it (Is 6:5) and have been purged of it (Is 6:6-7), how could our response be anything but, "Here I; send me." (Is 6:8) Ours is to plough, plant and water the seed of truth (1 Cor 3:5-7), and the basis of our motivation is that "the Lamb that was slain may receive the reward of his suffering".

Our message needs to be clear and succinct, as does their response:

Quote:
-----**Josh 24:15-16** And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this day whom ye will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, **God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods**;

After all, our message is not really our message, it is 'His'. And their response must be our response, or we have fooled ourselves into believing that we are not one of them (Rom 7:18).

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WHOA!!! - posted by IRONMAN (), on: 2006/5/18 20:38

bro Aaron

praise God for His revelations to you for indeed flesh and blood could not have shown you these things!

Quote:
-----Most Christians suffer conflicting emotions when it comes to sinners. We are torn between compassionate longing for our loved ones to be saved, and a vengeful desire to see the 'hideously wicked' come to justice before God. We cannot grasp that God can reserve the 'Lake of Fire' for those who have done something as trivial as 'lying', while at the same time extending mercy to paedophiles and murders. How do we reconcile this? The purpose of this essay is to answer this question as clearly as possible, so that the reader may know how to express the appropriate affection toward sinners.

indeed we tend to be more harsh toward sins we are not guilty of yet we neglect that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory. We should pause and consider how much we hurt God when we sin, perhaps we would not be so harsh if we realized that we too deserve hell. If we didn't there would have been no need for Christ to die. When we realize that the Lord has been merciful to us, we will reflect that same mercy to others.

Quote:
-----Literally, Christ is saying here that we are to love our neighbours and love our enemies equally and that we are to follow God's example as he "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust". This kind of love does not stop short of extending crumbs to starving dogs at the expense of seeing our own children go hungry, in spite of it being "not meet" to do so (Mat 15:22-28; Mark 7:25-29).

now this is a hard thing! how can one love his enemy as himself? that sort of love is not inherent in us, this is not the natural love which we have, this can only be the love of God. to attain this requires the emptying out of our fleshly love (which is fine while we're heathens, but unacceptable when we come to Christ, sadly we operate a lot out of this love) in exchange for God's love. This has to do with the cross and the death of self on that cross.

the Lord has been dealing with me about this and has given me much to share on this issue of love.

Quote:
-----We are not to be motivated by a desire to spare sinners from hell, but that God would have his "many sons" gloriously reconciled unto Him (Heb 2:10).

bro that is a most awesome thing which the Lord has shown you. our purpose for existence is to bring God glory, and all the glory at that. to preach for the sake of sparing sinners from hell (though noble) is actually an abominable thing for the end result and motivation is man's benefit and not God's glory. Much of what is done is to man's glory and not God's glory and all such works are about to be exposed for the abominations they are and torn down and trampled on.

bless the Lord for His revealing these things to you to the glory of His name via the edification of His Church. to God be the glory forever and ever indeed. AMEN.

Re: Appropriate Affection Toward the Enemy of God - posted by InTheLight (), on: 2006/5/18 21:31

AMEN!

Re: WHOA!!! - posted by CJaKfOrEsT (), on: 2006/5/20 22:59

Quote:

IRONMAN wrote:

now this is a hard thing! how can one love his enemy as himself? that sort of love is not inherent in us, this is not the natural love which we have, this can only be the love of God. to attain this requires the emptying out of our fleshly love (which is fine while we're heathens, but unacceptable when we come to Christ, sadly we operate a lot out of this love) in exchange for God's love. This has to do with the cross and the death of self on that cross. (emphasis mine, CJaK)

Bingo, give that man a prize:-).

Quote:

the Lord has been dealing with me about this and has given me much to share on this issue of love.

It would seem that there are many of us that are receiving the same message, and I can almost hear the Lord saying, "About time!" (or perhaps that is the sound of all creation "groaning for the revelation of the sons of God").

All I can say is, stay tuned for part two (may take a while as elements are still unclear in expansion, but it is coming (if this piece has anything to go by, it'll be out in a year or two ;-)).

Re: - posted by IRONMAN (), on: 2006/5/21 13:41

Bro Aaron

the Lord is most gracious and merciful and you're right, the Lord is revealing Himself to His own in preparation for the work which is ahead of us. Creation is indeed groaning for the revelation of the sons of God and it's almost time.

bro Aaron, the Lord will indeed see His wisdom poured into you for the glory of His name and it will take however long He requires. The Lord likes to take His time to see His work done properly. I pray the Lord's patience and humility in you that you may work together to bring this revelation to fruition. AMEN. The Lord had me share some of what He showed me on a thread in the lounge titled "The Lord's Revelations to His Admiral" if the Lord leads, check it out and I pray the Lord ministers to you and whoever looks at it.