

Jesus IOI

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” –Matthew 5:44, 45

One of the faith heroes among the Anabaptists was a man named Dirk Willems, born in the Netherlands. Due to his newfound faith and re-baptism, he was condemned and arrested. He was able to escape prison and cross a frozen pond. But a guard, who had noticed his escape, pursued him and fell into the icy waters, yelling for help. Willems knew the price he would have to pay for helping him, yet he could not refuse. He helped his pursuer get out of the freezing waters, which meant that Willems was recaptured and eventually burned at the stake.

God’s love for humans motivated the plan of salvation, which meant that Jesus died in our place while we didn’t want anything to do with Him. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). We did not deserve it and we still don’t. It is with this understanding that Jesus’ followers are empowered to love their enemies and pray for those who oppress them. God’s goodness flows into the believers’ hearts and spills over into the world, even toward those who make their lives difficult. We are called to love our enemies and not to retaliate (Matthew 5:39, 44). Note that the singular word “enemy” (verse 43) is changed to the plural “enemies” in the next verse (verse 44). The audience of Jesus would have had many different types of enemies: among them the Romans, as political oppressors, and tax collectors, who were considered traitors. Yet, by using the plural with no exceptions, Jesus makes an all-encompassing pronouncement: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (verses 44, 45). A practical way of loving our enemies is to pray for them, imitating our heavenly Father, whose goodness provides the sun and the rain on those who worship Him and those who don’t. May the love that Jesus has bestowed upon us overflow towards our fellowmen, even for those who persecute us.

Talbot, Elizabeth *Jesus Wins!*, p. 38.