

## **“How to Love Those Who Don’t Love You” (Part 2)**

Matthew 5:38-48

Tertullian, one of the early church fathers, reported that the Romans would often make statements about the early church, “See how they love one another,” and Justin Martyr, a Greek-speaking Christian apologist, described Christian love this way:

*“We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.”*

Clement of Alexandria, describing the person who has come to know God, wrote, “He impoverishes himself out of love, so that he is certain he may never overlook a brother in need, especially if he knows he can bear poverty better than his brother. He likewise considers the pain of another as his own pain. And if he suffers any hardship because of having given out of his own poverty, he does not complain.”

They, along with others who have lived and died throughout church history, illustrate the truth that Jesus teaches in these verses here in the Sermon on the Mount. His followers are known by their love, and in a way that is unique and foreign to the world, they even love those who don’t love them.

These words of Jesus are perhaps among the most radical and counter-cultural of anything else that Jesus taught. Yet they are precious words, and they show how Christ’s disciples stand out like lights in a darkened world.

In this chapter, Jesus gives six illustrations of what true righteousness looks like.

The fifth of these illustrations is found in verses 38-42 as Jesus says that true righteousness doesn’t retaliate but turns the other cheek. He uses a sixth illustration in verses 43-48 and says that true righteousness loves not only its friends, but also its enemies.

Our reactions often say just as much about us as our actions do. This section in the Sermon on the Mount shows us how a person who has the righteousness of Christ is to react to personal offenses.

Our reactions say as much about our character as our actions do!

According to Jesus, what are the appropriate ways that disciples love those who don't love them?

### **1. Don't retaliate when wronged---be GRACIOUS (5:38-41)**

*"You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."*

Jesus is dealing with the subject of retaliation and revenge in these verses. In Jesus' day, the law had been misused as a mandate for personal revenge.

Instead of getting back at someone, Jesus tells us how to love someone who has abused us, used us, mistreated us, and taken advantage of us. Because the believer has experienced grace, he or she lives to express that grace to others.

Grace to those who INJURE us

*"But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

Grace to those who INSULT us

*"But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*

Grace to those who INCONVENIENCE us

*"And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."*

### **2. Don't refuse when asked---be GENEROUS (5:42)**

*“Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”*

Possessiveness and a sense of entitlement characterizes man in his lost condition. It reveals the selfish nature that he has. Yet Jesus says that His disciples are known for being generous.

**Matthew 10:8 - “Freely you have received; freely you are to give.”**

Jesus describes two scenarios in which His disciples are often called upon to give and should reflect a generous spirit. The first scenario involves:

Giving to the one that BEGS

*“Give to the one who begs from you...”*

Giving to the one that BORROWS

*“...and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”*

Does this mean that each and every time we are approached by someone off the street for money, we are obligated to give to that person? Or, does it mean that each and every time someone asks to borrow something from us, we are obligated to give it to them without any discretion? The implication in these verses is that the person is someone who has a genuine need.

**Proverbs 3:27-28 - “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it, when you have it with you.”**

We do not turn away from those who ask something of us when the person who asks is someone who has a legitimate need. Jesus is speaking of a supernatural generosity that genuinely desires to meet someone at their point of need. It is the opposite of the selfishness that is typical of the world.

**Kent Hughes** - *“Jesus’ advice is not a set of mechanical rules, but principles for meeting the personal wrongs that come to those who follow Him. In the matter of loaning, the Lord wants His followers to reject a tightfisted, penny-pinching attitude that says, ‘This is mine and I’ll never share it!’”*

The followers of Jesus are those who live with an open ear and have an open heart and live with open hands when necessary.

### **3. Don’t resist when persecuted---be GODLY (5:43-48)**

*“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 makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

The Law required believers under the Old Covenant to love their neighbor as they loved themselves.

**Leviticus 19:18** - **“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.”**

By Jesus’ day, the religious leaders taught that love was to be reserved for the one who loved you. It was to be shown to those you got along with, certainly not those who were considered enemies. Their tradition taught that your enemy was to be hated.

The scribes and Pharisees had narrowed the meaning of “neighbor” to include only those who they preferred and approved of, and certainly an enemy was not to be considered a neighbor.

**Luke 10:25-29** - **“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, What is written in**

**the law? What is your reading of it? So he answered and said, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. And He said to him, You have answered rightly; do this and you will live. But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?”**

Jesus then told the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what love for one’s neighbor looks like, and it involved love for one’s enemy at its core.

Jesus is pointing out how the rabbinical tradition was way off base. He says, “It is not enough for you to love you neighbor. I want you to even love your enemies!”

In her book, “Reflections of God’s Glory,” Corrie Ten Boom told the following story, “In Africa a man came to a meeting with bandaged hands. I asked him how he had been injured. He said, “My neighbor’s straw roof was on fire; I helped him to put it out and that’s how my hands were burned.” She writes, “Later I heard the whole story. The neighbor hated him and had set his roof on fire while his wife and children were asleep in the hut. They were in great danger. Fortunately, he was able to put out the fire in his house on time. But sparks flew over to the roof of the man who had set the house on fire and his house started to burn. There was no hate in the heart of this Christian; there was love for his enemy and he did everything he could to put out the fire in his neighbor’s house. That is how his own hands were burned.”

This is the kind of radical love that Jesus says His disciples are known for. In these verses He mentions how we are to react and who exactly we are to reflect to the eyes of a watching world.

### How we are to REACT

*“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*

In verse 44, He explains how love for one’s enemy is expressed. Again, keep in mind that grace experienced results in grace expressed to others. How we react to those who hurt us says much about our own character.

**5:44 (NKJV) - “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.”**

- We bless those who curse us
- We do good to those who hate us
- We pray for those who spitefully use us

**Charles Spurgeon** - *“Prayer is the forerunner of mercy.”*

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** - *“This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God.”*

We don't love people for what they are and do, but we love them for who they are and can become by God's grace.

This kind of love is foreign to the world and to our own sinful understanding. Man has the tendency to base his love on the desirability of the object of our love. Thus, we love those who are attractive to us, we do things that are enjoyable to us, and we make decisions to give of ourselves to others on the basis that we get something in return for doing so.

This is man's idea of love, and it is based on feeling. God's truth is very different. God says that love is not a feeling, but is instead an action, an intentional choice involving the will.

**“Love”** - *word is ‘agape’ and is descriptive of the love of God; it is the love that seeks and works to meet another person's highest welfare; may involve emotion but must involve action*

**Romans 5:5-10** - **“Now hope does not disappoint, because the *love of God* has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that**

**while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**”

If this is the way that God has loved us, then shouldn't it stand to reason that this is the way that He intends for us to love others, even those who would do us harm?

**R.C.H. Lenski** - *“Love indeed, sees all the the hatefulness and the wickedness of the enemy, feels his stabs and blows, may even have something to do toward warding them off; but all this simply fills the loving heart with the one desire and aim, to free its enemy from his hate, to rescue him from his sin, and thus to save his soul. Mere affection is often blind, but even then it thinks that it sees something attractive in the one toward whom it goes out; the higher love may see nothing attractive in the one so loved...its inner motive is simply to bestow true blessing on the one loved, to do him the highest good...I cannot like a low, mean criminal who may have robbed me and threatened my life; I cannot like a false, lying, slanderous fellow who, perhaps, has vilified me again and again; but I can by the grace of Jesus Christ love them all, see what is wrong with them, desire and work to do them only good, most of all to free them from their vicious ways.”*

By blessing those who curse us, doing good for those who hate us, and praying for those who spitefully use us, we have opportunity to show forth the character of our Lord and prove that we belong to a different kingdom.

Who we are to REFLECT

*“So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Jesus says that it is a matter of relationship.

Jesus wants us to know that when we show love to those who don't love us, we reflect the character of our Father in heaven.

- God gives to those who take from Him
- God loves those who hate Him

Jesus says that it is a matter of reward.

Loving those who love us is easy, and there's no reward in that. Even those who do not know God do that. The real reward comes through loving the person who does not love you in return.

Christ's disciples have a higher standard of love than the rest of the world does. Where they work, Christ's disciples ought to stand out from the rest as being the most industrious, the most honest, and the most considerate of others. Where they live, Christ's disciples ought to be known for their love for God and for people. Where they interact with others, Christ's disciples ought to shine brightly and give glory to their Father in heaven.

**J. Oswald Sanders** - *"The Master expects from His disciples such conduct as can be explained only in terms of the supernatural."*

Supernatural conduct comes from supernatural character, and supernatural character comes only from a supernatural change. And such a change can only take place when a person repents of their sin, believes the gospel, and is saved by grace.