

## Love Your Enemies? Matthew 5:43-48 Shocking Statements of Christ (Sermon on the Mount, Part 2)

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘*You shall love your neighbor* and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

**How many of you have Friends? – Not Facebook friends.**

A) Real friends – people you are doing life with – People you share your heart with? People you trust!

B) **Good friends are hard to come by!** –

C) How many of you love your FRIENDS?

1) Easy to love our friends –

**How many of you have some enemies?**

A) After we see Jesus definition of an enemy today – I think all of us will agree Ok – I have some enemies. –

**MORE THAN YOU THOUGHT**

**B) Don't raise your hand to this one. – Do you love your enemies?**

**C) That is hard isn't it? LOVE OUR ENEMIES!**

**That seems like a contradiction in terms? Definite Tension there:**

A) How can "love" and "enemies" be put together in the same sentence?

B) The **nature of enemies is that we are to hate them**, or at minimum find them to be so

repulsive that we do not desire any good for them.

C) We naturally want harm and loss to befall our enemies.

1) Keeping it real – **COME ON – YOU IN THE FLESH - - NOT TRUE**

**D) Sure I will pray for them – Just like David did – KILL THEM LORD**

1) **PSALM 109 – David Prays for God to destroy his enemy** and pronounces no less than **30 anathema's** upon his enemy.

E) Follow that example: Sure I can pray for my enemies!

**But Jesus has something different in mind here:**

A) Context: V.20 Your righteousness needs to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

**B) Righteousness that was outward. – Ignored the heart.**

C) Matthew 5:43–44 is the last of six statements in the Sermon on the Mount that begin, **"You have heard that it was said . . . but I say to you."**

D) Jesus is explaining in these six statements what the righteousness looks like that He requires beyond what the scribes and Pharisees require.

1) This last one is a doozy

**"These verses carry the core of Christian ethics up to anchor it in the character of God, for they teach that the Christian is to love others, not as a man loves his friends, but as God loves."** – Pastor James Boice

**Why all the confusion on divine commands?**

A) It came about due to rabbinic reinterpretation. **"You have heard that it was said," "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy."**

B) The first half of the command was a direct quotation from Leviticus 19:18 but with parts left out.

1) The original states, **"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."**

C) But the rabbis added a second half: "you shall...hate your enemy."

D) Search the Old Testament and you will not find this command. **It is just not there**

1) Instead it was either inserted by the rabbis or construed by them due to passages inferring divine judgment.

E) But the typical rabbi did not want to be bound by such a narrow road of loving others. So he reinterpreted the Scripture to fit his motives.

1) His "neighbor" was only his Israelite brother, and certainly not a Gentile.

**Before we are too hard on them – we tend to do the same thing.**

A) I know God's word says this..... but my situation is different.

B) \$20 for every time I have heard that – be a rich man!

C) **My situation is different - NO IT ISN'T!**

1) What God said still applies to you.

**So the Religious leaders in Israel were good at reinterpreting the scriptures to fit their motives.**

A) Remember when the scribe came to Jesus and asked what the greatest commandment was? -

Aa) Love God ..... Love your neighbor.

1) The Scribe asked well – who is my neighbor?

B) **Because in his mind – Neighbor was his fellow Israelite brother**

1) Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan.

C) Jews and the Samaritans hated each other – **Hatfields and the McCoys**

1) Westside Story – **Sharks and the Jets**

2) Under 25 Taylor Swift and Katy Perry

D) Your neighbor is anyone in need!

E) But here Jesus takes it one step further – Love not just your neighbor but your **ENEMY AS WELL!**

1) **THREE THINGS WE WANT TO CONSIDER TODAY**

❖ **1<sup>ST</sup> How does Jesus define enemy?**

❖ **2<sup>ND</sup> How is this love even possible? –**

❖ **3<sup>rd</sup> What does this love look like?**

**1<sup>ST</sup> How does Jesus define enemy?**

❖ **#1 Those Who Persecute You**

A) The first meaning of enemy is found in verse 44,

But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

B) So, clearly, by "enemy" he means people who oppose you and try to hurt you. "Persecute" means to pursue with harmful intentions.

1) It might include very severe hostility like the hostility Jesus faced.

**C) Persecution of Christians still exist today**

1) Saeed Abedini – Beaten and imprisoned in Iran for Sharing Jesus

D) **ISIS last month beheaded 21 Egyptian Christians** for no other reason than they were followers of Christ.

E) **Iraq's largest Christian City** has been overrun by ISIS militant Islamists who have gained a foothold in parts of eastern Syria and western and northern Iraq. CNN

**1<sup>ST</sup> How does Jesus define enemy?**

❖ **#1 Those Who Persecute You**

❖ **#2 Those Opposing You in Less Dramatic Ways**

A) Verse 45b gives another pointer to the kind of hard relationships in which we should love. It says,

**He [God] causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

B) Two groups – **Evil and the Good – Unrighteous and the Righteous**

C) The evil and the unrighteous are people who defy the laws of God.

1) They resist his will. They do not submit to his authority.

**Most of these people do not admit that they are God's enemies. They would resent being told that they are God's enemies.**

A) But Jesus said: If you are not for me you are against me – **NO NEUTRAL GROUND!**

B)Based on this description in this passage another way to understand "enemies" is that they are people who are repeatedly going against you and everything you stand for!

C)They may not call themselves enemies. You may not call them enemies. **But they resist you and they are contrary and antagonistic.**

D) In this sense, the enemy might be a rebellious child.

1)He might be an uncaring, non-listening, ill-tempered spouse.

E)He might be a cantankerous neighbor that complains about everything you do to your yard.

### 1<sup>ST</sup> How does Jesus define enemy?

A)The 3<sup>rd</sup> way that Jesus illustrates enemy is #3 Anyone Who Doesn't Love You or Is Not Your Brother

V.46-47 If you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? 47 And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others?

B)There in verse 46 the "enemy" is any one who doesn't love you.

1)And in verse 47 the "enemy" is anyone who is not your brother.

C)Another way to put this would be – THE PERSON WHO IS UNLOVABLE or the person who is NOT EASY TO LOVE!

D)**Anyone can love those who love you.**  
Tax collectors – or in our day Criminals do that!

E)What about those who are unlovable – get on your nerves – get under your skin –

1)That person you want to avoid – every time you see them.

Some of you are getting really uncomfortable right now – because that person's face is flashing in your mind – love them?- this is too personal.

A)We love the Bible when it is just promises – theology and knowledge but when it gets down to real life – UNCOMFORTABLE

B)We don't like it when God wants to mess with our lives do we?

C)**This is hard isn't it ? CS Lewis described it as taking a sledge hammer to our hearts**

**BOOM**

That is the reason before moving on to talking about what this love looks like - I felt we should talk first about how it is possible.

A)Less some of you tune me out the whole time on what it looks like because in your mind you are saying **NO WAY! IMPOSSIBLE – not going to happen**

B)**You are right – Left up to you –IMPOSSIBLE**

– 1)Maybe on a good day – but to consistently love our enemies –

Bb)IMPOSSIBLE in our flesh

1)IMPOSSIBLE IN THE NATURAL.

C)But as Christians we are not told to live in the NATURAL are we

1)**We are to live SUPERNATURALLY**

D)Live as People who have been impacted by the grace of God and who lives have been filled with the Holy Spirit.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Where Does Power to Love Like This Come From?

A)In John 15 Jesus uses an illustration from nature to illustrate how this SUPERNATURALLY HAPPENS

John 15:4,5

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. 5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

B)**Fruit He is talking about** – Christ like Character – Greatest demonstration is love.

C)The Natural by product of daily abiding in Jesus is that supernatural love flows out of our lives!

D)We start to resemble Him! –

Naturally supernatural

A) **APPLE TREE IS NOT STRAINING/SWEATING** – Those branches are receiving all the Apple nutrients from that tree

B) Apples are the result –

C) So too as we stay connected to Jesus – abiding in Him and His word – The nutrients that flow from His life are infused into us.

1) The result is Fruit that resembles Jesus

D) **THEY WILL KNOW YOU BY YOUR LOVE!**

This is really the focus of what JESUS MEANS IN v 45 when he says **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**

A) He is not saying that Loving your enemies is what makes you a son or daughter of God!

B) He is saying – Loving our enemies is a positive proof that you are a child of God!

C) Kids take on the Characteristics of their Parents

1) Abide in Jesus – **we begin to resemble Jesus**

Paul makes a similar point in Galatians 5 in contrasting walking in the Spirit vs Walking in the flesh.

A) The Flesh results in Murders, Jealousies, Hatred and Evil Stuff

B) **But if we Walk in the Spirit, you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.....V.22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.**

C) Here is the thing we must understand - Love is an Action

1) Been said: **"It takes a habit to break a habit.**

D) You can pray every day for a loving heart, but until you start acting in that direction, nothing's going to change."

**Here is the thing that we need to always remember**

A) When we step out in faith in that direction – God meets us with His Power!

B) Our problem is when we like to say: I will move in that direction when God changes my heart –

1) **I am praying He changes my heart.**

C) God says it doesn't work that way. **You step out – you move in that direction** and – watch how I meet you with my grace and power.

D) God can change your heart – but He will not change your mind – Not going to violate your will.

**But when you change your mind – Repentance – Change of mind – change of direction –**

A) When You change your mind – God can and will change your heart.

B) Here is what I have found begins to happen: You see your enemy differently.

1) You begin to feel sorry for them – rather than frustrated and mad

C) You begin to realize they are the way they are because of sin and they desperately need – Christ to fill them –

D) **Quote by Andy Stanley** – A lot I disagree with from this pastor – But He hits the nail on the head here

**"In the shadow of my hurt, forgiveness feels like a decision to reward my enemy. But in the shadow of the cross, forgiveness is merely a gift from one undeserving soul to another."** ~ Pastor Andy Stanley

So that leads us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> thing we want to consider today – What does this love look like?

**#1 Something as Simple as Greeting Them**

A) In verse 47 loving your enemy means something as simple and gracious as greeting them: **"if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others?"**

B) Greetings were a big part of that culture just as we find today in the Eastern world and even in many parts of old Europe.

C) Warm comments, kisses on the cheek, embraces, and bows

1)The Jews were big on doing this with one another. But Jesus' point is clear. So are the Gentiles.

**D)So what if you greet your brothers warmly? The Gentles do the very same thing and they make no pretension of knowing God.**

1)That is natural: -

E)Supernatural - **Greeting your non-brothers is one form of the love Jesus has in mind here.**

1)Putting on Christ – you just treat someone the way you think Jesus would treat them! - **Really has a way of Disarming them!**

**Greet them**

**Costco** – See that person – turn go in the opposite direction

Some people have recognizable VOICES - hear them – on the next isle – **Choice**

**Run the other way**

**Confront** – I play that one over in my mind –

A) **Italian** – I don't mind confrontation- Give you a piece of my mind – Heritage {Ice cream commercial

B)So I have played the conversation over a few times in my mind – *I know what you said – posted on Facebook*

*1)Set the record straight*

C)Few times I have done that – Always regretted – I didn't feel better – (Maybe a little)

**Run Confront or greet**

Hey – How is it going?

A)Put on?

B)Putting on Jesus

**What does this love look like?**

**#2 Practically Meeting Their Physical Needs**

verse 45 illustrates what love is:

[God] causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

A)**In this case love is very practical efforts to meet a person's physical needs.**

**B)Sunshine and rain are the two things that things need to grow so that there will be food for human life.**

1)This is the kind of thing Paul had in mind when he quoted Proverbs 25:21f. in

Romans 12:20.

**If your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head. 21 do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

**C)Loving your enemy means practical acts of helpfulness in the ordinary things of life.**

1)God gives his enemies sunshine and rain. You give your enemies food and water.

**D)Burning coals = Burning Conviction** – hopefully melts their hearts!

1)Fire melts gold and silver – Hardens clay -

**What does this love look like?**

**#3 Praying for Them-** verse 44 gives one of the deepest meanings of love for your enemies. It says,

**I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.**

A)Prayer for your enemies is one of the deepest forms of love, because it means that you **have to really want something good to happen to them.**

B)You might do nice things for your enemy without any genuine desire that things go well with them.

C)But prayer for them is in the presence of God who knows your heart, and prayer is interceding with God on their behalf.

**I'll tell you a secret: If you pray for your enemies—for the people who bug you the most**

A)You will experience power in your life and an ability to love them that will blow you away. Why?

B)When you pray for your enemies, two things happen: They change and you change.

C)It might take some time, but slowly yet surely, you'll see a change.

1)If I'm praying every day for the guy I can't stand,  
something amazing happens.

**D)I become genuinely interested in him!**

**E)Stop praying – it goes away. – Keep praying**

**Love enemies?**

**Jesus loved me when I was his enemy**

**Love the unlovable?**

**Jesus always loves me when I am unlovable**

**Love the unfaithful – not loyal**

**Jesus has loved me plenty of times**

**Jesus is in me – Jesus wants to live through me**