

Gloating

Ponder: How difficult it is to love your enemies.

Scripture: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles" (Prov. 24:17, NKJV).

That rude neighbor whose obnoxiously loud music kept you awake night after night finally had to pay a hefty fine. How do you feel about it? "Ha! Good! He finally got what was coming to him!"

Wait a minute. Wipe that smug smile off your face! Rejoice that you can sleep again. Be glad that the God-ordained civil authorities did their job administering justice. But don't gloat! And you definitely should be in prayer for that rude neighbor.

That still holds true in cases vastly more serious than noise ordinances. After Jonah finally (and reluctantly) preached to Nineveh, he still held out some hope that he might gloat over the destruction of the dreadful and dangerous enemy capital. When the Ninevites repented and God spared the city, Jonah became angry! Can you imagine a preacher being angry because his audience believed and obeyed God's word?

Evidently Jonah didn't remember that he, too, needed salvation by God's grace. His rebellion against God's call warranted a death sentence. Jonah probably thought he would die when the giant sea creature swallowed him. God, however, graciously spared Jonah and sent him to fulfill his task.

It's still difficult to love enemies. I struggle to pray for Vladimir Putin. When I read of Russian soldiers wantonly breaking windows and kicking in doors at a Christian camp, such blatant spite and malice makes it difficult to love them. But love them I must, and not just those who behave honorably. I want President Putin's wicked plans to fail, but if or when they fail, I must not gloat! I, too, desperately need God's grace. How about you?

Hymn: "O For A Faith That Will Not Shrink"

Prayer: Father in heaven, we thank You for being gracious toward us. Help us, we pray, to extend loving grace even to our enemies. In Jesus' name, Amen.