Matthew
Love Your Enemy (Part 1)
Matthew 5:43-48
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Jesus introduced this great sermon, "The Sermon on the Mount," by describing "The Citizens of His Spiritual Kingdom." In verses 3 through 12, He describes "Their Character" in "The Beatitudes." This is who they are. Then, "Their Influence," in verses 13 to 16, they're like salt and light in the world around them. But beginning in chapter 5, verse 17, and running all the way to chapter 7, verse 12, we have the body of Jesus' sermon, the heart of His sermon. And in it, Jesus describes how citizens of His spiritual kingdom, true believers, actually live.

And He begins by identifying the essence, the heart, if you will, of kingdom living; and that is wholehearted obedience to the Scripture. That's what marks those who are in His kingdom. Look at verse 5:19, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and *teaches* them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." So, greatness in His kingdom is marked by a love for the truth and obedience to the truth.

Now, in verse 20, He tells us that His disciples' obedience to Scripture is radically superior to the obedience of the scribes and Pharisees. Notice verse 20, "Unless your righteousness (overflows or far) surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees," and then He uses a double negative in Greek, "you (absolutely) will not enter the kingdom of heaven." It has got to be greater. So then, beginning in verse 21, running through the end of chapter 5, Jesus gives six illustrations of how the righteousness of His disciples surpasses that of the Pharisees. And in each of these, He first shows how they had misinterpreted the Old Testament, and then He explains its true meaning. And with each of these examples, He explains that real obedience is

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not merely the external act; it is not enough, for example, not to murder. You also can't be angry in your heart. So with each one, he shows that real obedience is from the heart. His disciples are just as concerned about obedience in their hearts as they are in their conduct. So far, we've examined five of His illustrations, the ones about anger, lust, unbiblical divorce, dishonesty, and personal revenge.

Now today, we come to the sixth and final illustration that He gives at this point; it begins in verse 43 and runs through the end of chapter 5. Let's read it together; you follow along as I read. Verse 43 of Matthew 5:

> "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Now in the previous illustrations in chapter 5, Jesus has focused on the second half of "The Ten Commandments." He's focused on the final six, the second table of law, those commands that have to do with our relationships with others. And now, in this final illustration, He stays on the second half of the Ten Commandments, but this time He addresses the overarching command that summarizes all of the second table of the law. If you keep this Commandment, then you won't engage in the other sins that Jesus has already talked about in this chapter. In fact, you

remember in Matthew 22, Jesus calls the Commandment in our text "The Second Greatest Commandment." Now the theme of this paragraph is certainly easy to understand, but let's admit it's much more difficult to practice because Jesus here teaches us that we must "love our enemies," not just those who love us. In other words, Jesus calls us here to love every person in our lives regardless of how they think about us or how they treat us.

Now, as with the other illustrations, Jesus first rehearses here what the Pharisees wrongly taught, and then He's going to correct it with His own explanation of the Old Testament. So, He begins here with what I'll call, "The Pharisees' Distortion of the Law of Love," the Pharisees' distortion of the law of love. Notice verse 43, "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy." Now again, you'll notice that in introducing this Old Testament quote, Jesus uses that unusual expression, "You have heard that it was said," instead of His normal way of introducing the Old Testament, "It is written." Why is that? Because He's not challenging what's written in the Old Testament; instead He is confronting the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees about the Old Testament. Now let me just say, by the way, that what Jesus says here doesn't mean that every scribe and Pharisee taught this. There were exceptions among them, even in the New Testament we occasionally meet a scribe or a Pharisee who seems to get some of the important things right and Jesus affirms that. But for the most part, this was their common interpretation of this "Law of Love."

Now, in this final illustration that we're looking at, it becomes especially clear that Jesus isn't correcting the Old Testament but the scribes' interpretation of it, because notice verse 43, you will see the first half of the quotation is in all capitals, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR." And the reason it's in all capitals is that's our translator's way of saying that that phrase is taken directly from the Old Testament. Now, keep your finger in Matthew 5, but turn back to where it

comes from, back to Leviticus 19. Leviticus 19 and look at verse 18; here is what Jesus is quoting as He quotes the scribes and Pharisees, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people (Here it is.), but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD (YAHWEH).” Now, you'll notice that half of what the scribes and Pharisees taught about this issue is, in fact, from the Old Testament, it's from this text. Although did you notice the important qualifier they leave out? Here it says, “You shall love your neighbor (What?) as yourself,” they didn't include that in what they said.

But keep your finger here in Leviticus, we're going to come back in just a moment, and go back to Matthew, chapter 5. Notice the second half of Jesus' quotation, “and hate your enemy,” is not in capital letters. That's because the translators are acknowledging that that expression is found nowhere in the Old Testament. However, Jesus is telling us here that this is exactly what was taught by the scribes and Pharisees. By the way, we even know that this was common in the first century outside the New Testament. There was a community near the northern end of the Dead Sea called ‘The Essenes.’ I've actually visited where they lived, many of you have as well. It was a monastic community, in the first century, that lived near the Dead Sea there. And this is one of their common community rules, “Love all that He (That is ‘God.’) has chosen, and hate all that He has rejected.” In other words, they were saying, “Love your neighbor, love your fellow believer, but hate the outsider.” And according to Jesus here in our text, most of Israel's leaders agreed with that.

So, if you're thinking with me, a question that should come to your mind is, “How in the world could they justify that perspective? How could they get there? How did they come up with this interpretation?” Well, they came up with this interpretation based on three Old Testament realities. First of all, they justified hatred for their enemies “Based on the Immediate Context of

Leviticus 19:18." Go back now, if you kept your finger on Leviticus, go back to chapter 19. Let me show you why they came to this conclusion. Notice verse 13, there we see that expression, "your neighbor." Again in verse 15, "your neighbor." But watch the change in verse 16, "your people" and "your neighbor." Verse 17, "your fellow countrymen," literally in Hebrew, "your brother." And verse 18, "the sons of your people," and again, "your neighbor." So they said, "Look, if you see how 'your neighbor' is used in the same passage, it's talking about fellow Israelites. So based on the context, they argued, of Leviticus 19:18, 'neighbor' is restricted to 'fellow Israelites.'" By the way, that's why in Luke 10:27, when Jesus said, "Love your neighbor," and the scribe's response was (What?), "Who is my neighbor?" He (the lawyer) was arguing like, "Wait a minute, neighbor is defined in Leviticus 19, it's fellow Israelites." Now why is that wrong? Why was it wrong for them to say that they only had to love fellow Israelites?

For two reasons. First of all, because it ignores other statements in the same context. If you're still in Leviticus 19, look at verse 33, same context:

> When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. The stranger (The immigrant is the idea.) who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; (for) I am the LORD (YAHWEH) your God.

There it is. Clear; not just fellow Israelites, others as well we are to love in the same way.

Also, that interpretation that it's "only fellow Israelites you're to love," ignores other clear Old Testament texts. Flip back to Exodus 23; Exodus 23, verse 4. This idea of "You are to love your enemy" is practically fleshed out here. Exodus 23:4, "If you meet your enemy's ox or his

donkey wandering away, you shall surely return it to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying *helpless* under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him." You're to do good to your enemy, you're to love your enemy. Proverbs chapter 25, verse 21, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink." And so, those texts make it clear they were wrong, but the scribes and Pharisees argued, you can see from Leviticus 19, 'neighbor' only means 'fellow Israelites.' They were wrong, but that's how they justified it.

They also, secondly, justified hatred for their enemies "Based on God's commands about the Canaanites." You remember that the Canaanites were the people of the land of Israel before Israel came back from Egypt and took it. And God said this about the Canaanites, Deuteronomy 7:2, "When the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them." Listen to this, "You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them." Deuteronomy 23:6, again about the Canaanites, "You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days." Now it is true that God ordered His people to destroy the Canaanites because His people were essentially like a scalpel to remove a terrible cancer from the land. They (the Canaanites) were sacrificing their children. They were committing all kinds of gross sins and literally, God said, "polluting the land." So God used His people like a scalpel to remove the cancer from the land. However, although God ordered His people to destroy the Canaanites, even so, He was still exceedingly merciful and patient. You remember in Genesis 15:16, God told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Why? He said, because "the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete (full.)" It's amazing; God left His people in Egypt as an act of patience and mercy toward the Canaanites because God desired that

some of the Canaanites would repent and come to faith. Although He eventually ordered their destruction, that was not how God wanted His people to respond to all the nations around them.

How do I know that? Well, in Exodus 19:6, God says to Israel:

> You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests. In other words, you exist as My witness nation to the other nations of the world. You are going to bring My word to them, My word's going to come through you, and ultimately the Messiah's going to come through you. You're going to be a blessing to the nations, as I promised Abraham in Genesis 12, (Summary paraphrase).

They were to be His witness nation. But sadly, the rabbis used the commands specifically to destroy the Canaanites to justify hating all the nations around them.

A third justification for hating their enemies was "Based on Imprecatory Psalms and Prayers." Let me show you one example of such a prayer. Turn to Psalm 139; Psalm 139, verse 21. This is a Psalm of David, a very familiar Psalm, but right in the middle of it, verse 21, we read this, David says, "Do I not hate those who hate You, O LORD (YAHWEH)? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies." In certain of the Psalms called "Imprecatory Psalms," the Psalmist graphically calls out God's judgment on people in language that's shocking to us.

So, how exactly do we reconcile prayers like David's here in Psalm 139, the imprecatory Psalms, how do we reconcile those with our Lord's command to love our enemies? The answer is those prayers and those psalms are judicial, not personal. The Psalmist was considering how God's enemies had treated God's glory and God's people, and in response, he asked God to judge

His enemies, that is, God's enemies. It wasn't personal hatred for those who had wronged him. He was pronouncing, and the Psalmist does this often, a divine sentence, a judicial declaration of what God's enemies deserve and what they'll get if they remain unrepentant. I like the way John MacArthur puts it. He says:

> The truly righteous person's hatred for sinners is a righteous abhorrence of all that is base and corrupt, not a spiteful personal loathing of individuals. Godly hatred is marked by a brokenhearted grieving over the condition of the sinner, and as Jesus taught here, it is also tempered by a genuine love.

As we're going to discover next week, God both loves the sinner and hates the sinner at the same time, and so should we, and we'll talk about what that means, Lord willing, next Sunday. So, they are not mutually exclusive. God does hate, and we're called to hate those who are opposed to God, but we're also called to love them, as Jesus reminds us here. But the scribes taught that only the righteous are your neighbors; and therefore, only they are you to love, and you must instead hate, instead of love, the wicked, whether they're ranked sinners like tax collectors and prostitutes or Samaritans or Gentiles; you must hate them and only hate them because they are God's enemies. Jesus would have none of it.

In the story of "The Good Samaritan," Jesus makes it plain that we must love those who are not members of our own race, rank, nation, or even religion. William Hendrickson writes:

> Christ's love overleaped all the boundaries of race, nationality, party, age, sex, et cetera. Jesus taught mankind to see the neighbor in every human being. Jesus taught the people that one should not even ask, "Who is my neighbor," but should prove himself a neighbor to the one in need, whoever that might be.

So the right question isn't, “Who is my neighbor?” The right question is, “How can I be a neighbor to every person I encounter?” Jesus taught that it's never right to justify personal hatred and the refusal to love.

So, let me ask you a question. We're pretty quick to jump on the scribes and Pharisees, and rightly so, “But in what ways do we, today, what ways are we tempted to justify hostility and hatred toward others?” I think it is a temptation, and I think we are tempted to do it toward those who exhibit certain sinful behaviors. I think we are tempted to do it toward those who have radical views in our political and cultural climate. I think we're tempted to have hostility toward those engaged in false religion; those who are in the opposite political party; those who have positions on moral issues that we disagree with; those who sin against us personally; and we're also tempted to be hostile toward those who have sinned against those we love. In many ways, that's even harder, isn't it? According to Jesus, there are no reasons to justify hatred in place of or instead of genuine love for them. So this passage then first explains “The Pharisees' Distortion of the Law of Love.” They said, “Let's narrowly define neighbor, love them, hate everybody else.”

Secondly, this passage provides us with “Jesus' Exposition of the Law of Love.” This is verses 44 to 47; Jesus' exposition of the law of love. Jesus here, as He claimed to do, “fulfills the law.” In this case, He fulfills it by bringing out its true meaning. Let's look at His exposition of the law of love. First of all, let's consider “The Mandate of Our Love,” the mandate of our love. Verse 44, “But I say to you (Unlike what they teach you, I say to you.) love;” there's the mandate.

Now the Greek word ‘love’ here is the verb form of the noun *agape*. If you have been a Christian any time at all, you recognize that word, *agape*. It's a common word for ‘love’ in the New Testament. Now, let me just warn you about something maybe you've heard taught somewhere, and that is that *agape*, that is only ‘divine love.’ That's simply not true. There is not that great a distinction between the words ‘*phileo’* and ‘*agape*,’ the two common Greek words for ‘love.’ In fact, they're often used as synonyms. And both words are used to describe various kinds of love, both good kinds of love and bad kinds of love. Just like the English word love, *agape* can describe the full range of love, everything from loving ice cream to loving our children to loving God. For example, let me just show you how *agape* is used in negative ways so you don't think about it wrongly. *Agape* is used in 2 Samuel 13:1, in the Septuagint, of Amnon's incestuous love of his half-sister, Tamar. In Luke 11:43, Jesus uses it of the Pharisees' love of the chief seats in the synagogues. Paul uses *agape* to describe Demas' love for this present world that caused him to desert Paul and the Gospel.

Even in our text, in Matthew 5, Jesus uses *agape* several different ways, by implication, uses the same word to describe God's love for mankind in verse 45, the believer's love for other believers in verse 46, the believer's love for unbelievers or at least enemies in verse 44, and the unbeliever's love for other unbelievers in verse 46. So, in the same context, the same word describes all those kinds of love. In Greek and in English, listen carefully, in Greek and English, context, not the word you use, but context determines the kind of love. When I say in English, I love Sheila and I love carrot cake, both of which are true by the way, you understand, by context, that those are two totally different kinds of love. I'm committed to my wife, I'm not committed to carrot cake, or at least not as much anyway. In this context of this passage, the

love that we are to have for our enemies is compared to God's love for His enemies. That's the kind of love we're to show.

What distinguishes, then, God's love for His enemies? How would you define God's love? Well, let me give a definition to you. God's love is "His unselfish, self-sacrificing act of the will to meet their needs motivated solely by His concern for them and by nothing in them." Let me give you that again. When we talk about God's love for His enemies, honestly, this is true of His love for us as well, but "His love of His enemies is an unselfish, self-sacrificing act of the will to meet their needs motivated solely by His concern for them and by nothing in them." That's how He loves His enemies; that's how we are to love our enemies. Our love for others must never be based on what they deserve or how they have treated us. Lloyd-Jones has a really insightful observation in his book, *The Sermon on the Mount*. Listen to what he writes.

> One of the most tragic things about us is that our lives are so much governed by other people and by what they do to us and think about us. (He says.) Think of the unkind, cruel thoughts that come into your heart and mind. (He says.) What produces those cruel, unkind thoughts in our hearts? Somebody else. How much of our thinking and acting and behavior is entirely governed by other people. It is one of the things that makes life so wretched. "Now," says Christ in effect, "you must stop that. Your life must be governed by a new principle in yourself." (He doesn't mean something you generate on your own, it's something the Holy Spirit produces in you.) But now you are going to love others, not in reaction to what they have done (You're not going to treat them in reaction to what they've done.), you're going to treat them from your own heart because of the "love shed abroad in your heart," just like God does.

You'll notice, back in our text, that love is a command. Jesus our Lord, commands us to love. If I had time, I could take you throughout the Scripture and show you that when Scripture commands us to love, it commands us to love these people. We are commanded to love God; we are commanded to love fellow Christians; we are commanded to love those who love us; we are commanded to love our spouse; we are commanded to love our children; we are commanded to love our neighbor, in that broad definition we just looked at, and we are commanded to love our enemy. Now you tell me, who's left out? Nobody! In other words, you and I are to love every person.

Now don't misunderstand. That doesn't mean we love every person in exactly the same way or to the same degree. As we'll discover next week, even God doesn't do that. He loves everyone, but not in the same way and the same degree. Christ didn't do that. Nevertheless, we are still to genuinely love every person in our lives. That's the mandate.

But notice Jesus also stresses, secondly, "The Magnitude of Our Love," the magnitude of our love. Verse 44 says, "But I say to you, love your enemies." The Greek word translated 'enemies' literally means 'the ones being hostile to you.' That's how it translates literally in the Greek text, "the ones being hostile to you." So an enemy then is anyone who is hostile toward you. You'll also notice that 'enemies' is plural. That stresses the sort of comprehensiveness of this command. No kind of enemy in your life; no individual is excluded!

So who are our enemies? I think a lot of Christians miss out on what Jesus is teaching here because if you ask them who are your enemies, they'll say, "Well, I don't have any enemies." Okay, well let's define that. Who are our enemies? First of all, "Our Enemies" are those defined here "in the immediate biblical sense." Look at Matthew, chapter 5, verses 10 and 11. Our

enemies are those who insult and persecute us because of our faith. Verse 23, our enemies are the brother, the fellow Christian who has something against us. Verse 25, it's the person that we sinned against and who now considers himself our enemy. Verse 39, the first part of the verse, the evil person who sins against us. The second half of verse 39, the person who intentionally insults us. Verse 40, the person who with evil motive tries to take our personal property. Verse 41, a government official who abuses their authority or institutes unjust laws. Verse 42, the person who sinfully tries to take advantage of our generosity. All of those are our enemies.

Jesus' statement can also include "Enemies in a cultural sense," in the larger culture, such as the avowed enemies of Christianity like atheists, Muslims, terrorists, unbelievers who ridicule our faith, who mock us, professing Christians who mock the level of our commitment to Christ or to the Scripture, those who disagree with our biblical stance on moral issues like evolutionists, secularists, abortionists, angry, aggressive homosexuals, and so forth and so forth. Our enemies can be in the cultural sense our enemies.

Thirdly, we can be talking about "Enemies in a personal sense." Who would you say are your enemies? Maybe it's an estranged family member, an antagonistic child or parent, a former spouse, or sadly in some cases, your current spouse. Is your enemy your boss, your co-worker, a fellow student, a neighbor? Who would you say, if I ask you and brought you up here on the platform, who would you say is your chief enemy? Jesus says, "You are to love them." Jesus commands you to love that person. And Scripture is filled with examples of God's people loving those who are hostile to them. Stephen is being stoned in Acts 7:60. "He cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin (to their charge or) against them!" Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:12, "when we are reviled, we bless." Jesus, on the cross in Luke 23:34 says, "Father, forgive them;

for they do not know what they are doing." Listen, brothers and sisters, as believers, we are to love even our enemies.

But what is love for our enemies supposed to look like? How exactly are we to express our love to them? Well, let's consider "The Manifestations of Our Love," the manifestations of our love. Let me start by making sure we're clear on what it is not. Jesus' own example, while He was here on earth, makes it clear that by loving our enemies, He's not talking about syrupy sweetness or mere sentimentality. He's not talking about, "I want to go on vacation with you." No! Jesus loved the scribes and Pharisees. Can we agree on that? He loved the scribes and Pharisees. Of course He did. Like God, He loved His enemies like we're commanded to love our enemies. But read his indictment in Matthew 23, and you will see that love sometimes requires confrontation and rebuke. And by the way, let me just say, some of you here have suffered horrific sins from others. Loving your enemies does not mean that there are no consequences for that person's sin. There may be legal consequences. Loving them might be reporting them to police. Or they may have so violated your marriage, for example, that you have biblical grounds, and God would support you in ending that marriage. So, loving them does not mean there are no consequences to their sin.

But how are we called to express love for our enemies? Well, Jesus lays out three specific ways. Number one, "Pray for them." Verse 44, "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Pray for them. There's a powerful example of this back in the Psalms. Turn back to Psalm 35. David is a model of this. Psalm 35, verse 11, he says:

> Malicious witnesses rise up; they ask me of things that I do not know. They repay me evil for good, to the bereavement of my soul. (Now watch how David treated his

> enemies.) But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer kept returning to my bosom. I went about as though it were my friend or brother; I bowed down mourning, as one who sorrows for a mother.

David says, “Listen, I prayed for my enemies when they were in the middle of their trials and difficulties.” Our love for our enemies should be shown in our regular prayers for them. You say, “Tom, what do I pray for my enemies?” Well, like Jesus, we are to pray for our enemies to be forgiven, to be saved. Think about that person who is your chief enemy. Have you ever prayed for God to truly save them? Has that been your heart's cry to God on their behalf? If they're in Christ, and sometimes sadly our enemies are professed to be in Christ, what do you pray for then? Pray for their repentance, if that's needed. Maybe they're sinning against you. Pray for their repentance and pray for their spiritual good. John Stott writes:

> It is impossible to pray for someone without loving him, and impossible to go on praying for him without discovering that our love for him grows and matures. We must not, therefore, wait before praying for an enemy until we feel some love for him in our heart. We must begin to pray for him before we are conscious of loving him, and we shall find our love breaks first into bud, then into blossom. If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence our Lord's prayer for His enemies, what could justify the silencing of ours?

Pray for them. Let me ask you honestly, “Those enemies that you made a little list of a minute ago in your mind, are you praying for them?” Jesus says you must.

Secondly, another manifestation of our love is we must “Bless them,” bless them. Our love must be shown not only in our prayers, but in our words. Luke 6:28, “Bless those who curse you.” In other words, we must respond to insults and curses and spiteful words against us with kind,

gracious words. That's what it means. It's like Ephesians 4:29, “Let no unwholesome word (Literally, in Greek, “Let no rotten word.”) proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment,* so that it will give grace to those who hear.” That doesn't mean we don't say hard things, but it means we say them with the right motive, and we say them in love and not in a vindictive, hateful spirit. So, let me ask you, “How are you doing with this? How do you talk about your enemies? How do you talk to them?” Bless them.

Thirdly, Jesus says we must “Do good to them,” we must do good to them. Not only must our love be shown in our prayers and in our words, but it must also be shown in our actions. Verse 45 of our text, God does good to His enemies, “He sends the sun on their yards and lives; He sends rain on their crops and their fields,” (Paraphrase). He does good to His enemies. We must also do good to our enemies. Luke 6:27, “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies (How?), do good to those who hate you.” Do them good. You say, “What does that look like?” Well, the proverb is pretty clear. Paul repeats it in Romans 12:20, “If they are hungry, give them food; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink,” (Paraphrase). Do them good. What do they need? Jesus demands that you respond to hateful, hurtful actions with kind, gracious actions and acts of service–serve them! John Stott writes, “True love is not a sentiment so much as service, practical, humble, sacrificial service. Do good to your enemies.”

So, let me ask you, those who are your enemies, “Are you intentionally and actively seeking to do them good?” That's what Jesus requires. Jesus says that if you are His disciple, whoever your enemy or enemies may be, you must love them. That is a tall order, isn't it? I think it's a tall order. Maybe it's easy for you; it's not for me.

How do you do this? What helps us learn how to love our enemies? Let me give four helps to help you love your enemies. Number one, “Remember that people are not the real enemy.” We forget this so often. We think of people as the enemy. What does Paul say in Ephesians 6:12? “For our struggle (wrestle) is not against flesh and blood, but instead, we wrestle against (Whom?) Satan and his demons,” (Paraphrase). Jesus says in Matthew 13, “Your enemy is the devil.” People are not your ultimate enemy. They are merely both victims of him and tools that he uses.

Number two, “Remember that unbelievers are slaves to Satan and their sin.” When unbelievers sin against you, when they make themselves your enemies, understand they are just being who they are. But listen to what Paul writes in Titus 3, verse 2, he says, I want you:

> To malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. (How can you do that?) For (because) we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.

He says, “Look, remember who you were. If you weren't redeemed, if Christ hadn't redeemed you, you'd be just like them,” (Paraphrase). This helps us as we interact with those who have made themselves our enemies, who are unbelievers.

Number three, “Remember our own sin struggles and we will be more gracious to others.” Hebrews, chapter 5, verse 2, talking about the high priest, says this, “he can deal gently with the ignorant and the misguided (How? How can he deal gently with them?), since (because) he himself also is beset with weakness.” When he thinks about his own weaknesses, his own sins, his own struggles, it enables him to deal gently with others. And the same thing is true for us. In

fact, in my experience, the people who tend to be the harshest toward their enemies are those who have no clue how sinful they are. It's when we understand something of our own sin, we don't excuse the sin of others; we may not understand the sin of others, it's not what we're tempted to, but we understand our own sin, and that allows us to be gentle with others.

Number four, “Remember that God loved us when we were His enemies.” Romans 5:8, “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Folks, we all need to be reminded of this because of how far short we fall of the standard our Lord prescribes here. Listen, God expresses His love toward His enemies by sending the sun and sending the rain, but he most profoundly expressed his love by sending His own Son to die for sinners. 1 John 4, verse 9, in this is love “that God sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.” The incarnation was an expression of God's love. The next verse, verse 10, says, “By this (We know.) the love of God...that He sent (made) His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins,” the satisfaction of God's justice against our sins. Christian, we don't meet God's standard and never have, but God graciously forgives our sins because of the death of His Son on the cross (When?) when we were His enemies! So, how in the world, Christian, having been forgiven that massive debt, can you justify not loving your enemies if God demonstrated that love toward you when you were His enemy?

If you're here this morning without Christ, let me remind you of Jesus' most famous words. Listen to them as though you have never heard them. This is what Jesus said, John 3, verse 16, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son (His eternal Son), (so) that (those) whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Listen, if you're not in Christ this morning, you're God's enemy. But here's the good news, God loves you. He loved you in that He sent His Son into the world. He loves you in that He is offering you a genuine invitation

of forgiveness of your sins and reconciliation with Him through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. You can have your sins forgiven and know God your Creator, and that comes from His love for you. He's extending that offer, that invitation to you. My plea with you this morning is to respond in faith, repentance and faith, toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for our study. Lord, thank You that You love; You love Your enemies; help us to love ours. But, Father, thank You that You love Your own in a unique and special way, even as we'll be reminded next week. Lord, help us to love You and to love those whom You have redeemed through Your Son with that deep, profound, special love.

And Father, for those who are here this morning who don't know You, help them to see that You demonstrated Your love for them, You loved them, You sent Your Son into the world; You're genuinely inviting them to be reconciled to You through Him. And may they, this morning, respond to that love in repentance and faith. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen!