

## Are You a Child of God?

The question here is not about your initial salvation, but your daily lifestyle as prescribed by Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is addressing His own people who are in a covenant relationship with Him (the Old Covenant at the time). The sermon is not about initial salvation - His Jewish audience were already children of God. But this discourse in Matthew chapters 5-7 is arguably the premier treatise for God's children for everyday living.

Late in chapter 5 we see a challenge made. Jesus throws down the gauntlet for all to see clearly. Are you a child of God or not! We might expect some great and lofty call, some deep and difficult challenge. But that is not what we get from the lips of our Lord in verses 44 and 45.

**But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.**

It's all too clear - Jesus challenges us to both love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. That's all fine and dandy until we have *real enemies* who steal from us, subjugate us and over-control our lives. It's rather easy to label a rude driver or nuisance neighbor an enemy, then pray for him. It's not so easy when that enemy has conquered your country and placed soldiers on every street corner to beat you into submission. ***But that is exactly the situation of the original hearers of Jesus' words in this passage!***

The hand of tyranny chafed hard on necks of Jesus' countrymen. Yet for those who choose to follow Him, the call is not merely a suggestion, but a test of family membership, ***"...that you may be children of your Father in heaven."***

As an American patriot, I'm not fond of that call. But as citizens of God's kingdom and children in His family, we bow at the foot of cross above and beyond the foot of our flagpoles.

Paul understood clearly that the call is to share Jesus far more than to fight our political foes. We, to be God's children, must put Jesus and the souls of all above our natural inclination toward political freedom. We see clearly that Paul was processing that priority in his mind when he told all the guards in his prison about Jesus! (See Philippians 1:12-14.)

The goal God gives is heaven, not harm to our enemies. The goal of our hearts is to teach Jesus and Him crucified to every nation (Matthew 28:18-20). When my personal, political freedom supersedes my commitment to lost souls, then my commitment to myself supersedes the commandments of our Savior.

When we pray for our enemies, the turmoil in our hearts is crowded out by our love for the ones Jesus loves - the ones we must be learning to love also. Many more souls will be in God's eternal glory if and when we take Jesus at His word, ***"But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."***

Ray Wallace