

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

- There is a startling portion of what we often call the sermon on the mount
- It's startling because it so radically contradicts our natural instincts
- But Jesus explains it, so there is no doubt what He means
- It contains a command we have to remind ourselves about when we are attacked or falsely accused
- When we are tempted to react emotionally or unbiblically, it may spring to our minds

- If we learn to obey, it can be a powerful tool
- Something that is so counter-cultural, it can't help but stand out
- I wonder if we are willing to do what Jesus says in Matthew 5:43-48
- "Love Your Enemies"
- His command and our theme today

- A person unfamiliar with our theme today may wonder, why should I do this?
- How can it possibly make sense to love my enemies?
- Does Jesus understand what He is asking me to do?

- I think all of these answers are simple
- Not easy, mind you, simple
- And we'll touch on them all
- But first, let's read the entire passage...

Matthew 5:43-48

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

- Now you may see why I called it a startling passage of scripture
- It certainly has a lot to teach us
- And we'll take a closer look next...

Matthew 5:43

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

- Someone specific may teach "hate your enemy," but it's usually more subtle than that
- The world around us, and our flesh say without a doubt, say hating your enemy is (at least) Ok

- It's something that's likely to happen, and that you can likely "get away with"
- It's only natural to love people that love us
- And it's also only natural to hate anyone who doesn't love us

- But most of Jesus' commands go against our natural tendencies
- And this is no exception

- Despite our feelings
- Despite the world's allowances
- Despite what people may say
- God has another plan in mind...

Matthew 5:44

44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

- Just the very reading of the verse is difficult
- It goes against everything that is in us
- We usually call people "enemies" because we don't love them
- When people curse us, we want to - and often do - curse them back
- And we usually do something bad, not good, to those who hate us
- What's more, those who persecute us are not at the top of our prayer list

- We're really in difficult territory here
- We will need God's help, without a doubt, to do this

- And the question might be asked right from the very beginning: why do this?
- A few answers spring to mind from other passages
- Starting in Romans 5, first in verse 8...

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

- Then in verse 10...

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. "

- God sent His only son to die in our place while we were His enemies
- There is precedent for this
- The One we follow loved His enemies first

- But there is more
- Let's remember who we were before Christ
- By looking at 1 Corinthians 6:9...

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

- These sound like the kind of people we might hate
- The bad people in society
- Don't forget 1 Corinthians 6:11...

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

- Why should we love our enemies?
- Let's start with the fact that we used to be God's enemies
- But He loved us
- And that we used to be the bad people in society
- But we have been radically altered, precisely because God loved us
- And because He sent His only son to save us

- There is more in our text...

Matthew 5:45

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

- Remember what God does
- Just or unjust, He makes the sun rise and the rain fall
- The good He brings into the world is not exclusive to His children
- He is a good God
- Full of mercy
- Full of grace
- Always loving
- Having compassion

- Though all of us deserve judgement
- And that judgement is coming for those outside of Christ
- He is longsuffering

- The free gift of salvation is open to everyone
- The judgement His children deserved fell upon Jesus at the cross
- He was the just sacrifice
- And His blood can wash away all sins
- Even the sins of our enemies
- But we must show them love
- As He showed us love

- Consider this...

Matthew 5:46-47

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

- There is nothing extraordinary about the natural response
- Those who don't know Christ
- Who aren't new creatures in Him can do the same

- We must be different
- We are called to be different
- We are called to be like our Savior
- Who came willingly and died for His enemies
- He was crucified by His enemies
- Who would have the opportunity to be saved eternally by His blood

- It's hard to think of something more "like Christ" than loving our enemies
- He is doing it constantly
- Unwaveringly
- And is our example

- The difficulty of being like Him is not lost on us in this passage
- But it only gets harder...

Matthew 5:48

48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

- If we thought the first commandment was impossible, how about this one?
- Be perfect?
- Sounds impossible
- True

- We can't do the impossible
- But God can do the impossible in us
- Just as He can work His will inside of us to love our enemies
- He can perfect us in Him

- But none of this is possible on our own
- In our own strength
- If we are not walking in close fellowship with Him
- As His children

- Just a couple of simple mandates today
- Love your enemies
- And be perfect