

“Love Your Enemies, and Pray for Those Who Hate You...”

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Q: Jesus teaches us to pray for our enemies. Lucifer, and all of the other fallen angels, are our real enemies (according to Saint Paul). Does that mean that we should pray for Lucifer?

A: That's an interesting question. While I really like how you put it in light of Jesus' command to pray for those who hurt us, I have come across it in a number of other ways. Usually, when people ask me this question, they are asking if they can pray that Satan can still have the possibility of being saved. This idea goes hand in hand with Jesus' command. The heart of the reason we would pray for our enemies is for their salvation, therefor....

Essentially, the short answer is no, we do not pray for Lucifer or any of the fallen angels. This comes out of two things: the nature of angels, and the nature of a definitive choice.

The thinking goes like this: As human beings, we have bodies (duh). That is how we learn things. We take in information through our bodies and begin to learn about ourselves and the world around us. This process takes time. It is also made more difficult by the fact that we are all born with the condition of original sin. Because of this, we don't always have clear thought or complete freedom in our choices. As a result, we can fail, repent, and try again. Ultimately, however, the day will come when we will have made a definitive choice either for or against God.

Angels do not have bodies. They are pure spirits. Because of this, the thinking goes, they come to know things in a very different way than we do. Whereas we acquire knowledge through sense perception and our brains, angels come to know through a thing called "infused knowledge". They don't "learn" in the sense that we learn. Since they have no bodies, they are simply given knowledge "at once". If you have ever seen the movie The Matrix (it's very violent, my mentioning it does not constitute a recommendation), there is a time where the protagonist is hooked up to a computer and knowledge of things like Kung Fu or how to fly a helicopter is "downloaded" into his mind. This is kind of like how angels would come to know.

With this infused knowledge, they also had entirely free wills. Therefore, with full knowledge and complete freedom they chose to reject God. This is the nature of a definitive choice. There is no sense whereby a definitive choice can be reversed (then it wouldn't be definitive). But Lucifer, fully knowing what he was doing and completely free in his choice, intentionally rejected the life offered to him by God. There is no repenting from a decision like this.

Now, why would we wonder if we could pray for Satan? I think that we tend to have compassion for the underdog. We also don't like suffering. We imagine that Lucifer desperately wants to be redeemed, but he is just stuck unfairly in a constant state of hell. We might imagine Lucifer as the mean dog in the neighborhood who is only mean because it was treated so cruelly by its owners. We think, "Maybe that's Lucifer...maybe he couldn't help himself." But this merely reveals our fear about God than it does any sense of misplaced compassion for Lucifer. We can sometimes fall into the fear that God will not be just, that He will not take into consideration what we truly wanted, and that God won't give us grace when we need it the most. The fear could be that "if I have wounds that make me more disposed to some sin, God won't take those wounds and weaknesses into consideration." We doubt that God will truly be both fully just and fully merciful.

In order to receive the complete justice of God, He has to know more than just the externals (what I've chosen); He also has to know the hidden internals (my lack of knowledge, my lack of freedom, etc...). We may find ourselves fearful that God will not give me the grace that I need ("If only God knew what so-and-so had done to me when I was younger!").

But God does know. He is just. He will not judge anyone unfairly. He knows the wounds and secrets of the heart and the sinner who wants God's mercy will have it.

As long as one has breath, they can change their course. Of course, one day that breath will run out and our course will have been chosen in a definitive and unalterable way. Because of this, on this day, at this moment, with this breath, I choose what Lucifer refused: I choose to serve God.