

Matthew 5:43–48

Loving Enemies Like Father Does

Saturday, February 17, 2024 • Read Matthew 5:43–48

Questions from the Scripture text: What have they heard (v43)? What was said? Who says different (v44)? Especially with respect to whom—what are His disciples to do to their enemies? What to those who curse them? What to those who hate them? What for those who spitefully use them and persecute them? What would this show them to be (v45)? Of Whom? Whose is the sun? Upon whom does He make it to rise? Upon whom does He send life-giving rain? What point does He make about loving those who love them in v46? And what point about greeting only friends (v47)? Why must they come to a maturity and fullness of righteousness that leaves nothing out (v48)?

What piece of reflecting our Father's character must not be missing in the children of God? Matthew 5:43–48 prepares us for the morning sermon on the Lord's Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **sons of the heavenly Father must be like Him in loving their enemies.**

Coming at the conclusion to this section of the sermon, it seems that most scribes taught (or, at least, most Jews took away from the teaching) the statement in v43 as a summary of biblical teaching. Not only had the scribes justified a vindictive spirit (v38), they had justified outright hatred of enemies (v43).

The morality that comes from God says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and, love your neighbor as yourself" (cf. Mt 22:37–40). But this statement left off "as yourself," not doing justice even to the neighbor. And it added "hate your enemy." Could this be a twisting of Ps 139:21–22? It is difficult to find a text that could be the source of their teaching, and the difficulty indicates just how twisted this was.

But what if God had done this to all of His enemies? There would be no redeemed at all. There would be no children who were now learning to call Him Father. The language in v45a is really new with the Lord Jesus. The Jews viewed themselves as children of Abraham (cf. 3:9; Jn 8:33). They did not have grounds, apart from union with Christ, to think of themselves individually as sons of a heavenly Father. How great is the love of God, Who makes His enemies into sons, at the cost of the humiliation and atoning crucifixion of His only-begotten Son!

And not only has God taken to Himself enemies as sons, but He even continues to pour out goodness even on those who are still enemies. The sun is His (!) sun, and He makes it to rise upon them—giving light and warmth and life, and marking for them each new day that they don't deserve. And He makes His life-giving, refreshing rain to fall upon them as well.

God's adoption makes a difference. He makes children by giving them life, uniting them to His Son through faith, and indwelling them with His Spirit. Could it really be that this makes no difference between them and others? We must not read His Word like the scribes did—affirming and excusing an approach to morality that the rest of the world could agree with it. No, we must read it as from our Father and seeking to make us to be more like our Father.

Christ, of course, is the perfect example of all that He commands in v44. We were His enemies, and He loved us and died for us (cf. Rom 5:6–10). His law commanded us to do good to those who hate us (Ex 23:4–5). His psalter modeled prayer for those who condemn us (cf. Ps 35:11–14; 109:4). And He is, again, the clearest example of this (cf. Lk 23:34), and produces it in those whom He redeems (cf. Ac 7:60; Rom 10:1).

As long as our hearts do not go out to those who are enemies, curse us, hate us, and abuse us, there will be something missing from our godly character. There will be a gap in the family resemblance to our heavenly Father. But, if Christ has made us sons of God (cf. v9), then we must come into the fullness of reflecting the fullness of our heavenly Father's moral character (v48). God grant us, in His Son, by His Spirit, to love even our enemies and so show the difference that the triune God makes in our lives.

What enemies do you find it hardest to love? How could you be able to love them? Why must you grow to love them? What would this loving of them look like? Who has loved you this way? How does loving your enemies also serve Him?

Sample prayer: Our gracious God and our heavenly Father, thank You for taking us to be Your children through the sacrifice of Your only-begotten Son. Grant that by Your Spirit, we would act as Your children, in conformity with Your Son, by loving our enemies as well, we ask through Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP109A "God of My Praise" or TPH464 "The Beatitudes"

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Matthew 5 verses 43-48. These are God's words. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor. And hate your enemy. 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.

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. For, if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same.

And if you greet your brethren, only, what do you do more than others? To not even the tax collectors do so. Therefore, you shall be perfect. Just as your father in Heaven. Is perfect.

Men so far, the reading of God. Inspired and answered towards. Here, Jesus comes to. Uh, climax of The difference between The righteousness of. Uh, that describes and Pharisees defined, according to the law. Um, and the right distance that Jesus defined, according to the law, and of course, The scribes and Pharisees were misusing and abusing.

Uh, the law. The law said you shall love your neighbor as yourself. But you notice that. Uh, have not only cut off the as yourself here. But they have taken the word neighbor and said, aha, you see? If it's your neighbor, you're supposed to love him. But if it's your enemy, Well then obviously you're supposed to hate him.

This of course, is opposite the law of God in many places. Uh, where he taught them for instance to Love strangers in the same way. That they were to love their neighbor. But this was the way that Um, that they were accustomed to thinking you remember, Uh, the man who Answered.

Uh, rightly to Jesus. I love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus told him that that was correct. Uh, Seeking to justify himself. Said, who is my neighbor? And, That is an indication that there were those whom he was loving and then there were those whom he was hating.

And yet God's law written on his heart, even Was convicting him. And so he was To justify himself. Uh but we have a God who has loved his enemies. This is the great way in which God's love has been demonstrated. That while we were still sinners Christ died for us, He died for.

Uh, the ungodly and Christ died for us while we Under God's Wrath. Uh, enemies of God. Uh, then how much more shall we be saved once we have been Adopted.

And so, the The place to look to see. Uh, how we Uh, to keep God's law. Is in God himself. God, the father had already given indication of his goodness to enemies. The sun isn't just some independent agent. Verse 45 says it's his son. Um, the rain doesn't Fall merely by chemical processes or meteorological processes.

He sends the rain. So verse 45 doesn't just say the sun rises on the evil and the good and the rain falls on the just and unjust. But He makes his sun rise. He makes his rain fall. On, and you see, Uh, the Lord. Uh, for people who hate him, a world, full of people who hate him every day.

Then he raises his own son, it belongs to him. And he makes it to shine on them and give life and light. And he brings them the rain. Uh in season, he causes it to refresh the ground and bring life to the Earth. Provide for their drink. And so we see.

That God who rightfully has a right? To hate, he is angry with the wicked every day. And there's a proper way in which, in which we say that God hates. The wicked, they are under his wrath. But, They're not under our wrath. We are not God. We are not the Avenger.

We aren't their creator. And so God, who rightly, Um, pours out his wrath. Or God who rightly has? Wrath against them is loving them, even now waiting for the right time and way of his Vengeance. And so if God himself is waiting, To pour his right Vengeance on them.

How much more should we? Be patient for God. Let Vengeance belong to him. The timing of it, the manner of it, the execution of it that all belongs to God, doesn't it? And we would be. Arrogant fools like the devil. If we put ourselves and in the place of God and hated our enemies.

Now, even as we sing in the psalm, we sing very soberly of the justice of God. What is right? And just towards Towards Sinners towards those who hate him. Uh, and there is a right way then. Of singing, even the end from the end of Psalm 139, Do I not hate those who hate you?

I hate them with perfect hatred. Remembering that we ourselves were once those Who hated God and that there is still, that which remains in us, that is hateful towards God. And certainly, we ought to hate that, uh, hate that and ourselves. And so Jesus. Who is literally the embodiment of not?

Just general, love, common Grace, love, even for the reprobate. Like we think and hear about and in verse 45 but Jesus is the embodiment of special Grace love where God loved his enemies gave himself for them and changed. From enemies, even into children. And so we remember that he is the Who gave the law to begin with.

This is what he had done already. Um, Uh, not having given himself for them, but Uh, when he gathered them. Uh, to himself and he gathered Israel to himself. He was loving and redeeming and saving those who had hated him and cursed him. And so we see the great difference.

Between the scribes and the Pharisees who. Used their abusive exegesis to justify themselves. Than hating their enemy. The great difference between them and the Lord Jesus. Who is here, literally. Out of love for his enemies. Um, And redeeming. From among his enemies. And he says, 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. Now, it's not difficult to figure out what you're supposed to do. Um, with an enemy. Or with someone who curses you. Or with someone who hates you.

Or with someone who spitefully uses you And persecutes you. Some of you have been in those situations. And there have been people even in the church. Spitefully used you. And it feels difficult to figure it out at the time. But actually the Bible is pretty clear here, it's not.

Um It's not difficult to figure out, it's just impossible to do. But praise God. We have not only The clarity of what to do. If someone's your enemy. What are you supposed to do with them? Love them. Or someone curses you? What are you supposed to do with them?

Plus. If someone hates you, what are you supposed to do for them? To good to them. If someone spitefully uses you or persecutes you what are you supposed to do? You pray for? And so it's kind of like, Um, when Mom gives you a command, It's not difficult to figure out what you should do.

Although you may feel like it's difficult in the moment, no Mom gave you a command, you should do it obey your parents and the Lord honor your father. Uh, and your mother. And so we know just what we should do. And praise God. This can only be done. And he gives this to us very similarly, To the children of bigger parents children obey your parents.

The Lord. And so he takes He takes this. Beatitude. Uh, which Uh, pronounced in verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers For they shall be called sons of God. And now, He gives them the right to call God. Uh, father. Just as he said back. Uh, verse 16. Glorify your father in Heaven.

Uh so he says here, verse 45, that you may be sons of your father in Heaven. And if you are children, Of God with him as your heavenly father. Then you must be perfect. As your father in Heaven is perfect. The sum of, or one of the ways that the Bible summarized the law.

Was be holy. Um, for I am Holy you must be holy for Yahweh. Your God is Holy Well, now Yahweh, our God has in his son, whom he gave in love And the son who gave himself in love, And it gives us his spirit and love and the spirit who comes and Pours out the love of God in our hearts.

Uh, in It's not just Yahweh. Your God is Holy. It's your father in Heaven is perfect. And so, If we. Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. If that was the law. Uh, then our father in Heaven would have violated the law. Because he has loved his enemies. It is just for him to hate and pour out wrath upon his enemies.

But he in the greatness of his goodness. Has made Justice and mercy to come together in Jesus Christ, and he is even loved his enemies. And so we see Uh, our father in Heaven. And his love for his enemies and we are to love our enemies. And leave wrath to him.

Since that belongs to him in the first place. And since he for the sake of his love, Is currently. Delaying the completion of his wrath. So, let us learn. Uh, to read. Uh, the scripture is Jesus reads the scriptures. Jesus teaches it to us. And then especially let us take advantage.

Of having Christ himself as the perfect example of how to keep the law. That in the way Christ is we may be able to see more clearly What our father is like. And surely. Uh, we have not just a father who makes a sunrise. And and set on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

But for many evil and unjust God has sent his son into the world of love. And, Uh, we Uh, not being able to convert them. But, Being able to love them and bless them. Be good to them and pray for them. And leave unto God, what belongs to him?

Whether it is to convert them for which we'll praise him. And, And we will Rejoice. Or. Whether the Lord does finally. Pour out wrath upon them. And we who have loved him and who have loved them in imitating him. Uh, will confess how much more just That wrath is at the last.

That they who have so been loved by God? And who have so been loved by The Godly. Uh, wood. Hate him and hate us. Uh and and God's justice, then and Vengeance in that Justice. Uh, shall of the last be praised, all the more in doing. So he says, Romans 12.

You Heap burning coals. Upon their heads. This too, in the psalm that we'll be singing. We see how the psalmist kept loving them, they responded to his love of hatred. And they kept accusing him and he responded to their accusations with prayer. And yet, singing as God's anointed praying as God's anointed, He gives us this song to sing.

About the ones for whom we are praying and the ones whom we are loving, And the Wrath that shall come upon them at the last If the Lord does not Grant unto,

Repentance. And how marvelous? That we who deserved the same. He would give repentance. And so we should sing with.

Solemnity. Realizing what is coming up on them? Uh, and yet holding to clinging to the Justice, Of God. Let's pray.

Our Father in Heaven. We pray that you Help us to see. Continue continually. Are good to. Who are upon the Earth. And especially how. Good, you are to those enemies from among whom you have saved. Particularly the ones that you are saving. That particular yourselves. We realize, oh, Lord now We remember that.

We have acted sinfully and hatefully towards you and yet. Uh, you gave your son, you sent him into the world. Not to condemn the world, but the world's rem Might be saved. And so we pray that you would make us to be great. Lovers of our enemies. And that you would make us.

To do good to them. And to bless them to pray for them.

We don't have it in ourselves, Lord. Whenever we read, think about this, we even find March in our flesh rising up against it. But we see. So clearly that this is what Jesus has done for us for whom he died. And so, please help us by your spirit and make us more.

Like your son or savior. Whom you in whom you have revealed yourself to us. So that we too may be children. Well, who bring you glory? By being conformed to Christ by being Imitations. Let me ask it on his name. Amen.