

Matthew 5:38-48 NAS

Jesus Tells Us How to Love Our Enemies!

Sunday, February 23 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, February 24 at 7 PM

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany – 2014

Ash Wednesday is on March 5; Join us at 11 AM or 7 PM

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Last week, in Matthew 5:21-37, *Jesus explained commandments 5, 6, and 2; today*, in vv. 38-48, **Jesus tells us how to love our enemies!**

Remember, Jesus is speaking to His disciples – people who ♦ *believe in Him as Savior* and ♦ *persistently apply His teachings to their everyday lives!*

Before we get into the text, let's make sure we are ready for it: ♦ Are you a sinner? ♦ Are you sorry? ♦ Is your confidence for forgiveness in Jesus and His finished work? ♦ Are you a follower of Jesus? ♦ Do you love Jesus, thus you desire to know and do His will? If you answered “yes” five times, *then you are ready for Jesus' radical message!* It is radical because He is calling us to do what seems unnatural – → *to not only allow our enemies to abuse us, but → to also take action to be a blessing to them!* Of our own strength, *such things are impossible.* But let us take the attitude of Paul: **“I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me.”** (Phil. 4:13 NAS)

According to our *sin nature* we want to take revenge – *to give evil for evil*, BUT God tells us in His Word: **“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone.... Vengeance is Mine, I will repay...”** (Rom. 12:17, 19 NAS) **Forgive “each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”** (Eph. 4:32 NAS) Therefore, ♦ *forgiven in Christ*, ♦ *filled with the Spirit*, and ♦ *armed with the Word*, let us *hear and follow* Jesus' instructions for disciples.

1. **Give Our Enemies What They Want:**

- a. ³⁸ **“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’”** // The Bible does say, **“eye for eye, tooth for tooth...”** (Ex. 21:24 NAS), that instruction was given to the governing authorities, *not to individuals!* **“But the scribes and Pharisees applied the statement to the relation of every person toward his neighbor. They taught...that everyone had the right to take revenge...”** (Kretzmann, NT 1:29)
- b. ^{39a} **“But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil...”** // Disciples are to forgive; *Jesus said:* **“Father, forgive them...”** (Luke 23:34) He also trusted His Father to take the appropriate action against those who mocked Him (1 Pet. 2:23). Even when we suffer for doing right, *that suffering finds favor with God* (1 Pet. 2:20)! So how do we NOT resist? Jesus gives us four examples; note how each one is greater, **“the injury goes from bad to worse”** (Kretzmann, NT 1:30):
 - i. ^{39b} **“...whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also.”** // A humiliating open-handed public slap!
 - ii. ⁴⁰ **“And if anyone wants to sue you, and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.”** // Clothes were scarce and valuable.
 - iii. ⁴¹ **“And whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him two.”** // **“the demand... coming probably from a soldier, to...assist him with his baggage. A Christian will...render such exacted service**

cheerfully and do more than is asked... [However,] such passive behavior must cease as soon as it comes into conflict with the law of love. A disciple of Christ has duties toward his family, his community, [and] his country, which will sometimes compel him to protect and defend them against injustice and insult." (Ibid.)

- iv. ⁴² **"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you."** // Such giving and borrowing is guided by wisdom; it is also with those who are truly needy, not with those who are lazy (2 Thess. 3:10; Prov. 20:4).

2. **Help Our Enemies and Pray For Them:**

- a. ⁴³ **"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'" //** The Bible does say, "love your neighbor," (Lev. 19:18) *BUT the rabbis added, "hate your enemy."* So who is our neighbor, *people like us or everyone?* The LORD said through Moses: "...show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Deut. 10:19 NAS) Also, *think about Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); everyone is our neighbor, even our enemies!*
- b. 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.*" // "Whatever meanness the enemies may devise, love's ingenuity will find a way of overwhelming them with goodness."

(Kretzmann, NT I:30) Why? So the LORD may turn our enemies into *brothers/sisters in Christ!* Also, as our Father provides sun and rain for everyone – *regardless of how they respond to Him*, so we are called to be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1)!

- c. 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?" //** People of the world are friendly with *their own kind*, but NOT with everyone. But for us, *who are the forgiven children of our Heavenly Father*, we are called to offer help and lift up prayers for everyone – *even our enemies!*
- d. ⁴⁸ **"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." //** So what is our goal as disciples – *as followers of Jesus*, to do a little better than others? *No!* **Our goal is to be perfect – *like our Father in heaven!***

Conclusion: Therefore, *saved through Jesus and having received His instruction*, let us honor Him!

And all God's people said: **Amen!**