

Sunday, August 23, 2020 am

TEACHINGS OF JESUS (17)
Sermon on the Mount (16)
Who Do You Love?
Matthew 5:43-48

Today we continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount and the examples of how our righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. We have noted 5 of 6 thus far. Today we conclude this section with most extreme of these examples, and also at the foundation of all of them and ALL of the teachings of Jesus – it addresses who and how we should love.

I. “You Have heard that it was said...”

- a. You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. “
- b. **What the LOM actually taught** – Leviticus 19:18. *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*
- c. To my knowledge this is the ONLY time the expression “love your neighbor” is found in the LOM. Thought it is taught in other places.
NEVER do find the expression, “Hate your enemies”.
- d. **What the Jewish leaders taught**
 - i. It was acceptable to hate your enemies. They might have appealed to several passage and ideas from the Old Law (cf. Deuteronomy 23:3-6) where God said you were not permit certain nations to enter into their assembly.
At other times they were called upon to utterly destroy enemies.
And some have appealed to the “imprecatory” psalms that call a curse against enemies.
BUT each of these can be addressed – and AGAIN I note, NOWHERE does the LOM teach hating your enemies.
In fact there are passages and examples to the contrary – consider Jonah being sent to Nineveh, Exodus 23:4-5, *“If you meet your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, and you would refrain from helping it, you shall surely help him with it.”*
 - ii. They redefined who you neighbor was – it is clear that the Jews despised Gentiles and Samaritans. It is likely Jews restricted the definition of neighbor to perhaps their own nation (or tribe), or even narrower to their family and close friends, or perhaps they may have placed a geographical barrier such as a sabbath’s journey, or maybe their village.
Luke 10:29 finds a lawyer responding to this being the second greatest commandment (2nd only to loving God). He, *“wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”*
Jesus responded with the parable of the Good Samaritan.
And that accords with the answer Jesus gives on this occasion.

II. “But I say to you...”

- a. **A fourfold instruction (NKJV)**
 - i. **Love your enemies** – Again Exodus 23:4-5.
The word for love here is the Greek agape – which is a Christian love that cares enough to sacrifice for what is best.
It is crucial we understand this love – Matthew 22:37-40 – ALL the commandments hinge on that. 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 describes how far this love will go – giving us its characteristics.
This is the love that God had for us (John 3:16) and that Jesus has in laying down His life for

us (John 15:13)

It is His love for us that prompts us to love Him as we ought to – 1 John 4:19.

Finally, as we have noted continually, this love governs EVERY relationship we have as Christians – our love toward God, Jesus, our brethren, our neighbors AND our enemies.

And it is not mere toleration of our enemies – it is going the extra mile.

It includes:

- ii. **Bless those who curse you** – *not found in some later translations (NASB, ESV, ASV, etc. – lacking in earlier mss, but found in the parallel - Luke 6:27-28).
The word **bless** means to speak kindly of or to someone. Biblically it is defined as “to invoke divine favor upon someone”. Again, consider the example of Jesus and Stephen as they were being put to death. It is also found in Romans 12:14 which says, *Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*
1 Corinthians 4:12, Paul and the apostles labored, “*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted we endure, being defamed, we entreat...*”
It is praying for their well-being. Especially if they are somehow suffering affliction.
 - iii. **Do good to those who hate you** – rather than acting in kind against our enemies (or perceived enemies), we treat them with kindness and do good to and for them.
Romans 12:17-21 – explains some of what this involves.
AGAIN, this is based upon our genuine love for them, not some ulterior motive (i.e. “Kill them with kindness so that they feel guilty”. If treating them kindly makes them feel guilty and remorseful – GREAT, but don’t be spiteful in doing good.)
 - iv. **Pray for those who spitefully use you** – can you think of a better example than Jesus while being crucified? (Luke 23:34) Or even Stephen as he was being stoned to death? (Acts 7:60)
NOTE: Jesus is NOT saying to pray curses upon them (imprecatory), in hatred to pray against them. Clearly Jesus is emphasizing you pray for their wellbeing.
There is something about earnest prayer – how you pray for someone and continue to despise them at the same time?
Our prayers for such may be praying for ourselves – that we maintain a proper attitude and wisdom in dealing with them, and that they will repent and do what is right.
 - v. Why do we do these things? BECAUSE we are different!
This disposition is so different from the world – this world is filled with bitterness and hatred – that is what we are seeing right now – people behaving badly and selfishly – UNGODLY! People regularly curse one another and curse AT each other. They hurl insults, hateful language, profanities and angry words at those who cross them, sometimes in the least little way. They judge motives and always assume the worst. Their hateful attitude results in hateful actions.
Be reminded as Christians of Ephesians 4:31-32 – “*let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER...*”
- b. So WHY are we different? **Because we are Christians.**
- i. **That you may be sons of your Father in heaven** (45a) – one of the ways Christians are described is as children of God – we belong to Him. We are fellow-heirs of His kingdom. WHAT a blessing that is (1 John 3:1 – “*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God...*”)
NOTE: What Jesus said is conditional - you treat your enemies right so that God will call you His children in heaven. THINK ABOUT THAT!
 - ii. **He is benevolent to all** (45b)– Jesus makes the point that God gives us the sun and rain regardless of our goodness or evil. Everyone benefits from the good things of nature.
Consider also, how God has loved us. How many of us deserve His mercy and grace? How many of us deserve His love and forgiveness? But He offers it freely to anyone who will

surrender to Him – Romans 5:6-10.

If God can do good for His enemies and the ungodly, so can we.

- iii. **We are different** (vs. 46-47) – even “tax collectors” (their “enemies”) love their families and those who love them, and they greet their brethren (family) kindly.

So what makes you different if you act the same as the world and treat hatefully those who you DETERMINE to be your enemies and those who have wronged you?

- c. **Vs. 48 – the motivation** – “Therefore you shall be **perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is **perfect**.” –

One final observation Jesus makes. This is our ultimate goal. We are to strive to be like God in all that we do (Not that we are God or will EVER be God) – we learn from Him how to love all mankind and look out for their best interest, even – or should I say ESPECIALLY our enemies! We learn to be merciful, kind, patient, and forgiving – even as we need Him to be such toward us.

Think about how much better the world would be if we would all do that.

Ephesians 5:1, *Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.*

NOTE: The word for “perfect” can mean complete or mature, but is that how we ought to describe the perfection of God? He is so much more. I believe here the word implies PERFECT – a goal we will very likely NEVER achieve in this life, but we ought to be working toward that end and the more we mature the CLOSER we get to that goal (cf. 2 Peter 1:5-11).

The point of all this: We need to be different as followers of God. We need to be better! We need to have better attitudes, better self-control, better respect, better morals, integrity and so many other things that just make us BETTER. Things that make us ACT LIKE CHRISTIANS. That is HOW your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. Does it? Think about it!