

"Fighting the Forces of Evil for Over 50 Years...

Send More Money!"

I am not thinking of any specific organization, as I write this. I get unsolicited mail from dozens of worthy causes - all of which claim to be fighting for the cause of truth and justice, working to "bring back morality," and so on.

One thing amazes me, however: With so many organizations working day and night to "protect" us and our rights, why are conditions constantly getting worse? Could it be that our focus is wrong?

I am not trying to discourage anyone from donating money to a cause they consider worthy of that money. But perhaps we ought to re-evaluate things. After all, I don't recall the phrase "send more money" ever occurring in the Scriptures, as the answer to our problems.

Perhaps we should reconsider what *God* tells us to have as our priority. According to my recollections, God gives us two commands which must influence everything we do in life. God tells us to love him (God) with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-40). That's all. Other passages may clarify what these commands mean, but they don't change or cancel them.

One way the Bible clarifies the issue concerning love for neighbor is by pointing us to Jesus' example: we should consider others - our "neighbors" - as being *more important than* ourselves (Philippians 2:3-11). We also need to remember that our "neighbor" includes the people we *don't* like, such as our enemies, and anyone else who may oppose us (Luke 10:29-37).

Now if we love security, prosperity, family, health and "the American dream" *more than* we love God, then why should we expect God to bless our efforts? And if our own personal interests are more important to us, than the good (especially the *eternal* good) of our neighbors - including our enemies - then why should we expect God to favor us with the things we covet so dearly?

Perhaps we should re-evaluate our ways, and put first things first - if we really mean it, when we claim to be Jesus' disciples. Perhaps we should learn from Jesus, and follow the way of the cross - as he commanded us to.

Perhaps we can reflect on the fact that, "by our fruit (actions) we will be known," and consider the difference between God's love (which must be the pattern for *our* love) and

the world's counterfeit of love. God loves his enemies, and shows kindness even to those who will *never* repent. The world, in contrast, loves those who are easy to love, and those who return love for love. The world loves when it can get some type of "payback" from the relationship. We need to ask ourselves which type of love ("fruit") is present in our lives.

Considering all these things, perhaps we should start finding room in our hearts and lives, for some of those "enemies" we are fighting. It's not that we want to become like them (as in 1 Corinthians 15:33), but because we desire them to see genuine love in action. We've probably spent enough time telling them how bad they are; now we need to show them, by our own actions, how good Jesus is. Let's not forget the way Jesus interacted, with the "sinners" of his day. (The religious people opposed him for it.) Let us also not forget the way Jesus came to us: We were still his enemies when he did so (Romans 5:8, 10).

Though it isn't our main goal, there is an additional benefit of this kind of love: It shows that we are truly God's children! In contrast, when we are unwilling to love those who refuse to love us back, it shows that we are no different than the very ones we are condemning. (See Matthew 5:43-48.)

If we want to have a lasting impact on the world, we need to make it our practice to have the type of love that Jesus had for us: We need to obey the two great commands he has given us in Scripture. And then, having done the things that God *requires* us to do - then we can decide if we want to participate in the *optional* matters, such as sending money to the various organizations who are asking for it.