

"God's Standards for Human Relationships"

Part 2

Matthew 5:43-48

Introduction: Before we get started in our study of the Sermon on the Mount tonight I need to do a little review that will bring our minds back to where we were the last time we were together.

The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as King and that very theme is seen throughout the entire book. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus instructs His disciples about the standards of His Kingdom. This sermon from our Lord gives to us the standards of which God desires to see us live as people of the kingdom.

Now we must also keep in mind there was a distorted teaching that existed in Jesus' day and that had originated with the religious leaders. The scribes and the Pharisees were unable to keep the Law and therefore they took sections of the Law and mixed it with their own perverted teachings and all of this had poisoned the minds of the people of Jesus' day. In Matthew 5:20-48 Jesus contrasts the teaching of the religious leaders with His teaching of the Truth of the Scriptures. Six times in this section Jesus says, "It hath been said" which is a reference to the distorted teaching of the religious leaders. He then follows that statement up every time with the words, "But I say unto you" and these words point to His teaching and the Truth of God's Word. So as I have said before Jesus is doing two things as He speaks the words of this sermon:

1. Instructing as to the standards we are to live by as kingdom subjects.

2. Stripping all others of their self righteousness by showing them God's standards.

With all of His teaching in this sermon Jesus is calling you and me to a higher level of living. We are called to be separate from the world and this very thought is seen in 3 statements within this sermon.

1. **Matthew 5:20**

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

2. **Matthew 5:47**

⁴⁷ And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

3. **Matthew 6:8**

⁸ Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

So if I were to sum up these 3 statements I would say:

1. We are not to measure our lifestyles by the world's religious systems. God's Word is the measuring Tool for our lives.
2. We are not to allow others to set our standards. The world's standards are far below kingdom standards therefore we follow God's standards.
3. We are to rise above the standards set by everyone in society and live like children of the kingdom. Society always places conditions on helping others and on moral values. We are to live righteous moral lives regardless of what everyone else does.

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Now last time we were together we started into Matthew 5:43-48 where we began to look at God's standards for our relationships with other people. Jesus has saved this section for last for a reason. Throughout our study Jesus has contrasted the teaching of the religious leaders with His teaching. In the section before us we have the greatest contrast of all. Within this section we find that which is to separate people of the kingdom from all other people. That which is revealed in these verses is the most magnificent attribute of God which is to be displayed in His children. It is seen in one statement, "***Love your enemies***".

Out of all the standards which Jesus has set so far in this sermon this is the most difficult standard to reach. But it is not impossible. We are given the Holy Spirit and we can love our enemies if we are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:13

¹³ I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Let us quickly review what we looked at the last time were together. We looked at the teaching of the religious leaders which Jesus addressed in Matthew 5:43.

Notice Matthew 5:43

This was their teaching and they had taken it from the Old Testament.

Leviticus 19:18

¹⁸ Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

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But they took this verse and did 2 things.

1. They omitted the words, "*as thyself*".
2. They added the phrase, "*hate thine enemies*".

The religious leaders were constantly omitting or adding to the Word of God. This was because they could not live up to God's standards and so they distorted the Word with their sinful teaching in an attempt to justify their sinful lifestyles.

Application:

Let us not miss something very important here. False teaching will always contain a small portion of Truth from God's Word and it will be surrounded by poison. That is exactly what the religious leaders were doing. They would take a small part of God's Truth and do their best to blend it with lies and thus they would develop a "godly" standard they could then live by.

The religious leaders taught it was ok to hate anyone who was your enemy but there was never a verse in the Old Testament that gave them the right to hate anyone. They had most likely distorted God's command to exterminate the people of Canaan and also completely misunderstood David's prayers concerning his enemies.

I. The Old Testament teaching about human relationships.

A. Actions

I believe it would be good for us to take a journey through the Old Testament and gather all the Truth we can concerning how Israel was to treat their fellow man whether he be friend or enemy. People tend

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to think that much of the Old Testament is different than the teaching of the New Testament. But that is not the case when it comes to how Israel was to treat their fellow man.

Let us start our search in the book of Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.

² And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.

³ In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.

⁴ Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.

These verses were all about helping a brother that had a need and even when that need required some hard work. In verse 4 Israel was told that if their brother's ox fell down under the weight of a burden then they were required to stop what they were doing to assist in getting the ox back on his feet again.

Now someone may say this only applies to a brother and has nothing to do with strangers or enemies. Before we reach any conclusions let us look at something that was written in the book of Exodus.

Exodus 23:4-5

⁴ *If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.*

⁵ *If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.*

Here in these verses the very same principle is taught and here the focus was upon someone who hated them or someone who was an enemy. Now let me explain what this means. The word "brother" in Deuteronomy 22:1-4 must therefore refer to ANY person, including friend or enemy, which had a need. Israel was commanded to help any person they encountered that had a need.

It was taught very clearly in the Old Testament that Israel was tend to anyone they met who had a need. Bottom line was they were never given a mandate to hate anyone.

B. Attitude

Now we must understand the Old Testament went even beyond addressing the "**actions**" of the people of Israel toward their fellow man. God even address the "**attitude**" of the people of Israel toward their fellow man.

I want us to consider the words of David and what he tells us about his attitude toward his enemy.

Psalm 35:11-14

¹¹ *False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.*

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¹² They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

¹³ But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

¹⁴ I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

Here in this Psalm David writes about his enemies and how they brought false charges against him and how they rewarded him evil for good. In other words David had done nothing to them but they falsely accused him and when he treated them with love and kindness they returned to him evil meaning they mistreated him.

Later when they were struck with some kind of illness David did not rejoice but instead he mourned for them as a son mourns for his mother.

When we can weep over the suffering of an enemy like it was our own mother then we have entered into a love that the world knows nothing about. It is a love that is rarely seen on this side of heaven.

This very love was demonstrated at the cross when they crucified Jesus.

Luke 23:33-35

³³ And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

³⁴ Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

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³⁵ And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

When we look at David we actually see the Spirit of Christ within him.

Application:

That very Spirit is also to be seen in us as we pass through this old world. Human nature however desires to rejoice in the fall or destruction of our enemies and that is exactly why we must be controlled by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

Let me take us a little deeper into this thought. Did you know it is actually a sin to desire that your enemy would fall? Did you know it is a sin to rejoice when your enemy falls?

In Job chapter 31 Job is stating his innocence before his friends and in the statement that he makes he touches on his attitude toward his enemies.

Job 31:29-31

²⁹ If I rejoice at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him:

³⁰ Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.

³¹ If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh! we cannot be satisfied.

Now we must keep Job's words in their proper context in order to understand exactly what he is saying here. The context is Job is

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defending his life in the sense that all that he is suffering is not a result of a sin that he was practicing in his life. Now in that defense he states 4 ways he could have sinned regarding his enemy.

1. Rejoicing at his enemy's destruction. (Job 31:29a)
2. Joyous over his enemy's trouble. (Job 31:29b)
3. Desiring to see his enemy suffer and making that desire known through his words. (Job 31:30)
4. Allowing the people of his tent to speak in an ill manner of his enemy. (Job 31:31)

It is a sin to take any pleasure in the suffering of your enemy when we take pleasure in the suffering of our enemy we are not controlled by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Let me show you another verse.

Proverbs 17:5

⁵ Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamities shall not be unpunished.

If we are delighted at our enemy's calamities there will be calamities in our lives.

Conclusion:

Here is one more verse that will make it clear about our actions and our attitudes toward our enemies.

Proverbs 25:21

²¹ If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

There is then a twofold result which happens from this.

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Proverbs 25:22

²² For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee.

Results:

- 1. Brings shame to our enemy and may possibly lead to repentance.**

Coals of fire on someone's head was sign of repentance in Egypt. When a person was sorry for something they had done they would carry upon their head a pan full of hot coals.

- 2. Brings to us a reward from the Lord.**