"How to Treat an Enemy"

Matthew 5:43-48
5/28/2017

INTRODUCTION: V. 43

We need to know how to respond to our enemies.

How do I respond?

I. Our Response Should be <u>RADICALLY DIFFERENT</u> Than How We Are Treated (v. 44)
(The <u>Method</u> of how to treat an enemy)

II. Our Response Should be Like Our <u>HEAVENLY FATHER</u> (v. 45)
(The <u>Model</u> of how to treat an enemy)

III. Our Response Should be a <u>HIGHER STANDARD</u> Than the <u>WORLD</u> (v. 46-48)
(The <u>Measuring Stick</u> of how to treat an enemy)

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INTRODUCTION: V. 43

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor" -

SEE: Lev. 19:17-18

"Love thy neighbor" -

According to Jesus, this is the second most important command (Mark 12:8-31; cp. Mt. 22:36-40)

"And hate thine enemy" -

The Bible in no place said this. This phrase is not in the O.T., but was something made up and quoted as if it were Law (the Jews of Jesus' day did this often - Mk. 7:7-9. V. 7 - *"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."*)

****We need to know how to respond to our enemies.***

How do I respond?

I. Our Response Should be <u>RADICALLY DIFFERENT</u> Than How We Are Treated (v. 44)

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"But I say" - Again, Jesus speaks with independent authority (cp. 7:29)

"Love your enemies" - This demands a special kind of "love." The word love is "agape." This is a unique love, a love that not everyone possesses.

This is the same love God had for his enemies (Rom. 5:8, 10)

This love <u>cannot</u> be "<u>feeling</u>" orientated because it is impossible to feel good about those who practice evil and set themselves against you.

This love is "<u>will</u>" (decision) orientated. It is a decision of the <u>will</u>. It is a choice to love, even when one's emotions would not choose to do so.

Many justify grounds for divorce today by the statement: "I just don't love him anymore." I ask such people this: "Isn't he/she like an enemy to you?" They quickly respond, "Yes." To which I say: "Let's see how Jesus said we were to treat our enemies."

You can love anyone you <u>choose</u> to love! If you do not love anyone, it is not their fault. You are the one in sin!

How do you love your enemies?

1) You realize that <u>God</u> loves them (Jn. 3:16)

2) You realize that what they do to you, they do out of <u>spiritual blindness</u>

"Blindness" -

"The god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (II Cor. 4:4)

"Their minds were blinded" (II Cor. 3:14)

"The whole world lieth in wickedness" (I Jn. 5:19) (i.e. - the entire world of

unregenerate people lie in the lap of the Wicked One).
The unsaved are *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Eph. 2:1) and are living their lives under the influence of Satan (Eph. 2:2)

3) You realize that you are no more worthy of God's love than they are of your love

He loved us when we were enemies of Him, under His wrath (Eph. 2:3-4)

ILLUS: The Christian who saved the life of his pursuing enemy who fell through the ice (MacArthur, p. 346).

Job said, *"Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse"* (Job 31:29-30)

Solomon said: *"He who rejoices at calamity will not go unpunished"* (Prov. 17:5); *" not say, Thus I shall do to him as he has done to me"* (Prov. 24:29).

The admonition to *"bless"* and *"do good"* is not found in the critical text.

"Bless them that curse you" -

"Bless" = to say a good word about

"Curse" = to come down on someone with an evil wish. lit. "the ones who are cursing you" - It's one thing to say something good about someone who cursed you out 20 years ago; it's another to say something good about someone who did it yesterday; and has been doing it continually.

"Do good" - SEE: Rom. 12:20 (cp. Prov. 25:21)

"Pray for them...which persecute you" - EX: Jesus - *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"* (Lk. 23:34)

EX: Stephen - *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*" (Acts 7:60)

"Persecute" - Certainly someone must have prayed for one of the chief persecutors--Saul-- who was wondrously saved and actually ended up preaching the same faith he once tried to destroy (Gal. 1:23)

It's hard to be enemies with someone you are praying for!

"Pray for them" - Often Christians fail to pray even for their family, loved ones, and closest friends; this exhortation to pray for our enemies shows the depth of our prayer life that Jesus expects us to have.

Pray that they will see the error of their ways. Pray that they would come to know about God's grace and mercy. Pray that God would grant them repentance. Pray that they would be forgiven and saved.

"Our 'enemies,' of course, do not always come in such life-threatening forms. Often they are ordinary people who are mean, impatient, judgmental, self-righteous, and spiteful--or just happen to disagree with us. In whatever personal relationships we have, God wants us to love. Whether a conflict is with our marriage partner, our children or parents, our friends and fellow church members, a devious business opponent, spiteful neighbor, political foe, or social antagonist, our attitude toward them should be one of prayerful love." (MacArthur, p. 346).

Our reactions should be 180 degrees opposite of how our enemies treat us.

The words: "Love. . . bless. . . do good. . . pray" express the whole gamete of our attempts to win them to Christ.

"Love" = our attitude
"Bless" = our words
"Do good" = our actions
"Pray" = our spirituality

II. Our Response Should be Like Our <u>HEAVENLY FATHER</u> (v. 45)
(The <u>Model</u> of how to treat an enemy)

"So that ye may be the children of your Father" -

*NOTE: the phrase "<u>your</u> <u>Father</u>" shows that the people whom Jesus is addressing already had a <u>relationship</u> with God, since He is called their "Father." However, responding to one's enemies is the way Jesus says that will show that we "take after" our Father. We will be like true children of His.

The word "become" points <u>not</u> to us attaining a <u>relationship</u> with God by works, but to us attaining a <u>character</u> like God by such good works.

The phrase "like father, like son" should apply not merely to human relationships, but spiritual. We behave like sons of God when we respond to our enemies the way our Heavenly Father does.

Certain actions and attitudes identify us with God. Others know your relationship with God when you have certain inexplicable virtues that the world does not have (EX: Mt. 5:9)

Love for others is the greatest manifestation of our sonship (new birth) (Jn. 13:35; I Jn. 4:16, 20).

"His sun" - God <u>owns</u> all of creation!

"Sun. . . rain" - Our Heavenly Father has a "common" grace that extends to the lost as well as to the saved.

God commands us to do *"good to <u>ALL</u> men, especially those of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10)

III. Our Response Should be a <u>HIGHER STANDARD</u> Than the <u>WORLD</u> (v. 46-48)
(The <u>Measuring Stick</u> of our to treat an enemy)

"What reward have ye?" - To some extent, our rewards in Heaven will be determined by the degree of contrast between our love and the ones we love. In other words:

<u>Their Attitude toward You</u>	<u>Your Attitude toward Them</u>	<u>Your Reward</u>
Love	Love	None
Mild dislike	Love	Good
Hatred	Love	Great

"Salute" - greet, say hello to

To greet only those of your faith, ethnic background, language, skin color, means nothing with God! We should offer the same loving response to all! People in our city need such warm greetings!

"What do ye <u>more</u> than others? - the theme of this Sermon requires us to do more than others (Mt. 5:20)

The tax collectors are quick to greet other tax collectors.

"Perfect" - Complete, mature. This injunction by Jesus is not meaning that we can be without sin, but that we should at least strive for that. We should make every effort to be like our Heavenly Father. To share the same qualities that He possesses so that we can deal with our enemies like He dealt with us when we were at enmity with Him.

Perfect" - lit. "to reach the goal." We should reach God's goal and not the one established by the publicans! His standard for human relationships should be ours, not the standard that others have set.

CONCLUSION:

How one responds to an enemy reveals the depth of his spirituality.

Loving an enemy does not come natural, but supernatural. As J. Oswald Sanders comments, "The Master expects from His disciples such conduct as can be explained only in terms of the supernatural."

You can't do it in your own power.