

Enmity In Relationships

Day 1: Eybah & Echtrah (Genesis 3:15, Romans 8:7)

You ever have days where it just feels like tension is everywhere you turn? Maybe from misunderstanding between you and your spouse, a friend or family member saying something that just stings. Maybe you might even have old wounds that resurfaced between you and someone else. These things happen and Scripture has examples riddled all throughout its pages. From the Old to New Testament, you can find examples of this tension.

What you are feeling is what Scripture calls enmity. It's talked about in a multitude of ways; from political and human conflicts, humanity vs God, relational, cultural and societal, morality through compromising to inward treachery, deceitful malice, and unappeasable frustration.

(Luke 23:12, Romans 8:7, Galatians 5:20, Ephesians 2:14-15, James 4:4, Proverbs 6:35, 26:26, Jeremiah 9:8) These are just some examples.

So, what is enmity? How can we discern this in our lives? And what can we do as image bearers to overcome it? To answer these questions, let's first break the word down. Enmity is not a temporary emotion; it is a constant state of being i.e. a grudge, resentment, hate, irritation. Understanding the two original biblical words changes the way we understand what is actually being said in scripture.

The Hebrew word for enmity is eybah; which is a deep-seated hostility, spiritual warfare, or total opposition. It's a fixed fundamental barrier of hatred separating two opposing forces. The bible uses eybah to define the hatred between relationships. If we look at Gen. 3:15 during the fall of humanity God says-

"I will put enmity (eybah) between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel"

God inserted a cosmic boundary line between humanity and sin to ensure that His creations would not permanently align with evil as part of the greatest love story ever told.

The Greek word for enmity is echthra; it's the exact opposite of agape (Divine Love/Gods Love). Meaning animosity, alienation, state of opposition; the Bible uses this term when describing a fundamental incompatibility. Apostle Paul expresses how the enmity that's present here (echthra) in Rom. 8:7 our flesh on its on is naturally against God and cannot submit to His laws.

"The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to Gods law, nor can it do so."

By living according to the flesh; acting on those desires separate us from God making us incapable to please Him. Our flesh simply cannot compromise with God because of the echthra toward the Father.

Practical application: For today I challenge you to bring the relationship that comes to mind after reading this to the feet of our Heavenly Father. Don't force feelings that aren't there. Just be willing to let Him soften what your anger has hardened. (Ezekiel 36:26) Peace doesn't always mean agreement. Sometimes it simply means refusing to let enmity take up permanent residence in your heart.

Prayer

Lord, You see every strained relationship and every hurt I carry. Help me walk with wisdom, grace, and peace. Show me where I need to forgive, where I need healthy boundaries, and where I need to trust You with things that I cannot fix, keep my heart free from bitterness and fill it with Your peace. In Jesus name, Amen.

Day 2: The Rise of Enmity (Gen 3:15, James 4:4, Gal. 5:20)

Yesterday we focused on answering the first question: What is enmity? Now, today, we are moving on to the second question: How can we discern it in our lives?

From the very beginning, Scripture reveals that enmity is more than conflict. It is a spiritual reality that shapes the part humanity plays in this amazing love story. God declared there to be enmity between the serpent and the woman, between darkness and light, between rebellion and righteousness. This theme of enmity—the cosmic boundary line put in place by God—can be traced from the Fall to the mercy and grace revealed through the work of our Savior on the cross. There are three significant movements that can be seen to help us answer our second question.

The Origin: Genesis 3:15. God introduces enmity into the world as part of the curse upon the serpent after Adam and Eve both ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Sin had now entered the world, and along with that sin came enmity. What once had been harmony was now marked by division, conflict, and separation. Even in the midst of humanity's failure, God revealed the reality of the battle and His plan for redemption, brought to us through God's only Son, in whom we discover the good news of Jesus. But for now, let's focus on how sin created enmity between humanity and God.

Enmity With God: Vertical Enmity; Romans 8:7, James 4:4, Isaiah 63:10. This movement describes how human nature inherently fights against God's authority. Paul says that our flesh literally cannot submit to the laws of God and is actually hostile to Him. In James, we read that by being friends with the world, we are choosing to be enemies of God, as His jealousy grows when we do not choose Him over the world. Isaiah 63:10 brings even more light to this, saying, "Yet they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit. So, He turned and became their enemy, and He Himself fought against them." It's important to note here that the Hebrew word translated as "grieved" means causing pain, distress, or sorrow (Ephesians 4:30). By allowing vertical enmity to come between our relationship with the Holy Spirit, we are grieving Him. Now, this doesn't mean that by God becoming your enemy, His love for you has vanished. The Father's love isn't as conditional as we know love to be in the world. However, it does mean that consequences for our actions should be expected. God desires fellowship with you, His people, and throughout Scripture, after humanity's rebellions, God extends opportunities for reconciliation.

God's love is never-failing, and through Christ we are empowered and strengthened to make the impossible possible. This now leads us into our last and final movement.

Enmity Enters Relationships: Horizontal Enmity; Numbers 35:20–22, Luke 23:12, Galatians 5:20. Our final movement points us to the sacrificial love of Christ. This is the relational friction of humanity and how anger, hate, resentment, and unforgiveness play a role in our politics, marriages, families, friendships, and possibly even our work lives. The cosmic hostility at play from the boundary line God placed between us and sin bleeds into humanity because we are all sinners. Not one of us can point the finger at another, saying, "You need Jesus." While it may be true, so do you; in fact, we all do. Paul even goes as far as to say that we are all guilty and that not one of us is righteous (Romans 3:10, 19). We have all been hurt, damaged, and broken by someone, regardless of whether they know it or not. All of us have also been the ones to do the hurting, damaging, and breaking as well, whether we are aware of it or not.

However, this is where God's plan, after all this time, comes into effect. We have Jesus. All of us are guilty, yes, but Jesus paid the debt. We can now appreciate the work of enmity God placed there because of Jesus. Our Heavenly Father's truth has been revealed in Christ, and we are accountable for our response: to either remain shackled to our sin or bow to the Lord of lords, the King of kings, our Savior, Christ Jesus, who defeated the grave and put sin in a chokehold until it was screaming uncle.

For Thought and Discussion

Grab a journal and answer these questions, if you don't have one use your notes app. So, my questions to you are this:

Is there someone who has wronged you? If yes, how? Write out who it is and name what they have done. How did it make you feel in your soul?

Do your actions towards this person based on how they have made you feel reflect God's image or are you allowing enmity to keep you neutral in the battle of Good and Evil over your heart?

What fruit of the Spirit is being produced in you based on your behaviors towards this person? Is it peace, wisdom, and love or is it confusion, division, and disobedience?

Day 3: Power Through Faith

Ephesians 2 - 4

Enmity is the reality of a broken world. It is just a fact of life that broken people break people. Sin damages our relationships with others; most of all God. Misunderstandings, unforgiveness, pride, jealousy, and selfish ambition create walls that divide our families, friendships and communities. These vertical and horizontal separations are symptoms and signs that the enemy is trying to create a foothold in your life and do the thing he came to do. Kill. Steal. Destroy. He will use these to kill your identity in Christ, steal your joy, and destroy your life. Gods plan for us was not to live in constant hostility with one another. He is and always will be (Revelation 22:13)

None of this negates His perfect plan for us. Our Heavenly Father has given us the power to replace enmity with peace. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he explained how Christ alone destroyed relational enmity. "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace... His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace... and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility." (Ephesians 2:13 - 16). Jesus is our peace. Jesus reconciled us to God by putting enmity to death. The Son of Man didn't just create peace or make it possible; He is that peace. Jesus destroyed the enmity that separated people from God and from one another. No longer does it hold power over us. No longer do we need to be enslaved by it.

Paul goes on to explain that we belong together in unity in Christ. (Ephesians 2:19-22) We are all members of the same household and enmity has no place in Gods house. The same God who restored Job, the same One who created a path across the Red Sea for Moses to lead his people out of captivity, the same One who Abraham and Isaac both trusted on a mountain when asked for a sacrifice with Isaccs life Abrahams only son. The same God who created the universe and holds it all in the palm of His hand is the same One that is with us today and tomorrow and all the rest of tomorrows in our short time here. His power put all of it to death. Through His love we are able to conquer division and without it, reconciliation becomes difficult.

Paul prays that all who believe In Jesus would be rooted and established in Christs love that we can have power together to truly know the vast ocean of The Fathers love by our faith that we cannot contain with our own knowledge or understanding. (Ephesians 3:17-19) All the love you are capable of as human fits into the same size of your own heart (about the size of your fist) Now imagine you are at a beach. That ocean is the comparison of what God can bring to your life when your faith is in Him.

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:1-3). Notice here that Paul doesn't say create unity, he says to keep it. Unity was the work of Christ and maintaining it is ours. True spiritual maturity is demonstrated not by winning arguments or holding onto offenses, but by pursuing peace, speaking the truth in love, forgiving as we have been forgiven. Enmity, sin, malice, evil was all absorbed by Jesus and He - who was perfect, void of blame; took our punishment on Himself destroyed it all and created unity in its place. So don't resurrect what He put to death. Don't give enmity a place in your heart. "In your anger do not sin, do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold." (Eph 4:26-27) Unresolved anger or hurt leaves the door to your heart open for the enemy to come and settle into your life

To answer our last and final question from day one; the cure and how we overcome enmity is told to us by Paul at the end of chapter 4. "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (31-32). Notice the pattern in Paul's words; put off bitterness, put on kindness; put off malice, put on compassion; put off unforgiveness, put on forgiveness. God has already forgiven each of us, offering your forgiveness is not for the one who wronged you or even yourself but for obedience to The Father, in honor of what Jesus has done to you.

We all have been broken, but The Father of all creation Who calls you by name, Who knows every hair on your head and, Who knows and shares in your pain. Your Heavenly Father can create you anew. No matter how shattered your heart is He can pick up every tiny piece and rebuild, reform, and transform you into something even more beautiful than before. Our cure and healing come from one place; at the foot of the cross. No where else can you access The Father. Nothing you surrender to Him will be wasted. Not your anger, hurt, suffering, pain, disappointment, sadness or grief; not your stress or anxiety, your depression or addiction, not even abuse will be wasted at His feet.

Lay it all down at His feet. Let His love pour out onto like a rushing waterfall. Allow Him to speak life into your broken heart. Invite Him in and kick enmity out. Give Him your complete attention and praise; hand over your struggle for control and rest in the peace Jesus is and created. Allow the Holy Spirit to transform your heart. Our cure and our answers are all found in Him and through our faith in Christ.

Reflection Questions

Is there a relationship in your life where bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness has taken root?

Have you confused standing against sin with harboring anger or resentment toward a person?

What would humility, gentleness, patience, and love look like in your most difficult relationship today?

Is there someone you need to forgive as Christ has forgiven you? What has been keeping you from taking that step?

What is one practical step the Holy Spirit is leading you to take today to replace enmity with grace, peace, and reconciliation?

Prayer

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe. Thank You for Your mercy, Your faithfulness, and the peace You have given me through Jesus Christ. Guide my heart today to walk in Your truth. Thank You for reconciling me to Yourself through Jesus Christ. Search my heart and reveal any bitterness, pride, anger, or unforgiveness that keeps me from loving others as You have loved me. Help me to extend grace, pursue peace, and forgive as You have forgiven me. Give me wisdom to stand against sin while reflecting Your compassion in my relationships. May my words, actions, and attitudes bring glory to You and point others to the peace found in Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.
