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Why Should We Love Our Enemies?

Matthew 5:44-45: (NASB) ***44**But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45**so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*



We live in a time of great contradiction. There are voices that shout, rant and insist for all in our society to embrace and accept everyone no matter what their choices in life are and no matter what their actions in life may be. Their message in many ways is framed as one of love - love for those who are opposite or different. Then there are those like myself who say, while I am willing to accept and love people regardless of their choices, I will not embrace anything I believe is not moral or righteous. I will love the person but not the action. For this I have been called a "hater" by those who preach that you should embrace those who are different than you. Jesus told us to love our enemies, but what exactly does that mean? Am I not loving enough? Do I need to change?

Before Jesus spoke the powerful words of our theme text about loving our enemies, he taught us several lessons that would help us to be able to accept that particular teaching.

Here is what Jesus taught us to do when we are treated badly: Matthew 5:38-39: Does this mean we just let evil run roughshod over us?

(Source: Biblical commentary by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown) Our Lord's own meek, yet dignified bearing, when smitten rudely on the cheek (John 18:22,23), and not literally presenting the other, is the best comment on these words. It is the preparedness, after one indignity, not to invite but to submit meekly to another, without retaliation, which this strong language is meant to convey.

Proverbs 20:22: (NASB) *Do not say, I will repay evil; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you.*

FIRST LESSON OF LOVE: Endure harshness that is physical. Stand for and speak for what is right, but do not retaliate in like manner. Rise ABOVE what the Law of the Old Testament would have allowed you to do.

Matthew 5:40: (NASB) *If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt let him have your coat also.*

(Source: John Gill's Exposition of the Bible) ...but will wrangle and quarrel in a private way, in order to take away thy coat, by force and violence, let him have thy cloak also; do not forbid, or hinder him from taking it;

(Source: Biblical commentary by Henry Alford) Take away - i.e. in pledge for a debt (see Exodus 22:6). Coat - the inner and less costly garment. Cloak - the outer and more valuable, used also by the poor as a coverlet by night.

In the Old Testament, you were not allowed to take someone's coat overnight. Luke 6:29

1 Corinthians 6:7: (NASB) *Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?*

SECOND LESSON OF LOVE: Endure harshness that is related to your "stuff." Don't enter into the personal, petty wrangling of life - even if it costs you, live above it!

Jesus taught us that our actions and attitudes should be different than the norm when things go wrong in life. We are to act differently than others.

Matthew 5:40: (NASB) *Whoever **forces <29>** you to go one mile, go with him two.*

Forces is not the best English translation. Compare with the Greek:

Forces: Strongs #29 *aggareuw aggareuo ang-ar-yew'-o*, to impress into public service, to employ a courier, dispatch a mounted messenger; hence to compel to perform a service.

For example: Matthew 27:32: (NASB) *As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they **pressed into service <29>** to bear his cross.*

THIRD LESSON OF LOVE: Endure inconvenience regarding your time and effort. Serve in a way that is beyond expectations!

As followers of Jesus, we are instructed to live to a higher standard. Matthew 5:42: (NASB) *Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.*



(Source: Biblical commentary by C.T. Russell) Not that we should lend to anybody who asks for a loan of money or goods, but that we should not turn away from those in need.

Matthew 25:35-36

FOURTH LESSON OF LOVE: Willingly help those in need - even at personal cost. Have your eyes and heart open to those individuals who may be needy and be someone who they can go to for help!

What is Jesus teaching about our response to those who may give reason to be viewed as our enemies? Endure physical harshness, do not be petty regarding your stuff, serve with vigor and beyond expectations and touch those in need. With these lessons, we can now be ready for the hardest one of all: **Christian love says love your enemies!** Matthew 5:43-45: (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, you shall **love <25>** your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, **love <25>** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Love: Strongs #25: agapao, 1. of persons - to welcome, to entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly.
2. of things - to be well pleased, to be contented at or with a thing.

- *It has been said* - Jesus here is not quoting from the Law but instead is quoting from a Jewish “tradition.” The Law never said to love your neighbor and hate your enemy.
- The *love* here is a benevolent love that does not require reciprocation. This is a KEY LESSON! This kind of love gives without taking.
- To love an enemy dissolves any potential traces of vengeance or retaliation - a characteristic that would have had the potential to grow in the previous four lessons.
- To bless and pray for those who hate and abuse you, can only be truly accomplished based upon our striving for that selfless love towards them.
- Be like God - God is good and just to all as shown in the cycles of nature. We have to rise above and be willing to give to all. That is easy to say but hard to do!

Let’s look at the practical application of the matter spoken by one who was *not* perfect - the Apostle Paul: Romans 12:14-17: (NASB) ¹⁴Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. ¹⁶Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. ¹⁷Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

 **Blame, What Does it Mean to Love Your Enemies, Pastor Tim Chaddick**

- *What exactly is “love for our enemies” according to Romans 12:17-21? And I think you will be surprised at what some of these things say. We’ll do this section briefly. First of all, to love your enemy is to blame your enemy. Interesting. To love your enemy is to blame your enemy. Notice the context. Paul calls evil, evil. He calls an enemy, an enemy. He calls it what it is. When you forgive someone - and I wonder if you’ve ever thought about it like this - to forgive is to blame. When you forgive someone, you’re blaming them. You’re not pretending that they didn’t do anything wrong, you’re not pretending that no evil existed. You are blaming them.*

“Blame” is acknowledgment of an action and does not need to imply emotion or retaliation.

Notice how the Apostle follows the pattern that Jesus laid out in Matthew 5: Romans 12:14-17: These verses come right after the verses about sacrifice and playing your role within the true church. Verses 14-16: Rather than retaliate, *bless* - enter into others’ realities whether they are happy or sad. Do not play favorites, do not be proud; be humble. This sets the table for appropriate blaming. Verse 17: Acknowledge and recognize: call evil what it is - evil. This is blaming done with godliness.

 **Blame through love, What Does it Mean to Love Your Enemies, Pastor Tim Chaddick**

- *So, to love our enemies begins by blaming them. To not blame their evil, to not call evil what it is, is not love at all. It’s not loving to someone to pretend that their evil does not exist. It’s not loving at all. Their evil is an offense to God, it’s harmful to*



themselves and it's harmful for other people. Do you think it's loving to pretend that it doesn't exist? Absolutely not. But usually we all say this: "Oh, I love them too much. I just don't want to tell them what they're doing is wrong." No. You love yourself too much because you don't want confrontation. You just don't want to deal. You love yourself too much. But if you really loved them, you would call evil what it is.

This helps them take responsibility for their actions so they can grow up and out of whatever it is that has happened. Let's examine an example of appropriate blame: Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin.

Acts 7:51-58: The blame was obvious and necessary, but did Stephen do anything else besides blame? Jesus knew that teaching us to love our enemies would need to be done in stages, so he does that in **Matthew 5** by telling us to endure physical harshness and not to be petty regarding our stuff. We are to serve with vigor and beyond expectations and touch those in need. Built on top of these things comes loving our enemy with a benevolent love.

True and benevolent love requires blame to be appropriately attached to those who do wrong. Warning! Ending with blame is NOT the whole story when it comes to loving our enemies!

 **Spare, What Does it Mean to Love Your Enemies, Pastor Tim Chaddick**

- *Secondly, to love your enemy is not only to blame them but it's to spare them. It's to spare them. It is to forgo retaliation and retribution on a personal level. To spare them, Paul says do not repay evil for evil. Miroslav Volf, in his book, "Free of Charge" says that forgiveness is to condemn the deed but to spare the doer. You're calling evil exactly what it is, and you're naming a person who did it - they are guilty - but you're sparing them personal retribution and retaliation.*

Sparing those who do evil: **Romans 12:18-19:** This is a difficult step, for it requires us to give away our perceived right to retaliate! Why would we do that? **Let's look again at Jesus' teaching:** **Matthew 5:43-45:** (NASB) ⁴³You have heard that it was said, you shall **love <25>** your neighbor and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴But I say to you, **love <25>** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

So, loving our enemies requires placing appropriate blame - **but not with retaliation in mind**. It requires proving this selfless blaming by sparing them our retaliation and by praying for the other person to show we are in line with God dealing out all judgment and not ourselves dealing out judgments.

This is exactly what Stephen did: **Acts 7:59-60:** This was a wonderful example of rising above and being more than those around him - a higher standard of living, a higher sacrifice and a higher level of humility.

Once we get it into our heads the value of sparing them, we begin to become walking epistles: **1 Peter 3:13-16:** By standing in Christ, we can properly and humbly represent truth and righteousness. By so standing, those who oppose such things can see the things they previously did not perceive. It becomes a "win-win" situation. We can help people and dramatically affect their lives for the good if we are willing to step out and be vulnerable.

The Apostle Peter takes our lesson to another level by applying its principles to everyday life: **1 Peter 2:18-25:** Stand for serving with dignity and respect - even if dignity and respect are not shown to you. Today this could be a boss or a co-worker. This is loving those who act as enemies in an everyday environment - this is a whole different level here! Why do this? Because that is what Jesus did. By so doing, you will stand in Christ, like Christ and be blessed! *You were continually straying like sheep* - Jesus taught us to love our enemies, realizing we were once enemies of God. God loved you by sending Jesus before we could even approach Him. We are not breaking any new ground when we love our enemies - we are following the example of God and Jesus who changed our lives and absorbed our sins.



Bless, What Does it Mean to Love Your Enemies, Pastor Tim Chaddick

- *Thirdly, to love your enemy is to bless them and to do good to them. That’s just a starting point of a real brief overview of what it means to love your enemy. Jesus did these things. He accused the enemy to his executioners who were nailing him to a cross. He said, “Father, forgive them.” What was he doing in that moment? He was blaming them, but he was also dying on the cross for their sins so he could pardon them and he was doing good for them. To blame, to spare and to bless.*

Blessing those who do evil completes the “love your enemies” training.

Romans 12:20-21: (NASB) *²⁰But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. (As quoted from Proverbs 25:21-22) ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* How is this blessing someone? This is a tough verse to understand - the following are a few possible explanations:

(Source: <http://www.hiskingdomprophecy.com/heaping-coals>)

Kenneth Samuel Wuest (1893-1962) was a noted New Testament Greek scholar and wrote on this point: “In Bible times an oriental needed to keep his hearth fire going all the time in order to insure fire for cooking and warmth. If it went out, he had to go to a neighbor for some live coals of fire. These he would carry on his head in a container, oriental fashion, back to his home. The person who would give him some live coals would be meeting his desperate need and showing him an outstanding kindness. If he would heap the container with coals, the man would be sure of getting some home still burning. The one injured would be returning kindness for injury.” Robert Jewett’s relatively recent Romans commentary “Romans: A Commentary - Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible” image icon suggests that since Proverbs draws on some Egyptian literature, it is probable that it refers to an Egyptian practice of a repentant person carrying on their heads, some form of vessel with hot coals in it, symbolizing their repentance. Thus the idea of Proverbs 25:21-22 would be to feed and give drink to your enemy so that he or she will repent of their animosity toward you.

Regardless of which is correct, the person has blessed the other individual and did good for them. They were spared animosity and retaliation and given something of great value.

Finishing the context, we see a “blessing” suggestion: Matthew 5:46-48: Greeting - treating someone with much more friendliness than a mere acknowledgement.

Sadly, Stephen never did get a direct chance to bless his enemies: Acts 8:2-4: We should seek, if at all possible, to be able to engage this step in this present life because we never know when circumstances will change. Opportunities may be fleeting. What would Jesus do? He would appropriately blame them, spare them judgement at that moment and would bless them. How do we get to a point where we can bless our enemies without reacting poorly in the immediate moment? Becca draws strength from comparing what Jesus went through. The challenge is to “spare” and find a way to bless.

When circumstances (not excuses) make it so we cannot bless our enemies, we will do so in the future: 1 John 2:1-2: When we sin, we have an advocate, Jesus, who stands by us and represents us to God. But he died not only for our sins but for that of the rest of the world. That means the rest of the world is in a position (maybe not now at this moment) where they can be blessed.

We still want to do what we can now. Remember when Peter cut off the ear of Malchus (Matthew 26:51) and Jesus healed it? Malchus then took him to what would be his crucifixion. Jesus blessed his enemy.

Romans 8:18-22: The entire creation will be blessed and set free from slavery.

2 Corinthians 5:18-19: To *reconcile* is to bless. We must learn now to properly blame our enemies, spare them of our own retaliation and bless them, for that will be our future opportunity to bless all the families of the earth who had once been enemies of God. They will all be brought back into friendship with God.

*So, why should we love our enemies?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*