



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::::: Volume 9 :::::: Issue 3 ::::::



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Herb Montgomery



The Seven Last Sayings of Jesus

Part 3 of 9

Forgive Them; For They Do Not Know What They Are Doing

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

"The truth may set you free, but first it will shatter the safe, sweet way you live."

– Sue Monk Kidd;
The Dance of the Dissident Daughter

"Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.'" (Luke 32:34)

Online, we are in the midst of a nine part series leading up to easter. I want to encourage each of you to take advantage of this series if you have not as of yet. You'll find Part 1 at <http://renewedheartministries.com/Esights/02-02-2015>. In this third part we are looking at a statement that was the most problematic for early Jesus followers.

Why?

Simply put, as early as the late first century, anti-Jewish sentiments were present among Christians. Not one of the early Christians (or even the later Church Fathers) interpreted this passage as being toward the Romans who crucified Jesus but rather as toward the Jews instead. This produced two problems for early Christians. First, this was a prayer for the forgiveness of unrepentant Jews on the basis of actions being done in ignorance. This was contradictory to anti-Jewish sentiments, which were growing at this time. And second, Jesus' prayer seemed to have been in vain, to have failed, because Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 C.E. What we begin to see then as early as the late second century and the early third century are copies of Luke in which Jesus' prayer for his enemies is missing and some in which Jesus' prayer is present. Two theories exist today. One is that it was removed by early copyists because of the above problems, or that it was simply added in later manuscripts and therefore did not originally belong to Luke. Thus in some more recent translations you will find Jesus' prayer placed in brackets in Luke 23:34.

If you enjoy textual criticism, I want to recommend the following article to you. I want to give you a brief overview of its content and then share why, although far from conclusive, I, and even non-Christian textual critics too, feel the evidence leans toward this statement actually being original to Luke and not some later addition. Then lastly, if this is original to the early Jesus narratives, we must ask what it means for us today, who like the early Jesus followers, long for a radically new social order.

The following is from an article published

in The Journal of Biblical Literature, 129 in 2010 entitled *A Disconcerting Prayer: On the Originality of Luke 23:34a* by Nathan Eubank; Duke University, Durham, NC 27708.ⁱ

The article puts forth that "external evidence" for the inclusion or exclusion of Jesus' prayer for his enemies "is far from conclusive." Evidence for both early versions of Luke (with Jesus' prayer and without) "are found in every text type, including important Alexandrian witnesses." An "important late second or early third century papyrus" gives us a version of Luke without this statement, "but a good number of second and third century church fathers" use of Luke reveal this statement actually does belong to early versions of Luke's gospel. The research goes on to say that "intrinsic probability suggests that the prayer belongs in the text of Luke: the prayer matches Luke's preferred way of addressing God; its structure resembles that of the Lukan Lord's Prayer; it resembles Stephen's prayer for his killers without having a single word in common; and the link between ignorance and mitigated culpability matches a motif running throughout Luke-Acts."

As far as the likelihood of copyists actually adding this statement or removing it, the evidence leans in the direction of the probability that early copyists removed the statement from some early copies of Luke rather than later copyists adding it to older copies. What is conclusive, however, is that this *statement by Jesus in Luke was deeply problematic for early Christians*.

This research shows that conclusions that suggest that the prayer was omitted for anti-Jewish reasons are "on the right track," yet adding that the "early Christian consternation with Luke 23:34a stemmed not from anti-Judaism alone but also from the fact that Jesus'

prayer seemed to have gone unanswered, and from a sense that the Jews had been punished unjustly" (i.e., Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E.). The early Christians "discomfort with the prayer explains why the external evidence for both readings is early and widespread; in all likelihood, Luke 23:34a was omitted fairly early, possibly by multiple scribes, while other

cont'd on page 3

scribes corrupted the text.” Lastly, this research shows that the “confidence” that some feel that if this statement were original to Luke “that no scribe would have omitted something as sublime” as Jesus’ prayer for the forgiveness of his enemies, instead reflects contemporary interpretations of the passage in question rather than in the context of “actual early Christian interpretations” of the passage in question. The theory that suggests “that early Christians inserted this prayer into Luke” as toward the Romans to “increase the guilt of the Jews by exonerating the Romans” rightly perceives the anti-Judaism during the time of the copying of these manuscripts, but it *ignores a whole class of evidence that suggests that no early Christians understood the prayer to be on behalf of the soldiers, but rather as being for the Jews themselves.* “If the goal of transcriptional probability is to determine what a scribe is most likely to have written, it would seem prudent to examine what the scribe’s near contemporaries wrote about the passage in question.”

The entire article is well worth your read. And as the research indicates, evidence is far from conclusive regarding one way or the other, yet given the contemporary interpretation of the passage during the era under question, the probability leans toward the validity of Jesus’ prayer actually belonging to Luke’s gospel. I want to be quick to add that the above article is not alone in this. Bart Ehrman, who is a self-professed agnostic atheist and textual critic, who has nothing to lose or to gain in either direction with this, also leans in the direction of concluding that early copyists would more likely have removed Jesus’ prayer from Luke for anti-Jewish motives rather than, as some have put forth, that later copyists added the passage to excuse the Roman soldiers but increase the guilt of the Jews.

As I said at the beginning, last week we looked at the most intellectually problematic statement of Jesus on the cross within the gospels for readers of the story today. This week we are looking at a passage that was the most problematic for Jesus’ followers at the close of the first century.

I would suggest that, on an ethical level, this statement is actually no less problematic for us today.

This is the case whether it’s in the context

For those who are visually oriented, here are both views side by side.

Early Removal	Later Addition
1. Prayer believed to be for Jews	1. Prayer assumed to be for Roman Soldiers
2. Prayer matches theme of ignorance and mitigated culpability found throughout Luke and Acts	2. Addition would have increased the guilt of the Jews and fed anti-Jewish sentiments
3. Resemblance to Stephen's Prayer in Acts	3. Always isolated as problematic in early harmonies of the last sayings of Jesus
4. Similarity to Luke's "Lord's Prayer"	
5. Matches Luke's favored way of addressing "God"	
6. Contradictory to Early Anti-Jewish Sentiment	
7. Problematic as Jerusalem was eventually destroyed	

of racial privilege between whites and non-whites, whether it’s in the context of the extirpation of non-normative sexualities by those who are labeled as “straight,” or whether it’s in the context of wealthy (by global standards) capitalists in the West discussing what to do about groups such as ISIS; any time “enemy love” is brought into the discussion it becomes problematic for those who would seek to solve societies’ struggles through “eye-for-an-eye,” justifiably retributive means, rather than transforming the world through methods of transformation, restoration, and rehabilitation.

I want to be clear. Do I believe Jesus taught us to forgive our enemies? Absolutely. Forgiving one’s enemies is not a “do-nothing” approach. Forgiving one’s enemies does not mean we ignore what our enemies are doing. Forgiving one’s

enemies doesn’t mean we don’t try and stop what they are doing. Forgiveness means we rise above what our enemies are doing to us; we see them not as evil, not as beyond redemption themselves, but as captives too, just like us, and as we strive to dismantle the system that is hurting us and others we see even those, at whose hands we suffer, as needing to be saved from the system too. In other words, we see our “enemies” as being captives, too, of a much larger, overarching problem from which both we and they need redemption.

Whether we have “enemies” within the context of race, gender, economics, or sexuality, Jesus offered nonviolent ways of confronting, discomfoting (even shaming at times), and de-centering oppressors where even those at the helm of such systems of injustice are offered a better way.

“Jesus did not advocate non-violence merely as a technique for outwitting the enemy, but as a just means of opposing the enemy in such a way as to hold open the possibility of the enemy’s becoming just as well.”ⁱⁱ It’s a means of liberating the world from oppression by liberating both the oppressed as well as oppressors from both of their enslavements to a much larger system of domination.

The following is from a more recent champion of social change rooted in confrontative, enemy love.



HeartGroups:

Anatomy of an Open Meeting: What does it look like?

Part 2 of 5

(For the entire series, please see *Anatomy of an Open Meeting Parts 1-5 at: www.rhmheartgroups.com*)

What Does An Open Meeting Look Like?

by Keith Giles

Essentially, what we try to do is to come together and “take hold of Christ” as a Body. In other words, try to imagine that your church was sitting together in someone’s living room and suddenly Jesus walks in the door and stands in the center of the room.

Would you guys keep talking to one another about the weather, or sports, or even Bible verses? Hopefully you’d all sit quietly and lean forward to hear what Jesus wanted to say to you. You’d talk to Him, not to each other. You’d meet with Him, not have a meeting about Him while He watched. That’s basically what we’re trying to do every time we meet.

Now, it might look different each time. And sometimes, honestly, we’re better at it than at other times. But, usually our times together go something like this:

Some of us meet about thirty minutes early for prayer before the meeting starts. A brother once noted that an open meeting requires more prayer together, not less. This is because an open meeting is led by the Spirit, not by any one person or persons. Everyone is invited to this prayer time, but no one has to come if they don’t want to.

After prayer everyone else shows up for a shared, potluck breakfast together. Eating is an essential ingredient, I believe. It helps us to get to know one another and to be together without being pretentious. It’s also how we build community and find out what people are like, what they’re going through, etc. Real ministry can take place during the meal times, or we can just laugh together and eat some great food. Either way it’s worth the investment of time. Plus, it’s based on the practice of

the earliest Christians:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
(Acts 2:42)

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts...”
(Acts 2:46)

Eventually we’ll finish eating and gather around the sofas and set out the communion elements and wait quietly for a while to pray together before we start singing songs. The singing is always suggested by the members of the Body, or anyone in the room. We have a set of worship songs put together in a songbook format, and we also have a set of old Baptist Hymnals. Or someone can bring a CD with a song to share, or they can just start singing a song that they love accappella and either teach it to all of us, or let those who know it join in.

There’s lots of flexibility, as you’ll notice. We’re very conscious of the fact that we’re not putting on a show. We’re not trying to shush the children or keep to a program. We just try to allow the Holy Spirit to move however He likes and get out of His way.

During the singing time someone might feel led to read a scripture out loud, or to pray for someone else in the group, or to call out to God in thanksgiving and praise. We never know how that might work, but we’re open to whatever happens.

I think this can only work if you’re with a group of people, a family of believers, that you can trust. You have to know that everyone in that meeting cares for you and loves you. They’re not trying to control you or to manipulate you. Over the last six years we’ve been developing that level of trust together and it’s great, really.

Eventually we’ll move from the singing and prayer time to “open share time” where everyone (young, old, male, female, visitor, regular, etc.) is free to share with everyone else what God has been teaching them during the week, or to share something that the Lord spoke to them during worship, etc. But not everyone has to share. It’s ok to be quiet and listen, too.

Transition from the singing to the open

share time is very fluid and sometimes we’ll drift back into singing songs again, or spend the whole time praying for one another, or maybe share with one another over a single passage of scripture, or a variety of scriptures if there are a lot of people who have something to share. It varies week to week.

What I really love is when the seemingly random verses and testimonies that each person brings suddenly begin to emerge as a complete teaching on a single topic. Sometimes someone will say, “What is Jesus trying to teach us this morning?” and we’ll realize “Oh, it’s about letting go and trusting Him” or “It’s about forgiveness”, and then we’ll try to respond to Him and thank Him for teaching us this lesson as a Body.

Our meetings usually run from about 9am for morning prayer to around 1pm or so. Sometimes it goes to 2pm but usually 12:30pm to 1pm. We usually end with Communion together and sing a song before we depart.

Now, even though this is our usual meeting format, what I love about an organic church is that we always have freedom to change things around whenever the Lord directs us to.

In the past, we’ve had gatherings where everyone creates artwork together, or perhaps we hear a testimony from someone, or sometimes we’ll hear a teaching by someone who brings a study on a particular topic or book of the Bible. Sometimes we’ll meet in a park together, or spend all of our time in worship and prayer.

Breaking our liturgy and embracing our freedom in Christ to do something different is important to the life of the Body.

One of my favorite times was when we asked the children to lead our meeting. They all sat together and we waited to see what they would do. Then one of them said, *“Ok, does anyone have something to share with the group today?”*

It was so wonderful because they had learned from us that to lead a meeting is to ask questions and invite others to share. How cool is that?

Next installment [Part 3], we’ll discuss how to lead or facilitate an open meeting.



7 Last Sayings of Jesus.. cont'd from page 3

*"I've seen too much hate to want to hate, myself, and I've seen hate on the faces of too many sheriffs, too many white citizens' councilors, and too many Klansmen of the South to want to hate, myself; and every time I see it, I say to myself, hate is too great a burden to bear. Somehow we must be able to stand up before our most bitter opponents and say: 'We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws and abide by the unjust system, because non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good, and so throw us in jail and we will still love you. Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour and drag us out on some wayside road and leave us half-dead as you beat us, and we will still love you. Send your propaganda agents around the country, and make it appear that we are not fit, culturally and otherwise, for integration, and we'll still love you. But be assured that we'll wear you down by our capacity to suffer, and one day we will win our freedom. We will not only win freedom for ourselves; we will so appeal to your heart and conscience that we will win you in the process, and our victory will be a double victory.'"*ⁱⁱⁱ

Where does it begin? It's rooted in the beginning and difficult task of first forgiving those who have hurt us and learning to see them differently. It doesn't

mean what they did was okay. It doesn't mean you are simply going to ignore what they have done or are presently doing. It simply means that we begin seeing that they need to be saved from what they are doing just as much as we do.

Is this approach problematic? Of course it is. Enemy love is always problematic for both sides. But I contend that enemy love as it was taught by Jesus, and Gandhi, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. as well as others, is the only way to lasting change and a healed, restored world where only justice dwells.^{iv}

A new world is coming...a world of mutual love, mutual care, mutual interdependence, mutual honor, mutual submission, mutual dwelling where all our differences are valued and every person is recognized as "the image of God." The first step for many toward that new world is enemy love.

HeartGroup Application

1. Stephen's dying prayer in the book of Acts^v is also a Lukan illustration of the kind of enemy love we are discussing this week. Step one in the wrong direction is to dehumanize our enemies as being beyond redemption. Step two is then to make us afraid of them as if they are monsters. Jesus' prayer, as well as Stephen's, counteracts these steps and helps us begin moving back in the direction of restoration, transformation, and hope. Evil, yes, should be confronted. And that confrontation must come in a form that holds out the hope of transformation for the evildoers

themselves if we are not to simply become like them. There are two ways to fight monsters. One transforms them into our likeness. The other transforms us into theirs. This week I want you to take someone in your life that has hurt you. I do not want you to ignore what they have done. What I want you to do for the next seven days is to pray for their restoration, transformation, and rehabilitation. Don't pray for some divine being to get them. This is not a prayer for retribution. Some people can forgive because they believe that one day a divine being in the sky will strike their enemies for them.^{vi} That is not what this is. This is a prayer, like the one we find in Luke's gospel on the lips of Jesus, for the healing of those who have hurt us.^{vii} Not vengeance, but rehabilitation.

2. Journal your thoughts and feelings as you do this exercise.
3. Share something you experience while doing this with your HeartGroup this upcoming week.

Till the only world that remains is a world where Love reigns. Many voices, one new world.

I love each of you dearly, and I'll see you next month.

^[i] You can read the article in its entirety at www.nathaneubank.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/A-Disconcerting-Prayer.pdf.

^[ii] Walter Wink.

^[iii] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; Ebenezer Baptist Church; Christmas Eve, 1967.

^[iv] 2 Peter 3:13— *"But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where only justice dwells."*

^[v] Acts 7:60— *"Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"*

^[vi] I would submit that this type of "forgiveness" is not genuine forgiveness at all but only reserved vengeance being administered by a much more severe third party.

^[vii] The word translated "forgive" is much more than simply being let off the hook. It's *aphiemi*. It intimates "healing" as well. Luke 4:39— *"Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left [aphiemi] her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them."* ■

Herb Montgomery

Follow the Lamb

Out of all the major documents we possess today from the early Jesus community, The Revelation has received the least attention from scholars. The picture we get from the early Jesus story of the first-century is that of a traveling teacher, traversing the countryside pioneering a new moral ethic and a new moral order based on a radically different way of viewing "God," ourselves, and others. Take away the lens of alarmist prediction, and use instead the lens of the ethical teachings of Jesus and Revelation becomes a whole new book! It ceases to be so much about predicting the future and becomes a message of hope coming down to us in the present from a not too distant possible future. It promises new possibilities of tomorrow if we will but listen today.

Jesus gave us a way to heal the world. The question we must ask is whether or not the ethical teachings of Jesus and his unique picture of a Deity, of ourselves and of others remain relevant to us in the 21st century. In the fourth century, Christianity, in significant ways, laid aside the ethics of Jesus, it's founder. Much good, but also much abuse has been done in Jesus' name since. The ethical teaching of Jesus are still calling to us today. The question that still haunts us is whether or not any, Christian or non-Christian alike, will pick those teachings back up and Follow the Lamb.

Check out this 17 Part Series at:
www.renewedheartministries.com/presentation/Follow-the-Lamb



Quotable Quotes

Do you think that is the way I want you to fast?

Is it only a time for people to make themselves suffer?

Is it only for people to bow their heads like tall grass bent by the wind?

Is it only for people to lie down in ashes and clothes of mourning?

Is that what you call a fast?

Do you think I can accept that?

Here is the way I want you to fast.

Set free those who are held by chains of injustice.

Untie the ropes that hold people in subordination.

Set free those who are oppressed.

Break every evil chain.

Give away your privilege to the disadvantaged.

Provide the marginalized with a world that is safe.

When you see someone denied what is right, give what you have to them, that there may be equality.

Do not turn away from others who are in all actuality "your own flesh" for they too are "the image of God."

Then light will break forth like the dawn, and YOUR healing will spring up quickly.

(Adapted from Isaiah 58
by Herb Montgomery)

Testimonies

"No teacher has captured my heart and mind and agreed with my idea of what the "real Jesus" is like Herb Montgomery. His teachings, full of scripture and historical facts, bring not only comfort but healing to a world fraught with blaming and judgement. Finally, I can exhale, and experience the Jesus of love and compassion and put away self-hate and guilt. What a relief. I stand with Herb Montgomery and his ministry of Love and Acceptance." - **CS**

"Herb, Just now listening to the June 2 podcast that you suggested regarding scapegoating. WOW! As usual your clarification of the Scriptures and of the political times of His era is a bright light in a often times dark place. I just want you to know...IF NO ONE STANDS WITH YOU AND YOUR MINISTRY, IF ALL YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY REJECT YOU AND CALL YOU DELUSIONAL, IF YOU FEEL YOU ARE TOTALLY ALONE AND OUT ON A LIMB...PLEASE KNOW, I AM STANDING WITH YOU AND KNOW THAT WHAT YOU ARE TEACHING, THE JESUS NARRATIVES, IS THE TRUTH AS GOD INTENDED. YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!!! I am praying for you and your ministry and I appreciate all you are doing to show us the "real Jesus"...Love you, Brother" - **CS**

"Today during church, my congregation watched one of your video presentations from 2009. I'm not sure what the name of the presentation was, but what impressed me was your sincerity and passion for Christ in relaying the message. What stuck in my mind is that WE don't have to be good enough for Christ to love us, He loves us even if we were His enemies. I

thank you for the work that you do, even 5 years after you made that presentation, it's impacting lives. I have two teenage brothers who often get discouraged with church and I watched the sermon today impact them. I will be praying for your very special ministry and that God will continue to use you and Renewed Heart Ministries to reach people for Him." - **RA**

"Your three part series [www.renewedheartministries.com/Esights/07-07-2014] touched my heart. There are not many out there who are saying what you are, and I just wanted to say that I appreciate your ministry. I'm teary eyed at the moment, and it's making it hard to write this. I will be sharing this with our fellowship group over the next several weeks. Our group consists of homeless men and women living out on the streets. I know the women are going to appreciate hearing this just as I have. God Bless!" - **K**

"Thank you RHM for all you do to show so many of us who God really is. God bless you!" - **T**

Schedule

MARCH 6 - 8, 2015

Grand River Center
Meeting Room 1
500 Bell Street
Dubuque, IA, United States
248.895.9096 / 1.866.690.4006
www.grandrivercenter.com

MARCH 27 - APRIL 5, 2015

Edmond Adventist Church
Edmond, OK, United States
405.478.4401

APRIL 24 - 26, 2015

Redeeming Grace
Fellowship Campmeeting
Nags Head, NC, United States
413.325.3648

MAY 15 - 17, 2015

Turning Point Adventist
Community Church
Roseburg,, OR, United States
541.492.1300





Featured Presentation



The Revelation is most likely the most abused book in the entire New Testament. Far from being a book of alarmist predictions, the book envisions a new world, here and now, informed by the values and ethics taught by the itinerant Jewish teacher, Jesus of Nazareth growing like a mustard seed, subversively working its

way like a weed through the order of things. Even if you've had a negative impression of the book of Revelation, we want to offer you this Christo-centric lens enabling you to encounter Revelation as a whole new book! This is how Revelation's original audience would have encountered this letter; it is the Hope of the Lamb's New World rooted in Jesus' unique portrayal of a radically inclusive "God," of ourselves, and of everyone else around us. This month, we want to feature the first presentation in this series—***Why Revelation*** by Herb Montgomery.

Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus instructed us, "Freely you have received, freely give." We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a difficult time charging money to people for things Jesus taught us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support, please send your contributions to the following address:

Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Contributions can also be made online at:

www.renewedheartministries.com

*All donations receive a tax-deductible receipt.

Be sure to check out RHM's *FREE* resources at:

www.renewedheartministries.com

Quotable Quotes

"Violence can beget fear, stalemate, annihilation, dominance, or more violence, but it cannot beget love, justice, abundant life, community, or peace."

—Rita Nakashima Brock
 & Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker;
Saving Paradise