

“JESUS’ KINGDOM MANIFESTO”

BIG IDEA . . . Part 9: Radical Love For Our Enemies (5:43-48)

INTRO: We arrive at final section in Matt. 5 on True Righteousness (vs. false self-righteousness). Ch. 5 has largely focused on the horizontal (relating others). Ch. 6 will move more to the vertical (true worship). In Matt. 5:21-48 Jesus has offered six illustrations of how His true righteousness and that of His followers is greater than that of self-righteous, which focuses on eternal conduct apart from the heart.

QUOTE by S. Harris: “It is . . . “

Interestingly these six examples have actually served as illustrations of earlier Beatitudes (5:1-16) . . . Today, expand on previous passage of resisting revenge (vv. 38-42),

REMINDER – No person in their own power can live what Jesus is teaching. This last example is by far the toughest test of true righteousness. The whole point of Jesus has been to drive us to seek forgiveness and dependence on the Holy Spirit.

I. THE TEACHING OF THE MOSAIC LAW (Lev. 19:17-18)

Law commended doing good to foreigners and even enemies (Deut. 22:1-4; Exo. 23:4-5). David regarded doing wrong to an adversary as bad as to a friend (Psa. 7:4-5; 35:12-14). Several Proverbs 17:5; 24:28-29; 25:21. The leaders of Jesus’ day should’ve been familiar with these.

II. THE RABBINICAL PERVERSION OF THE LAW (v. 43)

Read Lev. 19:17-18 . . . They twisted by both omitting and adding . . .

A. They *omitted* two phrases in their re-interpretation:

1. “You shall not hate your fellow countrymen in your heart . . .” (v. 17) – restricted to fellow Jews
2. “As yourself” (v. 18)

B. They *added* “and hate your enemy” (v. 43). Opposite of Law in Lev. 19:17. They felt they were good as long as loved fellow Jews (“neighbor”). Jesus addresses this more in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:27ff).

“Who are our enemies?” Broadly, anyone who is against “me” (personal enemies, not political, international). More than likely, someone close to home (Matt. 10:34-37). Often someone who was once a friend or even family. If Jesus’ radical expectation doesn’t work with those closest to us, it’s probably not going to work elsewhere.

III. THE RADICAL TEACHING OF JESUS (vv. 44-47)

Jesus restores the true meaning of the law (like last lesson in regard to personal relationships – not war, civil, etc.).

A. World says, “Get even, be angry, get revenge, tolerate, . . .” but never love, pray, and bless (new standard). Jesus says in vv. 43-47 . . . ONLY Jesus says “Love your enemies (anyone who mistreats you personally).” “Love” is agape, the highest form of love, which can only be known, experienced, and offered when we are “in Christ”. When we experience God’s agape love in us, we can then extend it to others, even our enemies. We love our enemies, NOT for what they do against us, but in their very soul (image of God). We were all enemies of God before met Christ. He loved our souls enough to die for us. No longer just resisting revenge, but now actively pursuing to love them.

B. How Can We Love Our Enemies? Jesus gives specifics:

1. *Pray for those who persecute you (v. 44)*. Persecutors are hardest to love. Pray *for* them not against them – talking about personal enemies Release them to God and trust Him. Ex: Jesus (Lk. 23:34).
2. *Live as children of your heavenly Father (v. 45)*. Act like your heavenly Father, who blesses people good and evil. Both sun and rain are blessings. Notice, God still calls them evil and unrighteous. Do them good. Kill with kindness (Rom. 12:17-18).
3. *As Christ-followers we should do more than others (vv. 46-47)*. In Christ, we can all love. There’s no reward in only loving those who love us back – “even the tax collectors do that.” Also, “greet” everyone, not only Jewish brothers include Gentiles. “More” is the distinctive quality of a Christina’s love.
4. *Be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect (v. 48)*. Verse probably concludes Ch. 5. Strive to be as mature, whole, and complete in God is. Impossible to achieve, but constantly strive for – forgiveness and enablement.
5. Let me add: *Thank God for them!* If God is sovereign, then He has allowed that person to mistreat us for a purpose – to grow us to be more like Christ.

ILL: Put their Picture on screen saver and thank God; that “enemy” is God’s gift to us, so practice LOVE UNLIMITED!

CONC: Did Jesus have enemies? Many. They killed Him, but He loved them anyway. “Do we want to be like Jesus? Then let’s have radical love for those who hurt us, even our enemies. We must say, “I’d rather die than hate you!”