

MATTHEW 5:43-48

<p>1. The law: Love your neighbor; hate your enemy</p> <p>2. The real meaning a. Love your enemies^{DS1} b. Pray for those who persecute you</p> <p>3. The incentive</p>	<p>J. The Real Meaning of Human Relationships, 5:43-48 <i>(Lu 6:27-36)</i></p> <p>43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.</p> <p>44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;</p> <p>45 That ye may be the chil-</p>	<p>dren of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.</p> <p>46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?</p> <p>47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more <i>than others</i>? do not even the publicans so?</p> <p>48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.</p>	<p>a. Makes you a child of God b. Makes you like God: He blesses the evil as well as the good</p> <p>c. Makes you distinctive from other people</p> <p>4. The charge: Be perfect—trust God for the power to live righteously</p>
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DIVISION IV

THE TEACHINGS OF THE MESSIAH TO HIS DISCIPLES: THE GREAT SERMON ON THE MOUNT, 5:1-7:29

J. The Real Meaning of Human Relationships, 5:43-48

(5:43-48) **Introduction:** no subject is more important than the subject of human relationships. God is creating a family of believers who are to live together eternally. Therefore, He wants that family to live together as a family, loving each other and loving their neighbors as they should. God’s family must never allow hate to enter their hearts. God’s family is to treat no person as an enemy. Every person is to be loved as a true neighbor.

1. The law: love your neighbor; hate your enemy (v.43).
2. The real meaning (v.44).
3. The incentive (vv.45-47).
4. The charge: be perfect—trust God for the power to live righteously (v.48).

1 (5:43) **Love—Hate:** the law said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Le.19:18). Israel made two fatal mistakes in interpreting this law.

a. They said *neighbor* meant only the people of their own community, religion, and nation. They did not include anyone else. In fact, they shut out and cut off everyone else (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—Jn. 4:5; notes—Mk. 7:25; Lu. 7:4-5).

b. They inferred they were to *hate their enemies*. God said, “Love thy neighbor”; therefore, they reasoned and added, “Hate thine enemy.” Human reason actually leads a person to think that he should oppose and hate his enemy. But such is just *deduced* or *inferred* from depraved human reason. It is the natural reason of man at work. It is not God, and it is not what God knows to be the best for the world: love, joy, peace.... (Ga.5:22-23).

Thought 1. Many fall into the same mistake as Israel. They interpret *neighbors* to be only their friends and those who live close by. They never think of enemies nor of the world as a whole as their neighbors.

2 (5:44) **Love—Enemies:** the real meaning of the law *to love* involves four very practical acts (see 1 Co.13:4-7).

a. Love your enemies. (See DEEPER STUDY # 1, *Love*—Mt.5:44 for verses.) Believers are to love *all* men, even enemies. They are to respect and honor all men (1 Pe.2:17). Every human being has something that is commendable, even if it is nothing but the fact that he is a fellow human being with a soul to be reached for God. Note two facts.

- 1) Loving our enemies is against human nature. The behavior of human nature is to react, strike back, hate, and wish hurt. At best human nature treats an enemy with a cold shoulder and keeps its distance. The root of human reaction against enemies is self and bitterness. (Self-preservation is not evil of itself. See DEEPER STUDY # 1, *Love*—Mt.5:44. The section on agape love points out that love is not complacent acceptance of wickedness and license.)
- 2) There is one thing a believer can have for his enemy: mercy or compassion. If he does not have compassion for those who hate him, he has gained nothing of the spirit of Christ (Lu.6:36).

Thought 1. Believers are often criticized for coming so far short of this command.

Thought 2. Note two facts. First, all are not to be loved equally (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—Mt.5:44). Second, love is not license; it is not complacent in dealing with wickedness (see DEEPER STUDY # 1—Mt.5:44).

b. Bless those who curse you. *To bless* means that a person has to speak. Christ is saying to speak softly to the curser (Pr.15:1). Use kind, friendly words. When face to face, be courteous; when behind his back, commend his strengths. Do not render “railing for railing,” that is, do not condemn or attack him in bitter or abusive language (1 Pe.3:9).

A fact that is often forgotten is this: if we react with sharp, harsh words, it will only stir up more anger and hate in the curser.

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“Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing” (1 Pe.3:9).

“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Pr.15:1).

Thought 1. Cursing is a serious sin to God (see notes—Mt.5:33-37; Js.5:12).

c. Do good to those who hate you. *Doing good* goes beyond words. It does things for the person who hates. It reaches out to him through his family or friends, employment or business. It searches for ways to do good to him, realizing that he needs to be reached for God. If no immediate way is found, then the Christian patiently waits for the day when he will face one of the crises that comes to every human being (for example, sickness, accident, death). And then the believer goes and does good, ministering to him as Christ Himself ministered.

Thought 1. The greatest proof of love is *doing good to those who hate you*.

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you” (Lu.6:27; see Lu.6:28).

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (Ro.12:20).

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (1 Th.5:15).

“If thou see the ass [donkey] of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him” (Ex.23:5).

“If thine enemy be hungry give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee” (Pr.25:21-22).

d. Pray for those who persecute you. Three things in particular need to be prayed about: (1) for God to forgive the persecutor (Lu.23:34; Ac.7:60), (2) for peace between one’s self and the persecutor, and (3) for the persecutor’s salvation or correction.

Prayer for the persecutor will greatly benefit the believer. It will keep the believer from becoming bitter, hostile, or reactionary.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mt.5:44).

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots” (Lu.23:34).

“And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Ac.7:60).

DEEPER STUDY # 1

(5:44) **Love:** when Christ said “Love your enemies,” He could have used any one of four words. The Greek language is very descriptive and detailed in its expressions. Its words are precise and full of meaning. In speaking of love, the Greek language describes exactly what is meant. It separates the various types of love, and uses four different words for love. Thus, it is always important to know which word is used in the New Testament and what that word means.

1. There is *eros* love. This is love that arises from passion, infatuation, and sexual attraction. It is the love (passion) of a man for a woman. The word is never used in the New Testament.

2. There is *storge* love. This is love that arises from affection, a natural born affection, the affection of family love. It is the love and natural affection between parent and child.

3. There is *phileo* love. This is love that arises from affection also, but from a different kind. It is a deep, intense, and warm affection. It is an affection that fills a person’s heart with warmth, tenderness, preciousness, and a deep consciousness of really loving and really being loved. It is the love of precious affection and feelings toward those who are very near and very dear to one’s heart (see notes—Jn.21:15-17).

4. There is *agape* love. This is the love that wishes well. It is a love that demonstrates kindness, benevolence, and esteem. It is the love of the mind, reason, and choice. It is a sacrificial love, that is, a love that cares, gives, and works for another person’s good—no matter how the person may respond or treat one (see notes—Jn.21:15-17).

The word Christ uses in saying “Love your enemies” is *agape*: the love that must be willed. The Christian must use his mind and reason, deliberately choosing to love his enemy.

Note four things:

1. The Christian’s love for his enemy is different from the love he holds for his family. It would be impossible to love an enemy with affection. Christ knew this.

2. The Christian sacrifices himself, bears all in order to work for his enemy’s good. Whether Christian minister or layman, the Christian chooses deliberately to love a world of antagonistic men for their own good (their salvation and hope of eternity).

3. The Christian’s love (*agape* love) is not complacent acceptance of open wickedness and license. It is not sitting back and allowing a person to do as he pleases. It is not allowing selfishness and deception and a wallowing around in license. *Agape* love is putting a stop to sin and license as much as possible. It is restraint, control, discipline, and even punishment when it protects the offender from himself and protects those whom he hurts. Very simply pictured, it is a parent controlling a child for his own good and for the good of those who love him.

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4. Agape love is God's love. A Christian can have agape love only as he allows God to love through him (see note—Jn.21:15-17). The believer deliberately wills to love as God loves, and God empowers him to do so (Ro.5:5).

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies” (Mt.5:44).

“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head” (Ro.12:20).

“If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again” (Ex.23:4).

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth” (Pr.24:17).

“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: for thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the Lord shall reward thee” (Pr.25:21-22).

“Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Mt.22:39).

“Let love be without dissimulation [hypocrisy]. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Ro.12:9).

“And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you” (1 Th.3:12).

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well” (Js.2:8).

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 Jn.4:7).

DEEPER STUDY # 2

(5:44) **Curser:** the curser has two major problems. (See notes—Mt.5:33-37.)

1. The curser has a weak self-image. He has to play *the big boy* or *the big man*. He feels the need to assert himself, to come across as strong and forceful, to fit in as *one of the boys or men*. It should be noted that society itself can take on a weak image; that is, a whole generation can reflect a weak self image. One of the first signs of a weak self image is the acceptance of cursing as a normal part of conversation. What an indictment against so many societies!

2. The curser either does not know the Lord or else is very immature and weak in the Lord. Thus, he desperately needs the blessing and the help of the believer.

3 (5:45-47) **Love:** the incentive to love everyone as a true neighbor is threefold.

a. Love makes a person a child of God. Love is unmistakable proof that a person truly loves and truly knows God. A believer cannot hate another person—not a true believer. If a person says he loves God and hates some person, whether former friend or foe, he needs to search his heart. He lacks the genuineness demanded by God (1 Jn.4:19-21; 1 Jn.3:23; see Jn.13:33-34).

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Ga.4:4-6).

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 Jn.3:10).

b. Love makes a person like God. God loves His enemies. He causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on His enemies as well as on those who love Him. The Christian is to be just like God: he is to love his enemies. In loving his enemies, the Christian becomes more and more like God. He becomes godly.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Ge.1:27).

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mt.5:48).

“But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness” (1 Ti.4:7).

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Ti.6:11).

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit.2:12).

“But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pe.1:15-16).

Thought 1. Man was created “in the image, after the likeness of God” (Ge.1:27). Man's very purpose for *being* is to glorify God and to be like God (see Mt.5:48).

Thought 2. No man can look at God's nature and learn hatred. God's sunshine and rain bless all. There is no indication of favoritism in the sunshine and the rain. Therefore, the learning of reaction and hatred does not come from *without man*, but from *within man* (Mt.15:18-20; Mk.7:21; see Mt.12:34-35; Lu.6:45).

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c. Love makes a person distinctive from other men. A believer must do more than others. He must go beyond what others do. Everyone loves his friends, so *doing more and going beyond* means that the believer will love his enemies. Everyone is friendly to those who salute him; therefore, doing more and going beyond means that the believer salutes his enemies.

Thought 1. Motives have to be watched. Too many are nice and kind out of self-interest. They hope to gain something (a vote, money, inheritance, support) from those to whom they are friendly. The believer is to be different and distinctive. His motive must be to reach out to the unfriendly, even the enemies of Christ.

Thought 2. If people loved and cared only for those who loved them, think how divided the world would be. Someone has to reach out to bring all together. All must be reached: the bitter, the cold-hearted, the withdrawn, the angry, the murderer, the attacker, the thief, the enemy, the curser, the hater, the spiteful, the persecutor.

Thought 3. It is the task of the believer to *do more and go beyond*. The believer is to reach all, for he knows the true love of God.

Thought 4. God has *done more and gone beyond* by sending His Son into the world (Jn.3:16; see Ep.2:11-18). The believer knows this; therefore, it is his calling to *do more and go beyond* (2 Co.5:18-20).

“Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away” (Mt.5:42).

“I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Ac.20:35).

“Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality” (Ro.12:13).

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Ga.6:10).

4 (5:48) **Perfect** (teleios): the charge is “Be ye therefore perfect.” The idea is perfection of purpose. It has to do with an end, an aim, a goal, a purpose. It means fit, mature, fully grown at a particular stage of growth. For example, a fully grown child is a perfect child; he has reached his childhood and achieved the purpose of childhood. It does not mean perfection of character, that is, being without sin. It is fitness, maturity for task and purpose. It is full development, maturity of godliness. (See notes—Ep.4:12-16; see Ph.3:12-16; 1 Jn.1:8-10.)

The Bible reveals three stages of perfection.

a. Saving perfection. Christ’s death has guaranteed forever the perfection or redemption of those set apart for God.

“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (He.10:14).

b. Progressive or maturing perfection. God reveals anything that is contrary to His purpose, and the believer is expected to clean it up (Ph.3:12-16, esp. 15). The believer’s “perfect holiness” (2 Co.7:1) is “now being made perfect” (Ga.3:3). As a member of the church, the believer is experiencing “the perfecting of the saints” (Ep.4:12; Col.4:12; He.13:21; Js.1:4; 1 Jn.4:17-18).

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Ep.4:11-12).

c. Redemptive or resurrected perfection. The believer’s purpose and aim is to “attain unto the resurrection of the dead...[to be] perfect” (Ph.3:11-12).

“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Ph.3:10-12).

The Lord’s point is this: the mature believer will do good and show kindness to all men, both good and bad men. He is *mature* in heart when he shows love to his enemies as well as to his friends. God Himself is the believer’s example in this (see notes—Jn.13:33-35; 21:15-17).

Thought 1. God is love, perfect love (1 Jn.4:8, 16). He loves all; therefore, He wants a world of love from creatures who will freely choose to love. He challenges everyone to be like Himself: to love all, even his enemies.

Thought 2. Think about the challenge! The true Christian...

- ...has his enemies, yet he is to love them.
- ...has his cursers, yet he is to bless them.
- ...has his haters, yet he is to do good to them.
- ...has his spitters, yet he is to pray for them.
- ...has his persecutors, yet he is to pray for them.

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If a person will work to mature in this challenge, he will be marching ever forward to be like his *Father who is in heaven* (see Ph.3:12-16).

Thought 3. No man will ever gain perfection, particularly in the area of human relationships. Just consider how short each person comes in relating to spouse, children, friends, fellow workers, and enemies. Yet he is to “follow after...forget the past...reach forth...press.” He is to walk as he has learned to walk—more and more like Christ (Ph.3:12-16; 1 Pe.1:14-16).

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Mt.5:48).

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you” (2 Co.13:11).

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Ep.4:13).

“Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col.1:28).

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Ti.3:16-17).

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (He.6:1).

“[God] make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever” (He.13:21).

“But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Js.1:4).

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Pe.5:10).