

Reading: Romans 12:9-21

*“Love your enemies... do good to those who hate you” (Mt 5:44)*

“How can I love my enemies?” Every other Christian is bothered by this question. Enemies for a Christian are essentially those who are the enemies of the Cross and those who oppose the preaching of the Gospel. Occasionally there could also be some who, because of their differing tastes and temperaments, would hate you. Sometimes it becomes really impossible to get along with such folks. That’s why the Bible admonishes, “If it is possible, *as much as* depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Rom 12:18). Here are some guidelines to help you improve your relationship with those who oppose or hate you—

First, meditate on God’s love to them too! “He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust” (Mt 5:45). Each person is precious to God. Christ died for every man and woman, good or bad, so called.

Secondly, remind yourself of how patient God is towards you! He has not given up on us though we have failed or disappointed Him so many times. He, who is abundant in mercies, expects us to forgive others — not less than seven times seventy! Young Joseph pardoned his perfidious brothers who threw him in a waterless pit in the desert. How much our God loves this attitude!

Thirdly, pray for your enemies (Mt 5:44). Love grows in the soil of prayer. It always becomes easy to love or forgive someone who hates us when we start praying for that individual. Confess to God your inability to love and He will pour out His love into your heart through His Spirit and enable you to do what otherwise you cannot.

God does not allow us to curse even the devil (Jude 9). Guard your tongue lest you abuse someone. Let not bitterness ever take root in your heart. It defiles you and others as well (Heb 12:14,15). Vengeance is the Lord’s. Don’t take that rod in your hand. You will perish in that process (Mt 26:52). Look for opportunities to do some good to the one who has hurt you. Victory is yours! (Rom 12:19-21). “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov 16:7).

*Doing bad for good is devilish;  
Doing bad for bad is human;  
Doing good for bad is Divine!*

Almighty God, we thank You for Your love the length, the breadth, the height and the depth of which cannot be measured. Thank You for loving us the unloved and the unlovable. Thank You for manifesting Your love on the Cross when Christ died for us sinners and Your enemies. Your love is self-initiated towards us who are not at all worthy. Thank You for the self-giving love of Jesus who has challenged us thro' His life in this world of lovelessness.

We thank You, O God, for Your patience towards us inspite of our lack of response to Your love. Not we but You first loved us. Your love for us from beginning to end is the same even though we keep on disappointing You defeating Your expectations. We fail miserably in our decisions before You. But, Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness that remains forever. Help us be patient with our family members and neighbours. Help us root out all bitterness from our hearts. How soon we get irritated with others and how quickly we write them off! Melt our hearts by Calvary love!

Forgive us, O God, our cheap love. We love only those who love us, but hate those who hate us. We are happy only with those who please us, but we exaggerate the wood shavings in the eyes of others ignoring the wooden plank in ours. We are quick-tempered. We don't shed down our anger quickly but retain it for long. We don't do to others what we expect them do to us. Even after saying that we have forgiven the offenders, we keep reminding them often of their offensive deeds. If You forgive us only to the extent we forgive others, we would die of condemnation. Be gracious unto us, O Lord!

Fill us, O God, with Your Spirit afresh so our life may blossom with His fruits. Let our walk be pleasant before men and fragrant before You. Sorry for the instances when our behaviour was an offence to others, especially the youngsters. Let our talk and walk be dignified so You may be glorified by those who watch us. Trim our lamps, O God, so we may shine brighter and brighter in this world of darkness. We pray that our words and deeds be straight in this crooked world. We pray that You remove all the reproach we have as a Church in the Christ-rejecting society. Forgive us for failing in our calling to be peacemakers in this world of conflicts. Let our love for our fellow believers be without hypocrisy. Help us overcome evil with good instead of being overcome by evil. Let the devil be defeated in all his attempts to disrupt unity among us. In the Name of Jesus the Prince of Peace, Amen!

*(Eph 3:18; Isa 38:17; 44:22; Mic 7:19; Psa 103:12; Rom 5:5,8; 12:9,21; 1 Jn 4:19; 2 Tim 2:13; Mt 5:9,44-48; 6:31; 7:1-5; 22:39; Lk 6:31; Gal 5:22,23; Acts 24:16; Prov 4:18)*