

# Loving Your Enemies

The purpose of imposing penalties in an enlightened system of justice is two-fold. The first important goal is the protection of society. The second goal focuses on the rehabilitation of the criminal. In an enlightened society, these should be the only two goals of the justice system. Revenge and retribution, motivated by animosity and hatred, are the hallmarks of unenlightened justice. They represent a natural and perfectly understandable, but not enlightened, response of our lower natures when our lives are disrupted and threatened by those who seek to do us harm.

We enter this world as selfish, self-centered babies, completely controlled by our natural, carnal bodies and brains. Babies and children have little or no knowledge of their higher spiritual nature. That is why the Apostle Paul referred to some of the worldly, sinful Corinthians as “*babes in Christ.*” They were converted to Christianity, but were still dominated and controlled by their carnal, fleshly natures. The hallmarks of our carnal natures are selfishness, greed, and hatred towards those who threaten our well-being. The hallmark of our spiritual nature is unconditional love of not only our friends, family, and loved ones, but our enemies as well.

Expressing unconditional love involves many learned attitudes and behaviors under a variety of diverse circumstances. For example, you can’t learn to love your enemies unless you actually have some of them in your life. When faced with an enemy, your natural response would be hatred and animosity. As you mature and grow spiritually, you learn by a process of trial and error how to respond correctly. The proper response is not necessarily to just lie down and let people run over you. A loving response might involve subduing your enemy in order to protect yourself and your family, and preserve the well-being of society. The challenge is to avoid animosity and focus on the well-being of your enemy, as well as yourself.

It helps me to understand that really bad people, who would do me harm, are not entirely evil. They also possess a higher spiritual nature. We all do. We are all children of God, possessing divine, spiritual natures. Unfortunately, most of us are unaware of this and are currently, to one degree or another, still under the control of our carnal natures. Christian salvation from the domination of the carnal nature is a life-long, even an ages-long process. Evil people are just as engaged in this process as we are. They have just lost their way in this world and need someone to help them get back on track. They need to be “saved,” if you will. According to the Apostle Paul, God is the “*Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.*” According to this passage, all of us are included in God’s plan of salvation. Some are just farther along than others. Believers in Christ are “especially” saved, but not “exclusively” saved.