

Enemies

What is an enemy? Who are your enemies?

In the Old Testament times, Israel's enemies were also considered to be God's enemies, since Israel was God's own people.

Were Israel's enemies only exterior threats (e.g. foreign kings and armies)?

The Greek word *echtros* appears 32 times in the New Testament

Who, in the NT, is often referred to as the enemy?

But who else? Romans 5:9-10 (p. 1753)

Matthew 5:43-48 (p. 1503)

Where do we find in the Old Testament the command to hate one's enemies?

From last session: Not eye for an eye! How does that relate to this commandment from Jesus to love your enemies?

“To the natural man, the very notion of loving his enemies is an intolerable offence, and quite beyond his capacity: it cuts right across his ideas of good and evil.” – *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

What does it mean to “love” someone from Jesus' perspective?

- Is it feelings?
- Is it action?

Luke 14:26 (p. 1623)

What does this mean in light of our discussion?

“The will of God, to which the law gives expression, is that men should defeat their enemies by loving them. In the New Testament our enemies are those who harbour hostility against us, not those against whom we cherish hostility, for Jesus refuses to reckon with such a possibility. The Christian must treat his enemy as a brother, and requite his hostility with love. His behaviour must be determined not by the way others treat him, but by the treatment he himself receives from Jesus.” – *Bonhoeffer*

Is loving one's enemy simply a practical tactic to battle them?

Does this passage indicate that we should condone evil and appease bullies?

What does it mean to pray for those who persecute us?

“Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God. Jesus does not promise that when we bless our enemies and do good to them they will not spitefully use and persecute us. They certainly will. But not even that can hurt or overcome us, so long as we pray for them. For if we pray for them, we are taking their distress and poverty, their guilt and perdition upon ourselves, and pleading to God for them. We are doing vicariously for them what they cannot do for themselves. Every insult they utter only serves to bind us more closely to God and them. Their persecution of us only serves to bring them nearer to reconciliation with God and to further the triumphs of love.” – *Bonhoeffer*

What separates us, or makes us different from pagans (idol worshippers)?

“Be perfect...”