

1. MAIN IDEA: Love the People That Are Against You
  - a. Deepening regression of hatred towards you
    - i. Enemies - those on the opposite side of you
    - ii. Hate you - those who despise you
    - iii. Curse you - those who actively are working to harm you
    - iv. Abuse you - those who are succeeding at harming you
  - b. Deepening progression of love toward them
    - i. Love – set your affections toward them for their good
    - ii. Do good – love is active, spending your strength intentionally for their good
    - iii. Bless – love speaks words of favor, kindness
    - iv. Pray - interceding for divine grace on their behalf
      1. See Jesus on cross and Stephen as he was being killed
  - c. There is in this command and its immediate context a balance between one's personal relationship with a personal enemy and the protection of those treated unjustly as third parties
    - i. In other words, Jesus is talking about my personal enemy and my response to him/her
    - ii. What He is not talking about is not standing up against injustice towards others
      1. A godly person is actively working against injustice for those who are weak/oppressed (thus, "woe" to those who do pervert justice)
      2. Job recalls righteousness in Job 29:
        - a. I rescued the poor...the fatherless...the dying one...the widow...blind, lame, needy...stranger...I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched their victims from their teeth (vv11-17)
        - b. This is a godly protector of the poor, the just man is actively protecting the one who has no rights
    - iii. When Jesus was attacked personally, He did not defend Himself (Mark 14/John 19), but when others were being kept from God unjustly He was actively against the wicked (John 2:15/Matt 23:15,33/Acts 13:8-11 [Paul & Elymas])
      1. Jesus is not "nice" when He saw injustice towards others
    - iv. The type of love that Jesus is talking about here is not wimpy love, nor is it always nice – JESUS WAS NOT NICE!!
      1. "Woe to you..." means that He is pronouncing doom upon them – "you will be cast down if you cast down others"
      2. "Tax-collectors and whores will get into the Kingdom of Heaven before you..." (Matt 21:31)
      3. "You are the sons of the devil!" (John 8:44)
      4. The point is that to the hard-hearted who were leading others away from God and keeping people from God, Jesus used harsh penetrating language of judgment and warnings of doom.
        - a. Did Jesus love the Pharisees? Yes. He loved them enough to speak the harsh reality to them of their hard-heartedness and their inconsistency with God and consistency with God's enemy.
        - b. Also: Jesus loved the people whom they deceived and worked to protect them from injustice and show them who God truly is.
  - d. The question that we must ask as we respond to those who are hating us, cursing us, abusing us is simple: Am I taking this course of action in order to love them and protect others, or am I simply protecting myself and running away from them or over them?

- i. Even when an action condemns your enemy and calls them to repentance (important!), is it for their sake or your self-protection?
- ii. The opposite is also true: if an action or word is blessing your enemy, is it for their good or for mine?
  - 1. It is possible to be nice in order to make my life easier (co-dependence).
- e. The overall meaning of Kingdom love is to make a concerted and purposeful effort to see someone thrive with life and fullness and joy. Kingdom love is different in that this applies to one's enemies and haters and abusers.

## 2. Love Draws Close to Those Who are Likely to Hurt Me Again

- a. v29 - Love does not run away, but moves in close even if it means getting struck again or robbed again
  - i. The "cheek strike" is not a vicious attack (you don't go for the cheek if you're trying to bring a man down), but rather an insult, an attack on your honor and your reputation and your psyche
    - 1. This element..."again"... is what bothers us. We feel that we should protect ourselves that we have a right to protect ourselves and be safe from any hurt. Love, however, bears all things. It does not seek its own. It dies for the sake of another.
    - 2. This element of "offer the other cheek as well" is about entering in close to another to love them, even if they have hurt you before. It is about loving vulnerably, opening yourself up to pain and harm so that another might find life, fullness of joy, and hope in the King.
  - ii. Is Jesus saying to be a doormat?
    - 1. The big question of love: Am I acting for their good or for my own?
      - a. This is where Christian love is so different from the world and, sadly, where many Christian counselors have replaced Christian love with worldly love as *self-protection*.
    - 2. Does this love mean that you don't protest injustice towards you or others?
      - a. John 18:23 – when Jesus was illegally struck during his trial, He questioned the injustice verbally – He protested
      - b. Paul protested being flogged without trial as a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25), appealed to Caesar, went to trial over it
- b. v30 - Love gives up its rights
  - i. Love does not demand remuneration for what has been taken away
    - 1. As you would want to be helped when you need it, and rescued when you are in trouble, and treated with respect and forgiveness, so do to others.
    - 2. To sacrifice what is rightfully yours for the sake of another is what it means to love like the King
  - ii. This kind of love is the exact opposite of the way that the human heart works
    - 1. The natural way the human heart responds when mistreated (and that is what is under question here) is to react in one of two ways:
      - a. Passive acceptance – we don't speak out against injustice, we just let it happen over and over and over again out of fear of losing something that we perceive to be greater than what we're losing to the injustice
        - i. Often we feel that it is more painful to change the status quo than to confront the injustice or to rebuke sin
      - b. Vindictive aggression – you strike their cheek in return, making efforts to shame and hurt them in any way possible and to defend your rights
      - c. Combination of the two:

- i. Sometimes the vindictive aggressive is first passively accepting until something snaps and we blow up and lash out
  - ii. Or, we are accepting on the outside, but inside we are burning with rage and anger and bitterness
    - 1. This is probably the most destructive to our relationships – the insipid rage and bitterness that either a) slowly erodes all hope or b) ends up in a clock tower with a rifle
- 2. Jesus is saying that none of these are valid and only lead to the misery of hopelessness and destruction – and His followers are to be the opposite of the natural way
  - a. On the outside, we are to be actively opposing injustice and sin while on the inside being forgiving, warm, compassionate, and seeking their good
    - i. Working for the good of the wicked, that they would turn from their way and humbly turn to the Lord in repentance
    - ii. 1 Cor 5:5 – you are to turn this [unrepentant] man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord
  - b. It is not keeping the same cheek be struck over and over again (speak out about the injustice and start over on a different footing), but love enters in closely again to *take the risk* of being stuck again *after having spoken the truth*
- iii. Jesus is saying that love moves forward for another's good, and always in a way that comes from a heart that is warm and compassionate, but never in a way that is silent or inactive towards injustice

### 3. WHERE DO WE FIND THE POWER TO LOVE LIKE THIS?

- a. The Ability to Love is About Understanding the Nature of Grace
- b. Jesus is being quite clear that those who are sons of God, children like their Father, will love like Him who loves His enemies
  - i. "while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life?" (Rom 5:10)
  - ii. "We love because He first loved us." (1 John 4:19)
  - iii. "By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whomever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:10)
- c. God has adopted His enemies in Christ Jesus! Adopted them with full rights as sons!
  - i. The thing about childhood is that you cannot buy your way into it. You can be born into it. You can be adopted into it. However, you cannot earn your way into it. Thus, Jesus is not speaking in contingencies here anymore than he was in the beatitudes. You must read this "backwards" as well. It is the sons of God who look like their Father, and this is nowhere clearer than how they love those who do not love them in return. Those who love like this prove themselves to be like their Father - like Father like son.
    - 1. I look a lot like my dad, not only in physical appearance, but in mannerisms. People know that he is my father when we are together even if they've never met him before. It is obvious because I am like him. His DNA runs through mine. I am an expression of him, an imprint of his likeness. Thus it is with children born of God - His Spirit runs through them altering their hearts and attitudes and actions to look like the Father.

2. This is why the Father is glorified by our actions...because He is the source and worker of them. If these passages were contingencies, that is if our love for our enemy was a necessity that earned our sonship, then why would the Father receive the glory? We would. However, Jesus is not stating a contingency but a reality, an ontological truth that the children of God who have entered the Kingdom through powerlessness and dependence, have so entrusted themselves to the God of grace that they offer grace to their enemies as well.
- d. We find the power in seeing God's merciful love for us
    - i. Real Forgiveness of Real Sin Produces Real Love
      1. v36 - Be merciful *just as Your Father is merciful*
    - ii. The common word under question, translated variously as "benefit"(v32,33) and "credit" (v34) is the word *χάρις*, or "grace"
    - iii. Jesus is questioning what grace is there that is consistent with God's grace towards the weak, sinners, tax collectors, lepers, prostitutes, etc. who could never pay God back for His grace towards them.
      1. What kind of grace is it that gives what is deserved, that demands what is owed, that only gives what has been remunerated or reciprocated? That is not grace at all!
      2. That is the kind of "love" that the world gives, and Jesus' love is not like the world and the world does not know it.
    - iv. Here it is we see that deserving has nothing to do with love.
      1. Worthiness has no claim on God's love.
      2. Why do we make worthiness a requirement of ours?
  - e. Christians are those who have been enlightened by God to see that they were God's enemies, unworthy of mercy and undeserving of any good from Him, and yet Christ died for His enemies to make them His sons.
    - i. If I am to be saved, it must be only by the grace of the God who pays down the debts of His enemies by His own power and at His own cost
    - ii. Jesus did justice (satisfied God's wrath for my sins) and loved mercy (so that we might be forgiven and accepted)
    - iii. On the Cross Jesus said "no!" to injustice and "yes!" to mercy so that you and I might walk humbly with our God.

When you and I recognize that we are adopted enemies, it creates a fire in our hearts of humble gratitude, which we see grow by meditating on the glories of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. When we remember this gospel and it enraptures our hearts, which is where we find the power to love our enemies. The cross not only shows us the greatest love of enemies, but it also empowers us to carry our own cross by the power of His Spirit within us to change us to be like Him. How can you forgive the person abusing you, hating you, lying about you? To the degree that you get that you abused God, hated God, lied to and about God, and I received mercy, you will be able to turn the other cheek with a love that comes from the DNA of your Father. The power comes from knowing that He is kind to the wicked and the ungrateful...to ME! You will only be able to love well when you know that God is your Father and that He is only your Father because He adopted and loved His enemy by grace. Meditate on God's grace in the gospel of Jesus. See and savor the glory of Christ at the cross and love your enemy well. Rest in His risen life and His Spirit within you to transform you into the image of Jesus and love your enemy well. In His grace you find the grace to love against the grain of your sinful heart because God is remaking it...today.