

# The High Cost Of Getting Even

Darkness had fallen over the forest in the National Park

A group of people, with bated breath, were watching a pool of light that lit up the garbage dump of the hotel.

Minutes ticked by, then suddenly the silence was shattered by a crash.

Shivers went up and down the spines of those waiting in the shadows, their adrenaline rocketed up.

A towering nine foot giant, with rippling muscles, covered in fur, with a casual flip of paw scattered the contents of the bins and began to eat some of their content.

Much to the amazement of the onlookers, into the pool of light scurried a small animal and it began to eat alongside the giant grizzly bear.

The bear totally ignored the small intruder.

Why?

Experience had told the giant bear it was **not** wise to attack or upset, or try to get even with a skunk.

In life we also meet many two-legged skunks, and it doesn't pay to try to get even with the or upset them.

**Matthew 5:44-45** [NIV] *“But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*

Jesus taught us to love our enemies, not try to get even with them.

This is sound wisdom and good medicine.

**If we try to get even with our enemies we allow them to have power over us.**

Over our sleep, appetites, blood pressure, general health and happiness.

**Matthew 18:21-22** [NIV] *“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”*

Jesus Christ was really telling us how to avoid stomach ulcers, heart attacks from high blood pressure, etc.

**How can we avoid our enemies having this power over us?**

In the town of Pinewoods, Mississippi in 1918 it was emotional days of the First World War.

Rumours abounded that the Germans were arousing the coloured population to rebel against white Americans.

A white man paused outside a church and heard the coloured minister Laurence Jones say to the congregation, *“Life is a battle in which everyone must put on the armour of God and fight to survive and succeed...”*

“Fight” .. “Armour”, the white man had heard enough, he raced off and collected a mob, who dragged Laurence off.

The mob tied Laurence to a stake and piled faggots around him ready to burn him alive.

One of the mob called out “*let the ... talk before he burns.*”

### **Laurence spoke for his life and his cause.**

Graduated from university with a good degree, he was popular with the other students and a talented musician.

He was offered financial backing for a musical career but turned it down.

His seemingly foolish decision was based on a vision given to him after reading the life story of another coloured man, Brooker Washington.

Brooker had devoted his life to educating unschooled children and adults among his own coloured people.

Laurence was determined to follow Brooker’s example and had sold all his possessions and moved to the most backward part of the country.

The free school he started began in the open air, a tree stump being his desk.

Laurence told the men, who were about to burn him alive, of the struggle he had to continue to do this work of educating poor people.

He told the mob how he had turned uneducated boys and girls into good mechanics, farmers and housekeepers.

Laurence pleaded with the mob, **not** for himself, but for his cause.

The mob realised they should be helping **not** burning this man.

A hat was passed round and 50 dollars was collected for Pinewood’s Country School.

Laurence was asked afterwards, “*Didn’t you hate these men who were about to kill you?*”

Laurence’s reply was, “*I’m too busy with my cause to have time to hate anyone, I’m too absorbed with something that is bigger than myself to find time to quarrel with others.*”

**Matthew 28:18-20** [NIV] “*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*”

### **Every true Christian has a cause that is “bigger than ourselves.”**

Laurence had power over his enemies by showing them an example of love for people in need.

Laurence caused his enemies to change their minds from evil to good.

### **All true Christians have this same power within us to turn enemies into friends through sacrificial love for other humans.**

This is why Jesus Christ told His disciples to love their enemies, to soften their hearts and minds with acts of selfless love.

**Romans 5:6-8** [NIV] *“You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: **While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**”*

Jesus Christ as a human being lived and died as a perfect example of “loving your enemies.”

**1 Corinthians 16:15** [King James] *“I beseech you, brethren, ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that **they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,**”*

Paul pointed to the family of Stephanas as examples of people who were “addicted” to serving other people.

This cause took first place in their lives, just like a drug can control the life of a person who is addicted to it.

**Matthew 5:13** [NIV] *“**You are the salt of the earth.** But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”*

Salt makes food palatable to eat, so our lives should enhance other people’s lives, through our acts of love.

**Matthew 5:14-16** [NIV] *“**You are the light of the world.** A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

A true Christian’s life should be a light for others to follow.

Our good works eventually leading them to their Creator God who laid His life down for them to receive the gift of eternal life.

True Christianity is **not** a religion, it is a way of life devoted to serving other human beings.