

Job 31: Living With Integrity

Adapted from a series of studies by Brian Haines



Job 31:29-32

Love For Enemies and Strangers

"Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse. Have the men of my tent not said, 'Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat'? The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler?" Job 31:29-32

We are all familiar with the admonition that Jesus made for us in Matthew 5:43-48. There Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. Ultimately, Jesus states that if we love our enemies, we are perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. He loved us as His enemy, and while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus was once asked "who is my neighbor"? But for this study, we need to ask "who is our enemy?" Of course, we have an adversary in Satan. Satan's ministers are also at odds with us. In ancient cultures, the word for enemy and the word for stranger were often the same (as seen in Job here). We have enemies as Christians (John 15:19). We have those who cause us displeasure in life.

This idea is reflected in several ways. First, we are not to find joy in the punishment of the unrighteous, but instead we are to love our enemies. Second, we are to be hospitable to strangers.

The Divine Mind Does Not Rejoice Over the Lost

Often we fantasize about justice for those who do evil. Perhaps some of the brethren in the church in Jerusalem hoped Saul of Tarsus might fall in a ditch, both for their relief and for some justice after he tormented the church. Yet God would take this enemy and turn him into an instrument for God.

God reveals His mind to the lost even in the Old Testament. *"As I live!" declares the Lord GOD, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live.'*" (Eze. 33:11). God does not want anyone to be lost, and He does not want anyone to be judged unrighteous. We are to have a mind like this: we ought to desire God's mercy on the lost, not His justice.

Learning to Love Your Enemies

In Luke 6:27-33 we have a restatement of the message in Matthew 5. In this circumstance, Jesus instructs His disciples to love their enemies in different ways.

(1) Do good to those who hate you. Some may believe that they are doing well when they do not hate those who hate them. But loving our enemies is not just a lack of retaliation. Jesus is calling for a positive action toward our enemies. Do good to those who hate you. There is no excuse for not treating a person well.

(2) *Bless those who curse you.* Not only are our actions to be positive toward our enemies, but our words are also to be positive. The idea of blessing is to invoke God's favor on another's behalf or at least appeal to God for that person. It is difficult to respond with words of grace and kindness when someone is cursing us.

(3) *Pray for those who mistreat you.* Do not mistreat those who mistreat you. Do good for them, speak graciously of them, and pray to God for them. Pray to God that they will change their lives and repent. Pray to God that they will become a disciple of Jesus. Pray on the behalf of those that mistreat us. Stephen stands as a powerful example of this in Acts 6 as the people are stoning him to death.

Hospitality Toward Strangers

We often think of our hospitality commandments as being directed towards our brethren. Certainly we ought to do good first to our brethren (Galatians 6:10). But one of the most important commandments on hospitality (Hebrews 13:2 *Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.*) particularly directs it towards strangers.

We know that the reference here is to Lot and to Abraham. In those instances we see two types of hospitality; Abraham saw to the comfort of his guests, while Lot saw to the safety of his guests. We might suggest that these are ways we still show hospitality, even if our culture changes what defines comfort

Questions to consider:

1. Who are your enemies?
2. What is love?
3. Have you been tempted to rejoice in the destruction of someone who was evil?
4. Is God pleased with the death of the unrighteous? Is He pleased with the death of the righteous?
5. Do we have the mind of God on this?
6. Who are some who curse us? Who are some who mistreat us?
7. What are some ways you can show hospitality to the stranger? What about hospitality to your brethren?
8. How do you bless someone?