



# Berean Christian Fellowship

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## The Societal Hedge of the Church—P3

**“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44).**

As we continue our study of the Church as a societal hedge or foundation for a free and just society, let's turn our attention to Jesus' command for us to “love our enemies.” This injunction has a powerful dampening effect on society's tendency to oscillate out of control from tribe against tribe, grudge against grudge, maliciousness to maliciousness, and violence against violence. It is the wisdom of God to ensure liberty and justice for all people (good and bad) in a community, and it is an expression of His own character to the world, as He gives everyone the physical benefits of light, and life, and rain—as well as the universally accessible life and light of eternal life through the Gospel: “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 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; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*” (Matt. 5:43-47)

So, practically, how is it that Christianity is responsible for free societies? Well, in pagan societies, if someone wasn't from your group, club, or tribe, they were enemies. So, you might lie to them (their welfare isn't your responsibility), you might raid their village (they raided yours once upon a time), you might steal their stuff (they stole your stuff), and you might kill them (once upon a time, they killed some of your ancestors). No progress can come to a society built on this model, because there can be no trust as there is no room for empathy nor desire for reconciliation. Justice

becomes a nebulous and fluid fantasy as ancient grievances are dredged up as justification to rob, betray, and kill your “enemies.”

In contrast, the overriding moderating principle in a Christian community is that God is in control—He will administer perfect judgment when the time is right, and we will wait on Him rather than seek our own form of justice against our enemies. “*If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head*” (Rom. 12:18-20). And we are encouraged to be patient with our “enemies,” for we were all at one time enemies of God and our fellow man before we became Believers. “*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation*” (Rom. 5:9-11). We should always desire reconciliation, not revenge, just as our heavenly Father does with His enemies, and we should have grace on our enemies and bless them because they are exactly like we were, enemies of God and our fellow man. “*To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing*” (1 Peter 3:8-9)

May we always seek to better understand the wisdom of our Heavenly Father and the good works He has given us to do in practical expressions of His nature, which make our lives and the lives of those around us more representative of His faithful and loving character. Amen. (We'll continue looking at the concept of “loving our enemies” next time).

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