

Matthew 5:43-48: You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Intro: *Women Who Risk: Secret Agents For Jesus In The Muslim World* by Tom and Joann Doyle: A Muslim woman in Syria was forced to marry a man she was not attracted to at all. Then he beat her almost every other day and spent lavish amounts of money to have 66 other women come and sleep with him while his wife was in the same house - and then brag to her about his many sexual encounters. He did all of this evil because the Quran and Muhammad's life was his excuse.

She utterly hated him. He was repulsive to her, and she even planned to kill him by poisoning him. But God . . . Jesus eventually powerfully came into his life and saved his soul. He repented of his sins and began to love his wife as Christ loved the church. At first she continued to hate him and hold on to her unforgiveness. But then Christ worked in her life and saved her as well.

She says: "You see how amazing my husband is now. Thankfully, I was able to forgive Mohammad [her husband] - but only because I experienced forgiveness first. In my own strength, I could not control the bitterness inside. I could not forgive him. Jesus gave me the power to forgive . . . when Jesus transformed him, the joy on his face and the kindness in his heart made him handsome. I still cannot believe he's the same man I once loathed."

Because they left Islam and became Christians, their family took their businesses, and they lost millions of dollars. Their family also wants them dead and has sent people to try to kill them. Yet, they are willing and ready to die for Jesus because He is worthy! And they are loving their family who are trying to kill them – calling them, sharing the Gospel with them, and praying for them.

Matthew 5:20: For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (The King is teaching us how to live in His Kingdom!)

Two Weeks Ago: Jesus taught us that to follow Him we must deny ourselves. We must have a heart of submission, a heart of cooperation, & a heart of death to autonomy, death to self, death to our rights for the sake of others, for our witness to others, & for the glory of God. As followers of Jesus, we are to be so confident in God & satisfied in God that we know God will bring justice to all wrongs, God will protect us, God will provide clothing & everything else for us, God will give us strength to endure, God will help us and provide for us – always, perfectly!

Matthew 16:24-25: If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

This Week: Jesus goes further! Don't merely deny yourself & die to self & don't hit back: But love your enemies.

JMac: Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors, manifest your sonship, exceed your fellow men, & imitate your God.

1. The Pharisaical Perversion Of God's Law That Excuses Or Even Commands Hatred

Matthew 5:43: You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'

a. God's law teaches us to love our enemies: Leviticus 19:18: you shall love your neighbor as yourself - **Job 31:29-30:** If I have rejoiced at my enemy's misfortune or gloated over the trouble that came to him - I have not allowed my mouth to sin by invoking a curse against his life

- **Exodus 23:4-5:** If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.

- **Proverbs 25:21:** If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink

b. The Pharisees twisted Old Testament truth so that they could hate others: 1) God did command the Israelites to destroy all people living in Canaan: Deuteronomy 20:16-18: But in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, ¹⁷ but you shall devote them to complete destruction, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the LORD your God has commanded, ¹⁸ that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices that they have done for their gods, and so you sin against the LORD your God.

That command was for a specific people (Israelites entering the promised land) – Not us!

That command was for a specific time (The time of establishing the promise land) Not our time!

That command was for specific purposes (None of our purposes now!):

a. To Punish sin: M. Kruger: their sins were egregious. God drove them out of the land primarily because their practices were “detestable” in his sight: gross idolatry, sorcerers and mediums, sexual perversions, even sacrificing their own children to the gods. Despite these practices, God had been incredibly patient with Canaan’s inhabitants for generation after generation, dating back even to Abraham’s time. Nevertheless, God’s patience had expired.

b. To Protect His people: God cleared out the evils of the land so these vile sins would not ensnare His people.

c. To Provide for His people: God kept His promise to give His people the land. God is sovereign!

d. To Point to the final judgment: This judgment points to the final judgment in which God will judge all sinners!

2) God gave Israel Imprecatory Psalms: Psalm 139:19-22: Oh that **you would slay the wicked, O God!** O men of blood, depart from me! ²⁰ **They speak against you** with malicious intent; your enemies **take your name in vain!**

²¹ Do I not hate those **who hate you**, O LORD? And do I not loathe those **who rise up against you?** ²² I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies. (God avenges; Focus on God’s glory, not my personal offense)

Yes, we must love our enemies. God loves His enemies, but He will also punish His enemies if they do not repent.

Jesus loved His enemies, but He also pronounced woes toward them (the Pharisees) and called them a brood of vipers (Matthew 23). Jesus also made a whip of cords and drove the money changers from the temple.

John Day (A Cry For Justice): By Christ's own witness and example, this enemy-love is the attitude of readiness to show sustained and indiscriminate kindness. If, however, the enemy's cup of iniquity has become full to overflowing, this love is overtaken by the demands of justice and divine vengeance.

The Pharisees and Scribes twisted these truths (God’s judgment on His enemies and imprecatory Psalms) as an excuse to hate people they should have loved and served. Like the Gentiles and the foreigner:

Leviticus 19:34: You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 23:7: You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother.

John Day: Between these Psalms and the New Testament ethic there exists, indeed, a degree of difference in emphasis. In the New Testament, less stress is placed on imprecation and the enactment of temporal judgments, while more frequent and explicit calls are made for kindness in anticipation of the [final] judgment . . . Steadfast endurance under unjust suffering for the sake of Christ and after the pattern of Christ, entrusting both temporal and [final] judgment to God, becomes a more predominant theme in the New Testament.

2. Jesus' Command: Love Your Enemies And Pray For Them

Matthew 5:44: But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you

Love is the climax: First and second greatest commandments!

John 13:35: By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Love: (Piper): An overflow of joy in God that gladly meets the needs of others.

We are to desire good for our enemies and take sacrificial action to make sure good comes to our enemies. Pray for your enemies and those who persecute you! We ultimately want them to be saved and delivered from their sin!

David: Psalm 35:11-14: Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. ¹² They repay me evil for good; my soul is bereft. ¹³ But I, when they were sick - I wore sackcloth; I afflicted myself with fasting; I prayed with head bowed on my chest. ¹⁴ I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother; as one who laments his mother, I bowed down in mourning.

Jesus: Luke 23:34: And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

John Stott: Jesus seems to have prayed for his tormentors actually while the iron spikes were being driven through his hands and feet . . . If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence our Lord's prayer for his enemies, what pain, pride, prejudice, or sloth could justify the silencing of ours? **(Do you pray for those who persecute you?)**

Women Who Risk, Doyle: A young woman in Jordan who converted from Islam to Christ shared her new faith on social media and got these responses: "Infidel!" "I hate you!" "You deserve to die!"

Then she told her mom about her conversion, and her mom punched her in the face so hard it knocked her to the floor. Then her mom threatened to call her cousins and have them come beat some sense into her. Her response: "Nori pulled herself from off the floor, then walked past her mother. At the kitchen door she turned and smiled politely. Then she stumbled to her room, closed the door, and locked it . . . Nori dropped to her knees, forgave her mom, and opened the Bible."

Her mom continued to yell at her, curse at her, and even refuse to make her dinner, telling her that she hoped her daughter starved to death. But each time, Nori would respond with love and kindness and tell her mother that she still loved her.

Nori started a social media page to tell others in the Muslim world about Jesus. She had over 1,000 friends on her page and answered their questions every night. To her surprise, her own mother got on her page (she used a different name) and started asking her questions about Jesus because of the huge change that she saw in her own daughter's life! It was her daughter's love toward her that helped bring her to seek Jesus!

As her own daughter kept answering her questions about Jesus and the Gospel (even though she didn't know it was her daughter answering her questions!), eventually she also was converted to Christ, and now they live for Jesus together. This is an amazing story! God's grace is amazing!

3. Love Your Enemies So That You May Be Sons Of Your Father In Heaven

Matthew 5:44-45: But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

This is not about loving your enemies to earn, perform, or pay your way to heaven, but it's about loving your enemies to give evidence & prove that you already have been given the grace to enter heaven by faith alone in

Christ alone. But if you have trusted Christ by faith alone, you will act like sons of the Father! You will look like your Father who is in heaven! This is an exhortation to be what you already are: you are sons, now act like it!

Romans 8:23: we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

4. Love Your Enemies Because Your Father Loves His Enemies

Matthew 5:45: For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

God loves evil and unjust people (unbelievers) and good and just people (believers) by providing sun and rain!

If God didn't love His enemies, there would be no Gospel!

Ephesians 2:1-5: And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved

5. The Father's Love Is Radically Different From The Love Of The World

Matthew 5:46-47: For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

a. Loving people who love you is normal and ordinary: Even tax collectors do this! Sinners do this!

b. Greeting your own brothers is normal and ordinary: Even Gentiles do this! Pagan, godless sinners do this!

c. If you know, trust, and follow Jesus, you are not normal and ordinary: 1 Corinthians 3:4: For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

Matthew Henry: Christianity is more than humanity. We know more than others. We talk more the things of God than others. We profess more than others. We have been promised more than others. God has done more for us and therefore He justly expects more from us than of others. He calls on us to love the unlovable.

John Stott: Everybody believes in love. But not love for those who've injured us. (Man hugging police officer)

d. There is a reward for you: Matthew 5:11-12: Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven . . . (Reward: Mentioned 7 more times in chapter 6)

6. Be Perfect Like Your Father

Matthew 5:48: You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to labor and fight and strive and seek to be like our heavenly Father!

Michael Wilkins: Scripture is a reflection of God himself as he has made his will and character known to his people. As Christians seek to live in conformity to Scripture, they are in fact pursuing the very perfection of God.

D. A. Carson: Followers of Jesus should reflect God’s character. This must not encourage us to conclude that Jesus teaches that unqualified perfection is already possible for his disciples. He teaches them to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy and to pray “Forgive us our debts”. But the perfection of the Father, the true [final] goal of the law, is what all disciples of Jesus pursue.

J. Pennington: Perfect means whole, complete, having integrity, mature. Wholly dedicated, heart obedience!

How are you doing, loving those who hate you, those who persecute you, and those who are your enemy?

GOSPEL: Piper: The king: “I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” Matthew 18:32–33

The forgiveness of 200,000 years’ wages will have an effect on the way we treat others.

Rescue Illustration: Parents, if your child was drowning in the ocean, would you risk your life to save them? Think of your greatest enemy on earth, hurt you, hates you, abused you: would you save them?

Romans 5:6-8: For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person - though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die - ⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Jesus loved His enemies like no one ever loved – He died for them! He prayed for them! He Who made the sun rise on the same evil people who would crucify Him, suffered under the darkness of the sun gone dark at noon.

He Who gives rain that the just & unjust might drink & quench their thirst cried out “I thirst!” so that we might be satisfied forever! Jesus went out of His way to greet His enemies by leaving heaven & coming to die.

Jesus is the only One Who was, is, & always will be perfect like His heavenly Father is perfect! He died, & **He rose** that we might be like Him! **Trust in Him by faith alone!**

JMac: Love your enemies, pray for your persecutors, manifest your sonship, exceed your fellow men, & imitate your God.

Christ Loved His Enemies Though We Hate
And Turned From God Like Reprobate
In This Is Love He’d Demonstrate
The Wrath Of God In Fullest Weight
Would Fall On Christ To Devastate
He Died For Sinners Rose Up Great

To Change Our Hearts And Kill Our Hate
By Faith Alone New Life Create
And In His Love We Satisfiate
Now Love Like Him Who’d Liberate
Our Perfect Father Imitate
Who Loves The Good And Bad Who Hate!