

## Love your Enemies Matthew 5:43-45

**43 “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, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 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.**

**43 “You have heard that it was said,**

Jesus’ interpretation is going to \_\_\_\_\_ exactly what God had said, not changing the law one bit, but also \_\_\_\_\_ the Pharisees false teaching

**‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’**

While it’s certainly true that the Old Testament says, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev 19:18). The Pharisees admonition to “hate your enemy” is found \_\_\_\_\_ in the Old Testament. There are many admonitions in the Old Testament NOT to hate. Lev 19:17 says **17 ‘You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may certainly rebuke your neighbor, but you are not to incur sin because of him.** (Leviticus 19:17). The Israelites were commanded even to love the stranger among them in Lev 19:35 saying **34 The stranger who resides with you shall be to 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.** And instead of telling people to hate their enemies, the Law required them to show \_\_\_\_\_ to enemies and assist them when they fall into difficulty as in Exodus 23:5, **5 If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall not leave it helpless for its owner; you must arrange the load with him.** In fact, Proverbs 24:17 says, **“Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles”** (Proverbs 24:17). Jesus leaves the Pharisees no excuse for their false teaching, brings a correction and rebuke to them in verse 44

**44 But I say to you, love your enemies,**

So Jesus sets up a contrast between what the Pharisees have been teaching, and God’s actual moral \_\_\_\_\_ of the people of God. Now, let’s get one thing straight—you’d rather love \_\_\_\_\_ else, rather than your enemy. And notice that it says enemies (\_\_\_\_\_).

That means we are to love \_\_\_\_\_ our enemies, even those who make it the most difficult to love them.

The word love used here is agape, and it means “generous, warm, costly self-sacrifice for another’s good.” Self-interest cannot be our \_\_\_\_\_ motivation, if we are to love our enemies! This is an even higher calling than our verses last week. It’s one of the pinnacles of what it \_\_\_\_\_ to die to self, and follow Jesus. Not only are we to not strike back, but we are to \_\_\_\_\_ in return. When we do this, we (Prov. 25:22) **22 For you will heap burning coals on his head,** we force our enemy to try to figure out why we are blessing them. It forces them to confront the fact that maybe it’s not us that they hate, but God. And that will get them \_\_\_\_\_ why they hate a God who loves them so much. And that might just give us an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_ with them how much God loves them, and how He has provided a way that they can repent and be saved from their sins, through Jesus’ sacrifice for them on the cross.

**bless those who curse you,**

As we bless those who curse us, it’s going to make them feel ashamed. It will make them want to take back their words, and this can be the start of a \_\_\_\_\_ in their attitude toward God.

**do good to those who hate you,**

We must think of those who are persecuting us and hating us in the right \_\_\_\_\_. We must understand that they have been \_\_\_\_\_ by Satan. They are helpless against his \_\_\_\_\_ in their lives to sin more and more, and to hate what is good, as he does. We must see them as hell-bound \_\_\_\_\_, and we must do everything that we can to point them to Jesus. And that’s going to mean \_\_\_\_\_ our pride and doing good for them. Loving them, and praying for them.

**and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,**

And God uses these persecutions and tribulations to transform \_\_\_\_\_ hearts as well. Jesus assures us in John **In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.**” It’s part of our lives as Christians, and we know that this will happen to us. But God gives us instructions on how we are supposed to handle it, and how we are supposed to feel about it. In 1 Peter 4:14 we are assured **If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory, and of God, rests upon you.** And so, if we are reviled, if people rail against us, scorn and malign us because we are Christians, we can look at it as a blessing for a very specific reason: God has given us an \_\_\_\_\_ to glorify His name on Earth, and has given us spiritual strength to endure whatever however the world wants to defame us, and blacken our reputation.

As we learn to pray for our enemies instead of letting anger rise up and holding on to bitterness and resentment and bitterness. Pray for them, and you will sooner or later find any anger or resentment you have toward them \_\_\_\_\_ away.

**45 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.**

Jesus says: This is how true members of the family of God act. Our treatment of people is based on the \_\_\_\_\_ that they have, as persons created in the image of God, and on their \_\_\_\_\_. This is how God acts. He gives sunshine in it’s season and sends rain on crops so that they grow. God not only blesses the efforts of those who love Him, but those who hate Him too. He has patience with people, urging them to turn from their sin and \_\_\_\_\_ Him. Now is the time for \_\_\_\_\_, before it is too late and God must stop dealing with you on the basis of His love for you, and instead \_\_\_\_\_ your decision to reject Him and His offer of Eternal life. \_\_\_\_\_ Him today.