

The Garden – Matthew 5:43-48 – April 12, 2022

Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:43-48

43. You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR Lev 19:18, and hate your enemy'.

44. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you

45. in order 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.

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

47 And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48. Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Wow! What a commandment! Not only does Jesus ask us to love our enemies but then He tells us to be perfect. I wonder what the people that were listening to Him were thinking? Maybe some got up quietly and left because they knew that this is an impossible task. Just like the first day of a college course that appears impossible. The student gets up quietly and goes straight to the registrar and drops the course.

Adam Clarke says in his commentary:

“Verse 44. Love your enemies. This is the most sublime piece of morality ever given to man. Has it appeared unreasonable and absurd to some? It has. And why? Because it is natural to man to avenge himself, and plague those who plague him; and he will ever find abundant excuse for his conduct, in the repeated evils he receives from others; for men are naturally hostile to each other. Jesus Christ designs to make men happy. Now he is necessarily miserable who hates another. Our Lord prohibits that only which, from its nature, is opposed to man's

happiness. This is therefore one of the most reasonable precepts in the universe. But who can obey it? None but he who has the mind of Christ. But I have it not. Seek it from God; it is that kingdom of heaven which Christ came to establish upon earth.”

I believe that Mr. Clarke is using the word “happy” here in the way we would use it as a definition of the word “blessed”. We know that it is true that hating another person brings misery. I also agree with him that none can obey this precept except the person with the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8a

Love is _____,
love is _____,
and is not _____;
love does not _____
and is not _____,
does not act _____;
it does not _____,
is not _____,
does not take into _____,
does not _____,
but _____;
bears _____,
believes _____,
hopes _____,
endures _____.
Love _____...

The apostle Paul wrote this to the Corinthian church. In our study of 1 Corinthians we learned that the members of that church struggled to treat each other in a kind and loving manner. Paul told them to stop quarreling with each other. If they had so much trouble treating fellow believers with love I wonder how they treated their enemies? They lived during Roman times and I’m sure that the people in charge were not always kind and compassionate to them. Also some of the members may have been Jewish and were probably not treated

kindly by the Jews who did not follow Jesus. Reading through 1 Corinthians shows us how difficult living out love is even to fellow believers, much less our enemies. Sometimes it is even difficult to love in our own homes!

In verse 45 we read that we are to love our enemies to be sons of our Father who is in heaven... How amazing is it that God loves us!!

Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

In our study of the sermon on the mount we have seen that we are called to be different than the world. Verse 46 tells us that even the citizens of the world love those who love them. Children of the King of Heaven are called to love the ones who treat them horribly. Since verse 48 calls us to be perfect I think we can conclude that if we are perfect in our love for others possibly we have reached God's definition of perfect. I also believe that we will not attain that goal while we live in these bodies. It is a lofty goal and one worth striving for.

Matthew 19:19b ...you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Charles Spurgeon said in his sermon on loving your neighbor:
Again, thou art bound to love thy neighbour, though he offend thee with his sin. Sometimes our spirits are overwhelmed, and our hearts are grieved, when we see the wickedness of our streets. The common habit with the harlot or the profligate, is to drive them out of society as a curse. It is not right, it is not Christian-like. We are bound to love even sinners, and not to drive them from the land of hope, but seek to reclaim even these. Is a man a rogue, a thief, or a liar? I cannot love his roguery, or I should be a rogue myself. I cannot love his lying, or I should be untrue; but I am bound to love him still, and even though I am wronged by him, yet I must not harbor one vindictive feeling, but as I would desire God to forgive me, so I must forgive him.

We can be very unkind when it comes to people in our community that are "undesirable". We want to move away to better areas to get away from this type of sin. The reason that these people are the way they are is because they are lost

in their sin which is where we all were before we were saved only by the grace of God.

Ephesians 2:1,2 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Ephesians 2:3,4 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

When we are treated badly, thus causing us to consider that person our enemy, how should we react? We learned last week to not retaliate. This week we read that not only should we not retaliate but that we should love!!

Ephesians 4:31,32 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Ephesians 5:1,2 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

The normal reaction is anger and retaliation. This is our flesh. Because of what God has done for us and his command to love we must put that away. So difficult!

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Ephesians 4:26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

The Brethren NT Commentary says concerning this passage:

Be ye angry, and sin not. While this language is in the imperative form, it must however not be understood as a command to become angry; because it would be directly in conflict with the graces of meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, forbearance and patience, all of which are taught by Paul as essential Christian virtues. It must therefore be understood only as a warning to be watchful when overtaken by anger. The sense might be well expressed thus: "Let not anger cause you to sin." Ps 4:4 may be a good remedy in anger or vexation: "Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still."

Later in this passage in Ephesians we read:

Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Heaven is our goal. We should expect what happens here on earth to be difficult at times. Sometimes our lives feel impossible. God is not surprised by our difficulties and the way our enemies treat us. The world treated our Lord terribly. Our time here is short compared to eternity. We are to keep ourselves focused on what is coming.

Philippians 3:13b,14 ...but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Let's set our minds on our calling. This takes determination and constant evaluation of what we are thinking.

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

