

Counteracting the Wisdom of the World With the Knowledge of God

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6 NKJV)

The wisdom of God is merciful, kind, forgiving, and just in its impartiality, whereas the wisdom of the world is defensive and offensive, focusing its power against people who get in the way. It deceives, distorts the truth, retaliates when wronged, and turns people against each other. While the wisdom of the world seeks to crush its enemies, the wisdom of God seeks to deliver them from its power, and to add insult to injury, He uses human instrumentalities to do it. So it matters how God’s people fight and whose kingdom we fight for.

There is one principle Jesus taught that if it gets a hold of us will put enmities under our feet. That principle, along with a prayer strategy, is set forth below.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE NO. 1

Love your opposition.

Who opposes your values the most? A friend, sibling, or neighbor? Judging by partisan rancor crossing the airwaves on an almost daily basis, it could also be a public official who is getting under your skin. Zero in on whoever stirs up your ire the most. If he conflicts with your values, Satan is nearby to stir up anger so you strive against him, if not face to face, than in your heart. You “see” him as your enemy. Thus in a highly partisan and polarizing political atmosphere, it is not surprising that the person who stirs up our ire may not be the same for every Christian. This lays the groundwork to sow division in the body. With personal biases and sharp differences of opinion, we can take on the spirit of the world, provoking and striving against each other. This, in turn, can break the bond of unity among the people of God and block answers to many prayers. We must come to see that infighting on behalf of partisan loyalties plays into the hands of the devil, whose thrust is to divide the saints and set them against each other, for he knows that a house divided cannot stand.

In overcoming the worldly spirit, Jesus corrected erroneous paradigms to give us another vision, saying “*Ye have heard that it hath been said (what we have always believed)...But I say unto you...*” (Matt. 5). In this chapter, the most important paradigm Jesus came to straighten out was the false paradigm to love our neighbor, but hate our enemy. And so He gave us a new commandment that will pierce the darkness of our heart and put enmity under our feet, and that was to love our enemy, knowing that if we got this

one right, it would change our heart. Jesus said it was a new commandment perhaps because we selectively love those who love us, and not our enemies. It is summed up in the Master's commandment, "...*Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*" (Matt. 5:43-44 NKJV). The Lord who commands light in this hour to shine through the darkness has insight for you to cut through the enmity and bless your enemy.

First, the Lord asks you to look at your enemy through the eyes of your shared humanity (Mk. 8:2-3), and then you will see that your enemy is your brother. This simple fact will change your attitude because you see another picture—his real need for Christ's love and forgiveness. You see he is caught in the web of deception and that he is unable, by himself, to break free and see the pit he has dug for himself.

Second, the Lord challenges you to do something that initially repels you: love the one who persecutes you or who throws darts at you. You may cringe with the thought of loving the enemy because all you see are his evil deeds and cannot understand God's love runs deeper than his deeds would justify. But if when attacked, we do not retaliate, the devil loses and we win. As the fire dies out, God's love can flow through us, and it will crush enmities under our feet.

Salmon Chase served as President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of Treasury in his first term, but had eyes on Lincoln's second term, hoping to succeed him. While serving the President, he sought to become the party's nominee, thinking Lincoln weak and morally indecisive. In speeches, he called into question Lincoln's ability to lead the nation in a time of great crisis. "Even after the rebellion had become flagrant, you remember how forbearing the President was, how forbearing everybody was. I used to get impatient...and wanted...the rebellion crushed out at once."

Now introduce Jesus' commandment into the mix and see what happens: Bless those who curse you (speak words of judgment). In spite of Chase's numerous betrayals, how did Lincoln, occupying the highest office in the land, publicly respond as the appointing authority over Chase? He chose not to respond acrimoniously, but rather expressed admiration for Chase's work ethic and intellect. In this, Lincoln blessed him, for to bless a man is to speak well of him. On one occasion, he stated, "Mr. Chase makes a good Secretary, and I shall keep him where he is." Lincoln won re-election and later accepted Chase's offer to resign. But it does not end there.

Jesus also said we should do good to our enemies. The Lord knew doing good to an enemy would flatten Satan's advantage, humble the oppressor, and free his victim. Lincoln's conciliatory and forgiving philosophy would shine again. Upon the death of the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, against counsel, he appointed Chase to succeed him. (You will see the rationale for this appointment in Kingdom Principle No. 2.) Some would use their power to destroy their enemies, but not Lincoln. Defending his appointment, he blessed him again saying, "Mr. Chase is a very able man. He is a very ambitious man...He has not always behaved very well lately, and people say to me, Now is the time to crush him out. Well, I'm not in favor of crushing anybody out. If there is anything that a man can do and do it well, I say, let him do it. Give him a chance." The

irony is that Chase believed Lincoln, a good man who looked beyond an enemy's negative features to see the positives, was not fit for the moral challenges of his high position to remain in it? Herein is revealed Lincoln's greatest strength, not weakness. In a fitting tribute to his ability to make his enemies his friends, it was Justice Salmon Chase who administered President Lincoln's Oath of Office for his second term. ¹ *Wisdom is justified by all her children*" (Lk. 7:35 NKJV).

So what is the plan when we are wounded by words and betrayals and find ourselves attacking our enemy (political or otherwise) in our thoughts and taste the bitterness in our speech?

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE NO. 2

Pray for your opposition and walk in the light God has given you.

You may be thinking prayer is not new. In pondering this verse, you wonder what is the linchpin that cuts through enmity. It is the word **"for."** Jesus said we should pray "for" our enemies, and not "against" them (as hatred and opposing values prompt us at times to do). So when Lincoln appointed Salmon Chase the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (in Principle No. 1), the prayer is that God would grant him wisdom, not for personal advancement, political maneuvering, or self-glory, but for the good of the people he is called to serve. This was Lincoln's rationale in appointing Chase to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Christians can get caught up on partisan causes on moral grounds thinking we are doing God a favor when we, as Abraham Lincoln said, "...invoke His aid against the other." When we throw stones at our political rival, calling him and those who think like him wicked, we play right into Satan's hands, and do not advance God's kingdom. Just like they did to Jesus, when He was accused by the chief priests and elders (Matt. 27:12-14), the powers of hell converge against us to provoke and trip us into defending ourselves when we are accused. In time, we learn this kind of self-restraint goes beyond mere words; it requires our heart.

In the commandment to pray, the preposition **"for"** means "in behalf of, for the sake of, in the sense of protection, care, favor, benefit."² You know you have a problem if something rises up in you every time your enemy's name is mentioned. This is the time to bless and do good. Love comes rather easy when people agree with us, but demonstrating compassion or mercy to an enemy, whether political or otherwise, can be a struggle when they do not come alongside us. This shows our selfish nature. In the midst of conflict or global spiritual warfare, it probably does not occur as a strategy to launch prayer **"for"** our adversary when our eyes are focused on defeating him. In our striving, we may not realize

¹ Edward Achorn, *Every Drop of Blood*, pp. 24, 30, 36

² Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., Editor, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary* (of the New Testament). Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, © 1992

we have become a target, for our battle is not with people, but against spiritual wickedness (Eph. 6:12). If you come to God with a bitter attitude toward your enemy and pray against him, God will not hear you; but when you see yourself in him and pray for him and not against him, God hears that prayer (Psa. 66:18). Thus you can see that praying for an enemy in itself is an act of love toward God, because it requires a sacrifice of yourself. You are asking God to intervene, and in His mercy to “forgive him for he does not know what he is doing.” If we apply the Savior’s teaching on behalf of and toward our enemy, we have in our hands a powerful key to counteract the wisdom of the world with the knowledge of God.

So this step takes the Biblical command to love our enemies and turns it into a prayer strategy. The plan is to stop and pray that God will put His love in our heart for our enemy whoever he may be. The stumblingblock to breaking through enmity is not overcome exclusively through prayer, but through prayer the courage and strength to walk in the light we have. By faith, one thing we know to do, and that is in the midst of the fire not to retaliate, because then the fire goes out. This is how we counteract the wisdom of the world through the knowledge of God. “...*And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith*” (1 Jn. 5:4). Why is this? Because God said, “*For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly*” (Prov. 2:6-7 NKJV). Loving our enemies does not come easy, and though we do not know how to pray for them as we ought, if we yield to the Holy Spirit in prayer, we will hear that still small voice of God speaking His will through us, strengthening us in our resolve. When there is too much “noise,” we cannot hear that still small voice of God, but once we “come out from among them” (2 Cor. 6:17), we will be under the umbrella of God’s protection and obtain His wisdom and knowledge. Then we will have eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart that understands. Go to article entitled, “*Breaking the Stranglehold of Partisanship.*” [Click here: http://www.freeatlastministries.us/web/articles.aspx](http://www.freeatlastministries.us/web/articles.aspx)

And so instead of condemning our enemy, we pray that God grants him sorrow that leads to repentance, and in His mercy pulls him out of the fire, delivers him from Satan’s snare, and gives him a Damascus moment. Satan knows God’s love is the most powerful force in the universe to defeat him. He sees Calvary and the blood every time we love our enemy and shudders every time we pray to turn him away from his kingdom to the kingdom of God. This is especially true for rogue leaders.

When praying for America, the real test for Christians in a highly competitive and partisan atmosphere is to pray “**for**” the souls of those who inflict harm and sow discord, not against them. When darkness settles in and he must face himself, he looks for an escape, as we all do when our backs are against the wall. If he looks to God, he will find to his relief that the very moral law he repressed calls for mercy, and he finds the way of escape: the blood of Jesus shed so long ago flows to the lowest valley to pick him up. In every respect, it is God’s Word that rescues us and makes us free (Jn. 8:32; Prov. 4:20-22; 1 Pet. 1:23; Psa. 119:41). When we resist the “works” of evildoers as we are called to do, we must leave room for mercy and an open door for our enemy to redeem himself rather than to condemn him. And so we pray not that he escapes justice, but that he finds mercy to reconcile with God and his fellowman. We are no longer praying our will be done, but God’s will be done. This is our best hope to save the oppressor and abort his evil schemes at the same time. Oh, for the wisdom of God to be loosed in this dark hour!

As a shield, praying for our enemies protects our heart from Satan's devices and keeps us in the love of God; and, as a weapon of warfare, praying for our enemies breaks down strongholds holding them captive. Though we do not think alike, consider for a moment what might happen if each of us would love the principal we perceive to be the catalyst in stirring up the fires of contention and pray *"for"* him and not against him? We might pray that he be turned from darkness to light so that he might acknowledge truth (2 Tim. 2:25), and be guided by it rather than motivated by political or personal expediency. Knowing that God's love is the most powerful force in the universe, what transformation could emerge if we would pray earnestly for the salvation of his soul and that the fear of God would be stronger than his fear of man? If we pray along these lines, we will be less angry and more merciful. Though God's love does not excuse evildoers, and neither should we, He is not willing that they should perish, but come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9).

Finally, what if we laid aside our partisan interests and prayed that God would bring strong conviction against evildoers on both sides of the political spectrum caught in Satan's snare? Wouldn't we then find ourselves on the same page united behind one cause: the redemption of our enemy's soul whoever each of us perceives in our heart to be? With this, contention could cease because of agreement. And then each victim and persecutor will get one step closer to reconciliation with their God (if they voluntarily choose to do so), and the light in us will get brighter and brighter. *"For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles (the heathen) shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising"* (Isa. 60:2-3).

Heavily fortified strongholds in the nation take an army to crush. And that is why we must be united in one mind and accord to pray *"for"* our enemies under demonic oppression, without respect to persons or party affiliation. Through a chorus of oneness, God answers. *"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven"* (Matt. 18:19 NKJV). The key word is *"agree,"* which comes from the word *"together,"* which means *"to sound."* Once God hears that sound of agreement, He breaks the yokes of oppression holding our enemies captive to Satan's will, so that equity, mercy, truth, forgiveness and deliverance can enter. Taking the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we hesitate not to bind the spirits of lies and confusion and loose understanding and truth (Matt. 16:19), praying as we do that the forces of darkness will not be able to seize it (Jn. 1:5).

And so God looks not only to our attitude toward our enemy, but also to our attitude toward fellow believers fighting alongside us. We do not lose battles because we do not believe who we are. Many of us know how to pray and quote scripture. We lose battles because we are divided.

We counteract the wisdom of the world with the knowledge of God's love for His enemies. It is the most transformational principle in God's Word because of its wisdom, insight, and righteousness not only for the healing and redemption of our own souls, but also for its power to overcome evil with good in the earth. This takes us to the next Kingdom Principle.

KINGDOM PRINCIPLE NO. 3
Be a witness for truth (Acts 1:8).

While Atheists and Agnostics are becoming more bold in their desecrations, today there is a scarcity of believing Christians willing to bear witness to truth, willing to oppose wrongdoing, willing to stand upon the truth of God's Word (Eph. 6:13). I asked myself, "How can people follow the Christian faith if we are not bearing witness to the truth" (Isa. 62:10)? A word fitly spoken from our lips can liberate people from the darkness of their thinking, greater than any power of the opposition to bind them. A wise and discerning leader once said that society is poisoned when "theological underpinnings" are removed. He said when people of faith leave society bereft of belief, it will court corruption.³ In short, God is looking to His people for moral leadership.

Jesus gave us a model to follow. He came to his own at the height of political/spiritual turbulence as they struggled under the cruel dictates of the Roman Empire. Yet, He did not preach against rulers, for He wanted to save them, and rebuking a ruler would have hurt His holy cause (Prov. 9:7) and cause greater division among the people. Rather, Jesus taught Kingdom principles to prepare their hearts for the promise of the Father. What seemed to be the primary focus of His interaction with the people? Forgiveness and reconciliation, for these principles addressed the heart of all their problems with God and their fellowman (Matt. 5:3-10, 43-48; 18:15-17, 21-35).

In confronting the spirit of the world, Jesus taught that the spirit of the law He came to fulfill is brotherly love and it overcomes the world. In reconciliation, the law calling for mercy also calls for justice. This way, both the perpetrator and the victim see the error of their ways and get another chance. "*The poor and the deceitful man meet together: the LORD lighteneth both their eyes*" (Prov. 29:13). The victim gets justice through forgiveness, and the perpetrator gets mercy and a path to redemption. "*Mercy and truth have met together: Righteousness and peace have kissed*" (Psa. 85:10).

Two thousand years later, a similar turbulence is upon us, for Jesus said in the last days, many would be offended, betray, and hate one another, and because lawlessness will abound (through public corruption), the love of many will grow cold (Matt. 24:10-12). In today's political and social turbulence, how might we be a witness of the truth to prepare people for the coming of the Lord in their heart? Tell them the Lord is coming back, and in everything we say and do, model forgiveness and the promises of redemption.

Unforgiveness is at the root of society's ills. The message of forgiveness never fails to revive people. Why? Because when fallen people see their broken condition, they look for mercy, and a merciful God answers to reconcile them to Him through the good news of the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. This takes the sword out of their spirit, because

³ From President Ronald Reagan's remarks at an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast in Dallas on August 23, 1984

when they reconcile with God, they get power to love their enemies, and by this they can overcome the spirit of the world. This is the message our nation needs to hear.

Carole Keller, Apostolic Author
Attends Parkway Apostolic Church, Oak Creek, Wis.

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