

A Study of the Book of Matthew: Chapter 5 v. 43-48

- **A bit of review:**
 - Starting in **verse 21** Jesus begins to discuss six “topics” with the statement **“You have heard that it was said...”**
 - Anger
 - Adultery
 - Divorce
 - Vows
 - Revenge
 - **Vengeance - Tonight**

- Jesus begins our next section with the statement, **“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” (v. 43)**
 - This is unique to when compared with the first five contrasts because when compared to **Lev. 18:19**, it doesn't quote a part of the Old Law.
 - How are they different?
 - Do you think “good” Jewish mothers, fathers, teachers, priests, etc. taught that they should love anyone outside of the Jewish nation?

- **“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 and persecute you,” (v. 44)**
 - The word love here is “agape”
 - Same as in **Eph. 5:25** where husbands are told to love their wives
 - Same as in **1 Peter 1:8** referencing Jesus Christ **“whom having not seen you love...”**
 - Same as in **1 Peter 2:17** where we are told to **“Love the brotherhood.”**
 - It is a purposeful type of love.
 - Doing whatever is in the best interest of the other.
 - We choose to do that.
 - We do everything in our power for others’ best interests.
 - How hard would it be to love our enemies like that?
 - Fact: Christians are to also love their enemies.
 - What’s the application for us today?
 - **“Pray for those who persecute you”**
 - How easy is it to hate someone for whom you continually pray?
 - Bring the name of that person before God, praying for God to help, bless and forgive them just as Jesus did on the cross.

- **“... that you may be sons of your Father 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.” (v. 45)**
 - What do you think he means by **“be sons of your Father in heaven”**?
 - He’s really talking about the idea of characteristics.
 - How does God love?
 - Does God love his “enemies?”

- **“He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust...”**
 - God blesses not only those who are His, but those who are not His.
- **“For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” (v. 46)**
 - If we do the same as the unrighteous do, then are we any better than they?
- **“And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so?” (v. 47)**
 - What is a greeting?
 - Do we greet someone we like in a different way than those we don't?
 - How many times did we become friends with people by just talking to them - those we knew, as well as those we did not know?
- **“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (v. 48)**
 - Is a passage that is easily misunderstood?
 - Many think we are to reach perfection, but there is no way we can.
 - **Rom. 3:10** - **“As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one...’”**
 - **Rom. 3:23** - **“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”**
 - In context, this is talking about having perfect love.
 - We can love as God loves.
 - When we love our enemies as much as we want God to love us, then we have fulfilled **verse 48**.
 - When He talks of the perfection of the heavenly Father, He is talking about perfect love.
 - Our love is worthless if we show no more than the Gentiles.
 - **Romans 13:8** - **“Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another.”**
 - **1 John 4:19-21** - **“We love because He first loved us.”**
- **What's the take-home message?**
 - In Jesus' earthly ministry, He clarified that loving one's neighbor was the second-greatest of all God's commandments (**Matthew 22:36–39**).
 - He also expanded the definition of one's "neighbor" (**Luke 10:29-37**) well beyond the cultural norm through the parable of the Good Samaritan.
 - That doesn't mean this is easy; it's hard to love other people.
 - Jesus, though, will show that loving one's enemies can truly be powerful when done as a representative of God.
 - Once again, Jesus flips the common understanding of righteousness on its head.
 - Jesus' original audience probably wondered how any person could possibly be righteous, if a person must love His enemies.
 - That is part of the point Jesus intends to make (**Matthew 5:48**).