

# Eternal Perspective



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## *Our Obligation*

As he was mugged on an Ethiopian street, Ben Armstrong had no idea how that incident would change his life beyond the immediate.

The thugs knocked him down from behind, choked him unconscious, and then stole his identity – his laptop with all of his photos and personal items, his passport, and his wallet.

Then things got interesting.

Armstrong resigned his position with a tech start up, returned to the U.S. and started teaching at M.I.T., whereupon when he logged on to his new computer he received a chilling email:

“I have your computer and all of your documents,” the writer stated.

After ignoring the initial email, Ben received more. This time the writer became more personal. He said he was a young man in Ethiopia who wanted to study astronomy. Ironically, he had his own laptop stolen from his school locker, and was talked into going to the black market, where he purchased Ben Armstrong’s stolen one.

The young man went on to say how he was ashamed of his country and felt a moral obligation to reach out and apologize for ending up with the very personal effects of another. He felt an obligation to do the right thing.

He also wanted something. “Okay,” Ben thought. “Here comes the pitch.”

But it wasn’t money; there was no ransom.

The young man, whose nickname was “Furnace”, had a dream to come to the United States and study in a fine university. Would Ben give him a letter of recommendation? That was all he asked.

Ben’s initial answer was, “nope.” Subsequently, he decided to send Furnace some information about different schools and then thought he would be done with the whole thing.

But Ben kept coming back to a singular thought which changed the narrative: “What is our obligation to one another?”

I encourage you to go online and read about this story, and how it ended. (Yes, I just stopped this tale without telling you the ending!)

After I listened to this account recently, I also kept thinking about that theme – our “obligation” to one another....

A challenging thought in this increasingly divisive world we live in, with sectarianism spreading like wildfire across our neighborhoods, our cities, and our globe.

We have become a race of human beings who really don't care for each other very much (to put it too mildly).

Our Lord predicted this as he sat in the twilight on the Mount of Olives looking down at Jerusalem with his closest disciples.

*Jesus answered and said to them: “Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.***  
(Matthew 24:4-8)

The word rendered, “nation” here by Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the Greek word, “Ethnos”. “Ethnos” means “people group.” People groups are defined by common language, customs and a shared history.

What Jesus is telling us is that at the “end of the age” people will hate other people simply because they are different than they are.

They won't be dismissive of them. They won't be annoyed by them. They won't be offended by them.

*They will hate them.* With a hatred so strong it wants to kill.

Are we not seeing the escalation of that (for it has always existed) in the world today?

Unquestionably, these days we live in right now are the scariest in my lifetime; all because people groups hate other people groups.

What is our responsibility as disciples of Jesus, as his body, his arms, his legs, his heart and his mind on this earth toward our fellow man? (To be clear, I'm not talking about geopolitics here, or our response to the evils of terrorism/terrorists which is dominating the news. I'm talking about our interpersonal relationships.)

Because it is quite easy to just go along with the flow and allow your heart to darken with feelings which are quite *anti-Christ* for another. I've been there.

I am convinced that our obligation, our calling, our responsibility is to show Jesus to everyone we come in contact with under any circumstance, no matter how revolting, no matter how difficult, no matter how that other persons character and/or actions do not align with what we think or believe. I also won't argue that this is a very hard thing.

Jesus said to “love your neighbor.” (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31) Love them! In fact, it is so important to God that He said it is the most supreme thing we can do, right up there with loving God himself! Because when we love our neighbors, we are showing them the indescribable love of the Father. His love does not love conditionally. His love never stops. His love projects outward, it doesn't receive selfishly.

Will you join me and become a change agent in your little sphere of the world?

Talk to someone who might offend you. Smile at someone who snarls at you. Help someone who can do nothing for you. Show someone Jesus. Our world desperately needs it.

That is our obligation to one another.