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## **"God's Standards for Human Relationships"**

### **Part 3**

#### **Matthew 5:43-48**

**Introduction:** For the past 2 weeks we have been focusing upon 2 points:

#### **1. The teaching of the religious leaders in Matthew 5:43.**

#### **Notice Matthew 5:43**

They had based their teaching on Leviticus 19:18

#### **Leviticus 19:18**

*<sup>18</sup> 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.*

They took the part that said "***thou shalt love thy neighbor***" and they did 2 things.

- a. They omitted the words "***as thyself***".
- b. They added their own words "***and hate thine enemy***".

In their sinful depraved minds they formulated their own version of Leviticus 19:18. They could not possibly keep God's Law but they were too prideful to admit their sinfulness so they made their own version that fit their sinful lifestyles so well. Not only were they deceived in what they believed but their teaching had poisoned many of the people of Jesus day.

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**2. We also looked at how the people of Israel were instructed in the Old Testament about relationships with other people, both friend and enemy.**

When it came to personal relationships they were to help anyone who had a need.

### **Exodus 23:4-5**

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

*<sup>5</sup> 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.*

Israel was never commanded to hate their enemies under the Old Testament teaching. So the teaching of Matthew 5:43-48 was no a new teaching but it was just a more "detailed" teaching of what was recorded in the Old Testament.

Tonight as we continue we are going to start to look closely at Matthew 5:44-48 for in these verses Jesus will give to us the details as to what it means to "love our enemies".

### **I. The Teaching of Jesus (5:44-48)**

#### **Notice Matthew 5:43-44a**

In verse 43 Jesus reveals that He knows what the religious leaders were teaching. He says, "You have been taught to love your neighbor and to hate your enemy. In other words you have been taught that personal hatred is justified if it is directed toward someone who has in

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some way offended you. These religious leaders taught you this but I say you are to love your enemies!"

There is something very important here that we do not see on the surface of Jesus statement. When Jesus said, "I say unto you" the wording of this statement does not place the emphasis upon "what" is said but the emphasis is upon the "authority" of the One Who is saying it. In other words Jesus is strongly declaring that He has the authority to over ride the teaching of the religious system of His day no matter who the teacher is. Jesus made it clear that He was the Lord of the Law. He does this the entire way through 5:21-48.

Now as Jesus, in all of His authority, proclaims the standards for personal relationships here in this text He will give us 3 examples of how we are to love our enemies.

### **A. The Foundation**

**"Love your enemies"** - This is the foundation upon which the examples will rest.

**Let me first of all give to you something to think about. If you want to know the depth of a man's spirituality there is one sure way to do so. Watch the man when he finds himself under great pressure and then note his response in the midst of that pressure when someone comes along and offends him. The man's reaction in that situation will reveal whether he is a deep believer or a shallow believer. If he is shallow he will react very much like a rattlesnake when it is backed into a corner. He will strike out and then if he is confronted on his reaction he will most likely blame it on the pressure he is under in his personal life. If he is a deep believer**

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and he has died to self he will show love to the one who has offended him. He will desire reconciliation with the one who has offended him and he will pray for that individual. He will not in any way seek to get even. You see he will be controlled by the Holy Spirit and Christ will be seen in him.

### **Luke 23:33-35**

*<sup>33</sup> 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.*

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

*<sup>35</sup> 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.*

You see when the life of Christ is lived through us by the Spirit the very same response which we see in Jesus while on the cross will be seen in us when we are under great pressure and someone offends us.

But someone may say, "That was Jesus. We could not possibly be like that." If that is your thought then I encourage you to walk with me and look closely at 2 men in the Bible who had the same love and forgiveness.

**David** - Remember when David was undermined by his son Absalom and then he had to flee the palace? As he was running for his life there was a man who attacked him with words.

### **2 Samuel 16:5-8**

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*<sup>5</sup> And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came.*

*<sup>6</sup> And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men were on his right hand and on his left.*

*<sup>7</sup> And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial:*

*<sup>8</sup> The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man.*

Then a little later Absalom was killed and David was restored to his kingdom. He was brought back to Jerusalem and all the people returned including Shimei and he had to face David. David now has the opportunity to get even with the man who cursed him.

## **2 Samuel 19:18-20**

*<sup>18</sup> And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan;*

*<sup>19</sup> And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart.*

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*<sup>20</sup> For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king.*

## **2 Samuel 19:23**

*<sup>23</sup> Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him.*

We can see within David the Spirit of Jesus. Let me show you one more. Remember Stephen in the book of Acts when he preached a sermon and the people decided to stone him because he spoke the Truth? Do you remember his words in the midst of the stoning?

## **Acts 7:59-60**

*<sup>59</sup> And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.*

*<sup>60</sup> And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

From these 2 men we can see that it is possible for us to love our enemies. Jesus would never command us to do something that we could not do. When we fail to love our enemies we try in some sinful way to justify our spirit of retaliation. But there is no justification for sin. It just shows us how far from self surrender we really are.

Let's now consider the word "love" that is used here by Jesus; in the Bible there are 4 types of love that are pictured (Not all are mentioned but they can all be seen):

1. **Eros** - This is a sensual love between a husband and wife.
2. **Storge** - This is a family love.

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3. **Philia** - This is a brotherly love between believers.
4. **Agape** - This is the highest form of love there is and it is a love that seeks nothing but the best for the individual.

The love that Jesus refers to here is the "agape" love. It is the love that seeks the highest good and will do whatever is needed to meet the needs of the individual. This is the very love that we are to love our enemies with. Remember what Jesus is doing here. He is calling you and me to live far above the world's religious system.

Now in the definition of "agape" there is something we have missed. Again it means to seek the highest good for the individual. I have bolded the word seek to help you to see that "agape" love is a love of action.

#### **Notice Matthew 5:44**

There are several words of action here that define "agape" love.

- a. Bless
- b. Do good
- c. Pray

These are all action words and therefore they compliment the word Jesus uses to describe the love we are to have with our enemies.

#### **A. Example #1**

**"Bless them that curse you"** - Let me explain what it is to "bless" the one who curses us. If someone is cursing you that means they are speaking in a way that is designed to do as much damage as they can with their words. This kind of speech could also fall under the title of slander. Jesus tells us when that happens we are not to return cursing

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for cursing. We are not to launch a full scale attack against their character but instead we are to bless them. Now if we keep this in context I believe we can see clearly see what Jesus says we are to do. The context is that someone is trying to cause us harm with their words so therefore as we love them with a love that seeks the very best for them then we will say nothing at all that would harm them nor would be damaging to their character. Instead we would speak in respect of them. In other words with our words we will do all we can to elevate this person in the eyes of other people.

### **B. Example #2**

***"Do good to them that hate you"*** - Here again the word "do" is a verb and it speaks of action. The person who has for some reason come to hate us would never consider helping us if we had a need. If we did have a need and they were aware of it they would sit back and enjoy watching us suffer and if it was in their power they would increase the pressure even more so as to watch us squirm even more. If there is someone who has that kind of hatred toward us and one day we see them facing a great need we are not to sit back and enjoy watching them suffer. We are instead to love them with an "agape" love. Again that means we are to love them with a love that seeks the very best for the one who hates us. That means if they have a need and I am able to meet their need with the resources I have then I am to give up what I have in order to meet their need. This is exactly what Jesus did when He went to the cross. Many of those around Him hated Him and He went to the cross and paid a debt they could not pay to meet the greatest need they had. That is the very spirit that is to be seen in us.

### **C. Example #3**

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***"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you"*** - Now Jesus points to two offences that are very difficult to deal with. Being used or taken advantage of by others and being persecuted by others. Let me point out the thought behind these two offences. The idea is you are living for God and you are doing what He has called you to do and someone sees that character in you and so they come to you and they fabricate a story that plays on your heart and you end up making a great sacrifice for them only to find out they were not sincere and they simply used you because for personal gain. The other offense would come from someone who hated you just because they knew of your faith in Christ and because of your faith they took their hatred to the next level and they began to persecute you both verbally and physically. Both of these offenses have come because of your devotion to Christ.

Jesus tells us when this happens we are to pray for those who have caused the offense. Let us again be sure to keep this command in the proper context. We are to love them with a love that seeks the very best for them so therefore in our prayers we will beseech God on their behalf and with our prayers seek the very best for them. I can take that even deeper and say that we will pray for their salvation for that would be seeking the very best for them.

Notice the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

*"This is the supreme command. Through the medium of prayer, we go to our enemy, we stand by his side, and we plead to God for him."*

**Conclusion:**

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The love that Jesus speaks of here is "kingdom love". It will only be found in people of the kingdom who are living a life of complete surrender. Jesus is not commanding us to do something which is impossible. He is commanding us to love people in a way that will forever leave an impact upon them. Let us not forget Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of the Father. We are His body now and so His love is to be seen through us.

There is the story of George Wishart, who was a martyr in the early years for his faith in Christ. The story is found in Foxes Book of Martyrs:

*On the morning of his execution there came to him two friars from the cardinal; one of whom put on him a black linen coat, and the other brought several bags of gunpowder, which they tied about different parts of his body.*

*As soon as he arrived at the stake, the executioner put a rope round his neck and a chain about his middle, upon which he fell on his knees and thus exclaimed:*

*"O thou Savior of the world, have mercy upon me! Father of heaven, I commend my spirit into Thy holy hands."*

*After this he prayed for his accusers, saying, "I beseech thee, Father of heaven, forgive them that have, from ignorance or an evil mind, forged lies of me: I forgive them with all my heart. I beseech Christ to forgive them that have ignorantly condemned me."*

*The hangman that was his tormentor, sat down upon his knees, and said, "Sir, I pray you to forgive me, for I am not guilty of your death." To whom he answered, "Come hither to me." When that he was come to him, he kissed his cheek, and said: "Lo, here is a token that I forgive*

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*thee. My heart, do thine office." And then he was put upon the gibbet and hanged, and burned to powder.*