

My Attitude toward Lost Souls

Should I Rejoice?

When Babylon destroyed Judah by the power of God, they were “*glad*” and “*rejoiced*” because they considered Judah getting their just reward for their sin (cf. Jer. 50:7). Due to their lack of mercy toward human souls and an inability to see their own sin, God showed them no mercy (Jer. 50:11-13). How do we respond to those lost in sin? When a family member, co-worker, fellow student, or even a fallen away brother in Christ is lost, should I rejoice? Does it make me feel vindicated to see them in a lost state? Do I say, ‘He deserves to be lost’?

Should I Leave the Lost Alone?

This depends upon the amount of teaching and longsuffering you have exercised with such a one. Paul preached to the lost Jews in Corinth and when they rejected his words he rejected them saying, “*your blood be upon your own heads*” (Acts 18:6). This same apostle wrote the Thessalonian brethren instructions as to how to handle a disorderly brother. We are to “*admonish*” and be “*longsuffering*” with such (I Thess. 5:14) using a “*spirit of gentleness*” (Gal. 6:1). When brethren sow discord within a congregation and gain a following the word of God terms this action a “*faction*” (cf. I Cor. 11:17-19). We are commanded to give efforts to stop said actions; however, our efforts are limited. There will come a time when such will not endure sound doctrine, they will make this clearly known, and we must then avoid and reject such (Titus 3:10-11). They make themselves manifest by their going out from the faithful (cf. I Jn. 2:19).

Are the Lost Enemies?

Although the lost may sometimes acts as though they are our enemies, the child of God needs to be careful as to how he treats them. I am commanded to love my brethren with an “*unfeigned love*” (I Pet. 1:22). Jesus said, “*This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you*” (Jn. 15:12). I need to be careful how I speak about another brother in Christ, or anyone, who is lost. I need to remember that Paul said, “*At the mouth of two witnesses or three shall every word be established*” (II Cor. 13:1). I should not be one who desires to see the downfall of any brother nor should I draw conclusions about my brother without any facts. The apostle Paul told the Thessalonians that after a period of longsuffering with a delinquent brother, the faithful are to withdraw from such; however, Paul said, “*count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother*” (II Thess. 3:15). There are times; however, when a lost brother will become our enemy. Brethren who cause division in a faithful church by means of their own doctrines as opposed to the doctrine of Christ are to be counted as factious and enemies of the cross (cf. Rom. 16:17-18; Phil. 3:17-19).

Should I still Love these people?

A co-worker has talked behind my back and caused my fellow employees to have a hatred for me. A student in school keeps picking on me for no apparent reason. A brother in Christ has sinned against me and is now making it appear as though I am the one in error. A sister in Christ apparently does not like me and has treated me with disrespect for years in the church. A brother has spread false doctrines and rumors in the church, gained a following, and now many have left the church. Isn't it very hard to love someone who clearly does not love you?

I find it interesting that Jesus prayed for the lost as they killed Him as did Stephen (Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60) and that Paul termed the factious brethren in Philippians 3 "*enemies of the cross*" yet he did so while "*weeping*" (Phil. 3:18). Though people may disappoint and even hurt us (even more so when it's a brother in Christ) we ought to be filled with pain knowing that their souls are in danger of being lost for eternity. Why not have true love for the lost rather than expressing anger? Salvation will be lost by the saved if the saved do not exercise a spirit of true concern for people in this area.