

The Sermon on the Mount #8

Treatment of Personal Enemies Corrected (5:43-48)

Introduction:

1. Our Lord continued the body of His sermon by rescuing true righteousness from the perversion of Pharisees.
2. Having explained clearly that His intent was not to destroy the Law, He rightly applied the Law (5:17-20).
3. Having explained the importance of the least commandments and the totally inadequate righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, He exposed their wickedness in applying the Law of Moses for personal enemies.
4. The Lord Jesus continued His definition of kingdom righteousness by applying mercy to personal enemies.
5. The Jews by tradition justified personal hatred for anyone but their personal friends among the Jewish nation.
6. Self-righteousness, or presumed blamelessness before God, is always by applying God's laws to fit your life.
7. It is very important to see that Jesus opposed what had been said, not what Moses had written or intended.
8. Many foolishly suppose that this sermon was Jesus Christ correcting and improving the Old Testament.
9. Missing the lesson could cause you to think Jesus was an effeminate compromiser and tree-hugging weakling.
10. Ignorance and abuse of passages like this lead some to oppose Biblical separation, contention, and judgment.
11. Our Lord commended those who do and teach His least commandments, so I will apply Moses' Law of loving your neighbor to all personal enemies in order to exalt His righteousness (Matt 5:19).
12. Let the emphasis be instructive: our Lord dealt with relationship problems (5:21-26), sexual problems (5:27-32), speech problems (5:33-37), relationship problems (5:38-42), and more relationship problems (5:43-48)!
13. The Pharisees limited love of neighbor until no one was guilty, even if malicious toward others, if they were personal enemies; Jesus broadened the loving of neighbors until everyone is guilty! But He obeyed His interpretation, and that righteousness is yours by justification and representation (Rom 5:15-19; II Cor 5:21)!
14. All men have personal enemies, and you will give an account of your treatment of them on Judgment Day.
15. Let us tremble at God's word, search our hearts, commit our souls, and love all those that may be enemies.
16. Our generation needs this teaching of our Lord Jesus and its application more than any other generation, for the self-love, pride, trucebreaking, fierceness, and highmindedness lead to hating enemies (II Tim 3:1-5).
17. For this church to grow and prosper by God's definition of spiritual maturity and fruit, we must learn this lesson well and never forget it, for there will always be constant opportunities to practice it. Get ready!
18. This passage is excellent for learning how to study the Bible and arrive at the sense of apparent difficulties.
19. As the servant ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, I will defend the integrity and sense of His teaching here.
20. To get your attention, consider wisely the Good Samaritan that Jesus used for this topic (Luke 10:25-37).
21. To get your attention, consider wisely the opportunity to be the children of your heavenly Father (5:45).
22. To get your attention, consider wisely the conclusion of our Lord Jesus about being perfect as God (5:48).
23. You will now hear pure Christianity, which if you reject in hearing or doing, proves a vile and wicked heart.

The Text Explained

- A. Jesus identified the traditional interpretation Israel had been taught by scribes and Pharisees (5:43).
 1. He refers to what they had heard about love and hate, not what Moses had been written about it.
 2. To keep you from erring on this point, Jesus repeated Himself five times (5:21,27,33,38,43)!
 3. Our Lord did not identify or correct, "It is written," but rather what had been preached in Israel.
 4. He did not correct, change, or modify Leviticus 19:18,33-34 or Psalm 35:11-16; He corrected the wrong application that had been made by the Jews to allow hatred for personal enemies.
 5. He condemned the oral teaching and traditional interpretation the Jews had heard in synagogues.
 6. The scribes and Pharisees taught the tradition of the elders, "Ye have heard that it hath been said," which misapplied the Law of Moses by limiting love of neighbor only to Jewish friends.
 7. They had taken God's second commandment and limited it to allow hatred for personal enemies.
 8. Moses taught hatred and annihilation of enemies of God and the nation (Ex 17:14-16; Num 25:17-18; Deut 25:17-19; I Kgs 2:1-11; Ps 54:7; 59:10; 139:21-23). Jesus did not destroy that.
 9. Jesus Christ did not modify the law of God at all; He restored the law from Pharisee corruption.

10. There are foolish and weak men with the hearts of women that think this love applies to all enemies, so that any marking of sinners, excluding of them, and contending against them is sin.
 11. They foolishly conclude Jesus rejected all identification of enemies and judgment of them.
 12. By basing Bible study on the sound of words rather than the sense of words, they err greatly.
 13. They leap at His words here and those in the next lesson to become effeminate compromisers.
 14. The Mennonites, Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh Day Adventists are large cults that miss the lesson and slander Christianity with their pacifism, even with national safety at risk.
 15. There is nothing in these words to condemn or modify war to protect a nation, exclusion of sinning church members, firing of slothful employees, punishment of disobedient children, etc.
- B. Moses had definitely taught love for your neighbour, but he had not taught hatred for your enemies.
1. As in the previous lessons of this Sermon, our Lord corrected the Pharisee abuse of God's words.
 2. In fact, Moses had taught love of enemies in agreement with what is taught here (Ex 23:4-5).
 3. Jesus is not changing the Law of Moses to teach nonresistance and pacifism (Matthew 5:17-20).
 4. Jesus Christ has no more respect for Mahatma Gandhi than He does for Idi Amin or Pol Pot!
 5. Old Testament saints understood overlooking minor offences and leaving civil judgment for major offences to the magistrate (Ex 23:4-5; Lev 19:18; Pr 24:29; 19:11; 20:22; 25:21).
 6. Our Lord's command to "love your enemies" must be understood in its proper sense and place.
- C. First, our Lord's command for loving enemies must define the love that is being prescribed here.
1. If we do not rightly divide the word of truth, we will end up in shameful error (II Timothy 2:15).
 2. Are these words absolute or relative? Do we trust the sound of them? Or search for the sense?
 3. This cannot be the same love due to good men, otherwise that command loses sense (Titus 1:8).
 4. This cannot be the same love and goodness especially due the household of faith (Gal 6:10).
 5. This cannot be the love of approval and affection in the heart, for it is proscribed (Psalm 15:4).
 6. This cannot be the love saints have for each other in the church (Matthew 18:17; II Cor 2:6-8).
 7. This cannot contradict or condemn imprecatory prayers for judgment (II Tim 4:14; Rev 6:10).
 8. If we return to the Law of Moses, we find it is doing basic kindnesses to enemies (Ex 23:4-5).
 9. If we go to Solomon's Proverbs, it is doing basic kindnesses to enemies in need (Prov 25:21-22).
 10. If we read the context, we find it is granting blessings, doing good, and praying (Matthew 5:44).
 11. If we read the context, it is NOT the soul affection Jonathan and David had (Matthew 5:44).
 12. If we read the context, we find it is providing basic kindnesses and necessities (Matthew 5:45).
 13. If we read the context, it is NOT the giving of unlimited affection of salvation (Matthew 5:45).
 14. If we read the context, we find it is saluting others with private or public greetings (Matt 5:47).
 15. If we read the context, it is NOT the building of a personal and intimate friendship (Matt 5:47).
- D. Second, our Lord's command for loving enemies must define the enemies that are described here.
1. If we do not rightly divide the word of truth, we will end up in shameful error (II Timothy 2:15).
 2. Are these words absolute or relative? Do we trust the sound of them? Or search for the sense?
 3. These cannot be the enemies of God, because we are shown and taught to hate them (II Chron 19:2; Psalm 15:4; 31:6; 139:21-22; Revelation 2:2).
 4. If we return to the Law of Moses, we find it is those that hate us – personal enemies (Ex 23:4-5).
 5. If we look at Job's character, he described his enemy as the man that hated him (Job 31:29-30).
 6. If we look at David's life, it was those who slandered him and rewarded him evil (Ps 35:11-12).
 7. If we read the context, it is those who curse, hate, despitely use, and persecute you (Mat 5:44).

The Text Applied

- A. It will be our wisdom and righteousness to review ways that we break God's law about our enemies.
1. This is the highest standard of righteousness, for it requires treating personal enemies well.
 2. God's laws are exceeding broad: it is our duty to examine ourselves in their breadth (Ps 119:96).
 3. Given our Lord's expanded interpretation of murder, adultery, swearing, and retaliation in preceding lessons, we must apply His warning about enemies to all aspects of dealing with them.

4. We will consider a few other Holy Spirit examples of God's expanded definitions of sinning by mistreating enemies (Exodus 23:4-5; Leviticus 19:17-18; Luke 10:25-37; II Thess 3:14-15).
 5. Each and every one of the following sins violates directly or indirectly, "Love your enemies"!
 6. It is a horrible shame to our religion, when (a) we commit these sins ourselves, (b) allow others to commit them with relative impunity, (c) expose ourselves to temptations in this area, or (d) do not treat the offenders as heinously as we would a vindictive murderer (Pr 25:21-23).
- B. Everyone has enemies – those that curse him, hate him, spitefully use him, and persecute him.
1. They can be family members, a spouse, a cousin, a neighbor, a colleague, or a church member.
 2. They are the ones you are tempted to feel anger, envy, hatred, or revenge toward. They are the ones you are tempted to rejoice over when they encounter difficulties or troubles in their lives.
 3. Consider also racial, national, cultural, educational, or economic differences, and other artificial standards by which we are prone to mark men as being friends or enemies.
 4. It is your duty before God to identify your enemies and love them, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them.
- C. First, distinguish between God's enemies and yours, which makes a very significant difference.
1. Your enemies are those that hate you, curse you, snub you, spitefully use and persecute you on a personal basis, without regard for their enmity or hatred for God or the gospel.
 2. The issue between you and them are minor differences unrelated to the worship of Jesus Christ.
 3. Or the issue is caused by your worship of Jesus Christ, but the persecution is minor and personal.
 4. You may and must hate God's enemies (II Chronicles 19:2; Psalm 15:4; 139:21-22; James 4:4).
- D. Second, distinguish between your minor personal enemies and major enemies threatening your life.
1. David finally prayed against his personal enemies (Ps 35:1-10,17-28), though he had prayed for them and grieved for them during the early stages of their animosity (Ps 35:11-16).
 2. Stephen showed the power of the Holy Spirit in forgiving the enemies stoning him (Acts 7:60).
 3. But David prayed often against his enemies (Ps 3:7; 6:10; 18:37,40; 54:5; 59:10; 92:11; 143:12).
 4. One of the factors here is letting God be the Avenger rather than avenging yourself (Rom 12:19).
 5. Even Jesus told His enemies on trial what they were going to experience in 40 years (Mat 26:64).
- E. Third, distinguish between soul affection and basic kindness as the definition for loving enemies.
1. God does not have soul affection for His enemies; He merely sends sunshine and rain on them.
 2. The context describes blessing, doing good, and prayer, not bosom buddies of deep affection.
 3. The Good Samaritan did not necessarily build a permanent relationship, but he provided care.
 4. The issue is providing food when hungry and water when thirsty, not dining out every week!
 5. Loving your enemies is treating them with basic kindness, returning blessings for their curses, praying for them in spite of their treatment of you, and helping them when they are in trouble.
- F. You cannot be glad when a personally enemy is harmed (Job 31:29-30; Ps 35:13-14; Pr 24:17-18), though you may be glad when the enemies of God are harmed (Ps 58:1-11).
- G. When you see your enemy in need, you help (Exodus 23:4-5; Prov 25:21-22; Luke 10:25-37).
- H. Even those excluded are not to be treated harshly as the world treats enemies (II Thess 3:14-15).
- I. There is no room for revenge, but rather kindness to personal enemies (Pr 25:21-22; Rom 12:17-21).
- J. This does not allow for hate or grudges in your heart (Lev 19:17-18; I Cor 13:4-7; James 5:9).
- K. This includes rebuking a neighbor for sin, because to not do so is sin against him (Lev 19:18).
- L. Do you pray for your enemies? This is one of the clearest marks of a righteous man.
- M. If you know your enemy needs something, do you go out of your way to provide it for him?
- N. If you know your enemy is hurt and suffering, do you grieve and suffer with and for him?
- O. Are you able and willing to entertain your enemies? See ... it goes beyond bare prayer and wishes!
- P. This is how we melt or grieve our enemies' hearts by kindness (Proverbs 25:22; Romans 12:20).
- Q. This is how we overcome evil with good ... may good win the day (Romans 12:21; I Peter 3:8-16)!
- R. This is how we earn the Lord's reward by showing His character and grace (Pr 25:22; I Pet 3:8-11).

- S. Are you thankful for enemies (like a froward boss)? Without them we can do nothing worthy of praise and show ourselves His children (Matt 5:43-48; II Cor 12:10; I Pet 2:18-22).
- T. Coals of fire are the means by which metals are tried ... you can discover gold by your kindness or harden a heart into adamant flint (Proverbs 25:21-22; Romans 12:17-21)!

Conclusion:

1. Do not despise murderers in your thinking, unless you have learned to graciously love your personal enemies.
2. Do not think highly of yourself in God's sight, until you are fully free from all hate and grudges to enemies.
3. Do not presume that your worship of God is accepted, when you return evil to your personal enemies.
4. Have holy hatred for any bitterness, grudge, or slighting of any other person. Why are you doing it? Revenge?
5. Consider the great Day of Judgment, when you shall give an account for every wicked thought, retaliatory word or action, and your lack of forgiveness, which you will so much desire from the great and dreadful God.

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "[Righteous Indignation](#)," shows anger against sin and God's enemies but love for personal enemies.
2. The Proverb commentary, "[Proverbs 25:21](#)," which explains the meaning of feeding your enemy when he is hungry.
3. The Proverb commentary, "[Proverbs 25:22](#)," which explains the meaning of heaping coals of fire on an enemy's head.