

# How to Destroy Your Enemies

By Terry Hightower

The War Between the States ends and the opportunistic scalawags are busy lording it over their fellow Southerners. A hot-blooded contingency of die-hard Rebels gain an audience with President Lincoln. His gentle, friendly manner soon thaws the ice, and the Southerners leave with a new respect for their old enemy. A Northern congressman approaches the President and criticizes him for "befriending the enemy," suggesting that instead of befriending them he should have had them shot for the traitors they are. Lincoln smiled and replied, "Am I not destroying my enemies by making them my friends?"

Christ Jesus proclaims: This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you (John 15:12-14).

Although many of us sometimes live as if we are sent into the world to compete with one another, to dispute with each other, or even unnecessarily to quarrel with one another. Jesus sends us out to love each other. It is even easy for a Gospel preacher to tell others from the pulpit or classroom podium to love one another, when his life is a demonstration that this is the last thing he does.

When someone makes a great demand of us, we almost instinctively ask: What right do you have to make this demand? If you ask the Lord: What right do you think you have to demand that we love one another? His heart-piercing, marvelous answer is: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (15:13). Jesus gave men a commandment that He Himself first fulfilled. John repeats his description of this love of Christ that, like the peace of God, "passeth all understanding" (Phi. 4:7) in declaring: "Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). Biblical, Jesus -demonstrated love involves not doing what persons in the world do when they feel insulted.

Whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him two (Mat. 5:39-41).

Paul shows by the Spirit (in Rom. 12:20) that such God-like response can serve an evangelistic purpose when he instructs: "But if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" (thus "blowing his mind" and causing him to be ashamed of himself to the point of possible interest in why we operate this way and not as the world).

While still a young boy, a certain Christian formed the habit of praying beside his bed before he went to sleep. Later, when he joined the army he kept up this practice though he became the

object of mockery and ridicule in the barracks. One night, as he knelt to silently pray after a long, weary march, one of his tormentors took off muddy boots and threw them at him one at a time, hitting him on each side of his head. The Christian said nothing, took the persecutor's boots, put them beside the bed, and continued to pray. The next morning, when the other soldier woke up, he found his polished and shined boots sitting beside his bed. It so affected him that he asked for forgiveness and after a time became a Christian. Many of us wonder why our relatives and friends do not obey the Gospel. Could it just be, my brethren, that we have tried everything except Jesus' own method?

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:7-8), thus "Destroying his enemies by making them his friends!"