

Dealing with Impossible People

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake from multiple sources)

Introduction:

A. Matt. 11:28

B. Many years ago, a woman with her baby was riding in a stagecoach in western Montana. The weather was bitter cold, and, in spite of all the driver could do to protect her, he saw that the mother was becoming unconscious from the cold. He stopped the coach, took the baby, and wrapping it warmly, put it under his seat, then seized the mother by the arm, and dragging her out on the ground, drove away, leaving her in the road. As she saw him drive away, she ran after him, crying piteously for her baby. When he felt sure that she was warm and out of danger of freezing to death, he allowed her to overtake the coach and resume her place by her baby. Which deed would have been the kinder: to allow her to drift off and freeze to death, or to make her run behind the coach for a ways? Imagine when she realized that he had saved her life? He had done as God sometimes does, shaking us out of spiritual lethargy and moral sleep which would end in death. Sometimes God is like the stagecoach driver. He allows things to enter our lives that nearly destroy us. But, He is God and knows why He does it and how much of it we can handle.

C. Job 14:1, 5:7; John 16:33

1. (Felix Neff) "A Christian without affliction is like a soldier only on parade"

D. It is harder to deal with burdens when they are generated by people

1. By fellow human beings who ought to know what it is like to share the human condition
2. By fellow Christians who ought to know better because you share the same faith
3. By family members who ought to love you
4. When the physical world randomly gives us pain, we find it easier to accept than when a fellow human being thoughtlessly or purposefully hurts us

E. Three kinds of people who inflict pain on others

1. Thoughtless users who will not wake up enough to care about the burden they are to others. "I just didn't think..."
2. Self-righteous know-it-alls who are convinced the pain they inflict on others is in their best interest. "I know what's best for..."
3. Deliberate evil doers who do not care or even delight in causing pain for others. "It's my life..."
4. Which one is the worst? ALL OF THEM!!! No, I don't care if you think the thoughtless one is the least objectionable. Thoughtlessness is evil, and they don't have a right to insensitivity or expressing evil opinions
5. I'm not preaching to those who are impossible people. In most cases, they are reprobate and headed to perdition anyway. I am preaching to those that are hurt by them.

F. You are not alone - Psalm 55

I. HOW DID JESUS DEAL WITH IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE?

A. Rejection and mistreatment from family

1. John 2:3-5 - Manipulation from His mother brought direct address
2. Mark 3:21 - His family said he was out of His mind; He ignored it
3. Mark 3:30-31 - Tried to monopolize His time; He said His audience was His family now
4. John 7:3-5 - His brothers tried to send Him away and did not believe Him; He did not allow it to interfere with His work

B. Rejection and mistreatment from the people He was trying to save

1. How did Jesus handle missionaries of misery?
 - a. He never let them set the agenda for His work or teaching.
 - b. He ignored them or moved on.
 - c. He used their negativity as an opportunity for instruction.
 - d. Sometimes the situation was hopeless and Jesus just let them go and die in their negativity, bitterness, and sins.
2. Sometimes for the health of our own souls, we have to let a relationship die. They are just too toxic to our own spiritual health to be around them

C. Betrayal and abandonment from His friends

1. Peter denied the Lord - Luke 22:55-61
2. The other disciples with the exception of John forsook Him - Matt. 26:56
3. Judas betrayed Him - John 18:5
4. After Peter repented, Jesus restored and forgave him - John 21:15-19
5. It's easier and more tempting to keep score of the ones who have let us down. It is critical that we fight that line of thought

D. Horrible treatment from humankind - Matt. 5:43-48

1. But that doesn't mean that the evil ones get away with it
2. Acts 17:30-31 - Imagine what they will feel in His Presence on Judgment Day

II. HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE?

B. Take your enemy to the right place

1. Fretting won't help - Phil. 4:6; Luke 10:41-42
 - a. It serves no purpose but to drain your resources.
2. Friends don't always help - Job 13:4-5
 - a. The problem with friends is that sometimes they will lie to you
 - b. They will allow you to wallow in self-pity and tell you that you have a right to do so.
 - c. They may sympathize with you, but can't really help you solve the serious issues of life
 - d. A real friend will tell you the truth, even when it tears your heart out at a time when you think you least need it - Prov. 27:6
3. Fleeing won't always help
 - a. Patricia Christy fled Florida to avoid hurricane Andrew in 1992. She boarded the first plan to Hawaii and arrived in time to meet typhoon Iniki
4. Fighting seldom helps - Prov. 22:10

5. The Father will help - Heb. 4:16; Luke 12:32
- B. Transfer your enemy to the right Being
 1. There is One Who cares about your situation - 1Peter 5:7; Heb. 4:15
 2. There is One who can do something about your situation. Not only does He know who we face, He can change the one we face and provide us with the means to face him - Eph. 3:20; Job 42:2; Isa. 40:12
- C. Trust your enemy to the right position
 1. Sometimes God will remove you from your enemy
 - a. The widow of Zarephath - 1Kings 17:10
 2. Sometimes He will relieve the pressure of your enemy
 - a. There are times when the Lord will leave the burden on your shoulders, but He will lighten it a bit.
 - b. He did not give Ruth her husband back, but He allowed her to meet Boaz - Ruth 2-3
 3. Sometimes He will sustain you among your enemies
 - a. He gives us grace to bear with the burden of the evil doer we have been assigned - 2Cor. 12:9
 4. However God chooses to handle your situation, know the following:
 - a. He will always do that which is right for your life - Rom. 8:32
 - b. He will give you what you need - Phil. 4:19; 1Cor. 10:13

IV. PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

- A. Impossible people are a fact of life. Sin causes pain and people commit sin; therefore, people will cause pain
 1. Like death, taxes, inflation, old age, and winter, it is a part of life under the sun. We do not escape it in this life
 2. "But it's not fair!" Who said life was going to be fair? It is a fallen world.
 3. Evil doers come and go like the seasons; their sins make it likely that they will go eventually; be patient until the season changes.
- B. You can only change you. It is easier to stop death, taxes, inflation, old age, and winter than it is to force a change on a thoughtless or self-righteous or deliberately impossible person.
 1. Start by changing the way you think of them
 - a. They are to be pitied; they are without the love and respect of good folk in this world, and will be in hell without God in the next
 - b. They have no true power over you; they cannot influence God or the righteous to think differently of you
 - c. You do not deserve to be treated this way; stop blaming yourself; God Himself does not take responsibility for the sins of men
 2. Change the way you speak to them
 - a. Don't accept any responsibility for their ungodly treatment of you
 - b. Put them on the spot to give Biblical, moral justification for their sinful treatment of you, and refuse to allow the relationship to continue until they answer or repent
 - c. Speak in calm, even tones; avoid emotional responses

3. Change the way you interact with them.
 - a. They have proven themselves to be swine by their words and works; stop casting the pearls of your love, time, and resources before them
 - b. They have proven themselves unrighteous by their words and works; why do you continue to have a relationship with them?
 - c. Acts 13:46
 - d. You are authorized to do this by the example of Jesus and the apostles. If anyone tells you that they could do it because they were inspired but you are not, they make the argument of a fool
3. Change what you do for them
 - a. Resist your instinct for revenge - Rom. 12:17
 - b. Stake out the moral high ground of peace - Rom. 12:18
 - c. Move out of God's way - Rom. 12:19
 - d. Kill your enemies with kindness - Rom. 12:20
 - e. Pray that God will give them time to repent - Matt. 5:44

Conclusion:

- A. "Preacher, thank you for that lesson on how to deal with impossible people. I'm sure glad I'm not one of them!"
 1. Really? Perhaps a little self-examination is in order.
- B. Before we obeyed the Gospel, we were impossible people toward God.
 1. God's response was to love us and save us.
 2. Rom. 5:8