

Becoming Centers of Forgiveness and Peace

Session 4: The Power of Praying for Our Enemies

October 3, 2022 • Rev. Doug Gray

I. Introductions and Opening Prayer

II. Teaser

If you had a teen-ager ask you how to deal with anger, what's one piece of advice that you would offer?

III. The Biblical View from Here: The Purpose of Prayer

- a. Usually We Think — Some Biblical Views in the OT
 - i. Bargaining or negotiating with God (Jacob at Bethel in Genesis)
 - ii. Getting God's attention (Many Psalms, "I am suffering here. Wake up!")
 - iii. Changing God's mind (Psalms, "Bad things are happening. You can't just leave us.")Sum: We are telling God what to do
- b. Deeper perspectives — Other Biblical Views
 - i. Sharing of our lives and emotions and what matters most to us with God (Ps 42)
 - ii. "Listening" with the heart for God's guidance
 - iii. Align ourselves with God—Gratitude, Praise, Adoration, etc
 - iv. We open ourselves to God's grace and strength and wisdom
 - v. Allowing ourselves to be changed/molded by GodSum: We are part of a conversation with God—a shared relationship space, in which God attends to us, and we attend to God—with God uniquely in charge.

IV. Words to Watch for

- a. Love (*agape*) — sacrificial love
- b. Persecute (*dioko*) — chase after, harass, "to systematically organize a program to oppress and harass people" (BDAG)
- c. Brothers (*adelphoi*) — in NT usage, can mean brothers, sisters, or both.
- d. Perfect (*teleios*) — to meet the highest standard; mature, full-grown; initiated into the full mystery; fully developed in the moral sense; complete; ripe (BDAG)

V. The New Character of Payback— Matthew 5:38–42

- a. *You have heard it said...but I say...* — See Matthew 5:17–20. The new ethic—to fulfill the Law and exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees—captures the heart-deep reality of relationship to which Jesus calls and empowers us. This is the 5th teaching.
- b. *Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth* — See Ex. 21:24, Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21.
- c. How does Jesus redefine "payback"? What does Jesus' approach do for the people involved? What is our heart going to be like to do this authentically?

VI. The New Character of Caring— Matthew 5:43–48

- a. *Love your neighbor* — Leviticus 19:18 reads, "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord." That is, because we are inter-connected and in relationship, "love your neighbor as yourself."
- b. To love like God does — Rain or shine, good or bad, just loving, just showing kindness.