

Friend of Sinners

Part 6: A Friend to Enemies

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Matthew 5:34-35

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.”

Romans 5:6-10 THE STORY OF BECOMING GOD’S CHILD

⁶ You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

⁹ Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! ¹⁰ For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

A label I don’t want: Enemy of God

How does Jesus deal with enemies?

ACTS 9:1-22

Saul was a real enemy of Jesus and his followers

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

An intervention, Jesus-style

⁶ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

The tough task of waiting

⁹ For three days, he was blind and could not see anything, and did not eat or drink anything...

An enemy that needs help from a reluctant friend

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³ “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.

A bond is formed

¹⁷ “Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

What if I offered others the same grace Jesus offered me?

A transformation from foe to friend

²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?” ²² Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

To share Jesus, the only preparation you need is

a personal encounter with the risen Jesus.

“Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?”

– Abraham Lincoln

Next Steps

The Prayer Team and the Belonging Team will be available today after services. If you need prayer, meet a member of the prayer team in front of the stage. If you’ve just decided to follow Jesus or want to make that decision, come meet one of the Belonging Team members under the left video screen.

Small Group Questions

- 1) How do you feel about fall? What do you love? What do you not love?
- 2) Have you ever had to deal with an enemy? What happened?
- 3) What comes to mind when you read the intervention in Acts 9? What can we learn about the character of Jesus from this passage?
- 4) Read Matthew 5:44 again. How can you practically love your enemy? Is that even possible?
- 5) How can we pray for you right now and throughout the week?