

**Who needs enemies?****980124**

There are many people whom I admire very much and consider to have a spotless reputation. I remember one time, though, being very shocked when I heard someone speaking ill of one particular couple. It was a very unfair accusation. It struck me then that it didn't really matter how good you were, there was always a way for someone to find fault. And where there is a way, people will eventually use it.

You don't need "real enemies," that is, the kind that are responding to some real hurt that you have given them. All you need is to disappoint someone who expects to be treated as someone special. Perhaps you didn't bow and scrape to them and tell them how wonderful they are. Perhaps you were thinking of something crucial to your life and did not respond properly to them when they passed by you. Or it could be something else just as ludicrous.

You might think that if you were hauled into court for some bogus charge, that there would be no one to testify against your character. But there is always someone who can interpret something you said as a lie, or otherwise present some kind of slight to mar your reputation. Think about Christ. His enemies had to work at it, but they finally found two who could twist his comment about the future of Jerusalem into a personal threat against the city.

The same sort of thing happened long ago with Naboth, who did no one any wrong except that he had a family vineyard that he refused to sell to the king. So, the king became upset and the queen arranged for two men to accuse him of blasphemy. Naboth was killed, but fortunately Ahab and Jezebel did not get to enjoy the fruit of their evil.

Think about the Old Testament story of Esther. Actually, think about her uncle Mordecai. He was just trying to do what was right, taking care of his niece and saving the life of the king, but Haman became his arch-enemy simply because Mordecai would not bow down before him. Haman hated him so badly that he wanted to kill him, but Mordecai never did a thing to him. When people decide to hate and slander, there is really very little choice that you have in the matter.

Daniel is another example of this kind of thing. He was simply a good God-fearing man, but he made enemies of those who were jealous of his position and favor with the king. So they tried to have him killed. And what did Daniel do to them? Nothing but live by his principles.

Slander is an easy way of getting at people you need out of your way. The key to its success is that it can cause great damage by incorporating just a part of the truth. One of the ways that Jews and Christians were slandered in pagan days was that they were called "atheists". Isn't that the most ridiculous thing? But because these people did not believe in **all** of the gods, in particular the Roman gods, they were treated as though they didn't believe in any. This is how propaganda works. Hitler used it to great effect.

William Barclay writes in his Commentary on John of four slanderous reports which were spread about the Christians. They were said to be insurrectionaries because they would not claim Caesar as Lord. They were said to be cannibals because of the Lord's Supper, where they were eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ. They were said to practice the most flagrant and promiscuous immorality, because they had 'love feasts' and greeted each other with the 'kiss of peace'. They were said to be incendiaries, because they spoke of the burning nature of the end of the world. There was sometimes even another charge, that of tampering with family relationships, for families were split between the believers and unbelievers.

What can we do about it when this happens to us? There is really nothing that we can do to stop it. I used to think that if we were just good to people then we would win them over. I have matured in my thinking since then. I realize now that the force of my good can simply not overpower them. But we can focus on those who love us rather than those who don't, especially the fact that God loved us each personally and unfailingly. We can go on with our life, keeping our faith in God and commitment to his Good, regardless of what others say or do. We must not let this cause us to give up. God expects us to carry on. And, of course to:

*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*  
Matthew 5:44