



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study: **LOVING OUR ENEMIES AS GOD LOVES THEM**

Matthew 5:43,44

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies”. Who is an enemy? He is an unfriendly opponent, somebody who hates and seeks to harm or cause trouble for somebody else. Our Lord and Saviour commands, **“Love your enemies.”** An enemy is someone who fights against another person in combat or battle. He is a hostile person who has a plan or purpose to hurt or harm you. As true children of God, we are commanded to love our enemies - all our enemies.

The context of this passage defines and describes the enemies who we are to love. The enemies **“curse”**, they **“hate”**, **“despise”** and **“persecute”** us. They are **“evil”** and **“unjust”** in their dealings with us. They do not love us, neither will they even **“salute”** or greet us. Other scriptures also describe the enemies we are commanded to love (Numbers 23:11; Job 16:9,10; Psalms 17:8-10; 25:19; 41:5; 55:3; 56:2; 69:4; 102:4-8; 143:3,4; Micah 7:8; Matthew 13:24-28). These negative attitudes and actions describe the enemy. Yet, our Lord has commanded that His true disciples reflect His love at all times and in all situations. Whatever our enemies say or do against us, true believers must respond with love.

SINCERE LOVE FOR NEIGHBOURS AND ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43,44; Leviticus 19:17,18; Romans 12:9,10; 2 Corinthians 8:8; Mark 12:32-34; Luke 10:25-37; Leviticus 19:34; Psalm 109:3-5; Luke 6:27,28,35; John 14:15.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour.” Actually, the Lord commands, both in the Old and New Testaments, **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”** Whatever **“thy neighbour”** does or does not do, **“thou shalt love him as thyself.”** And this love must be sincere, not insincere or hypocritical. Our love for neighbours must be practical, beneficial and profitable. **“Open rebuke is better than secret love”** (Proverbs 27:5). Sincere love is **“unfeigned love”** (1 Peter 1:22). **“Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth”** (1 John 3:18).

Our understanding of sincere, scriptural love is as important as our definition and identification of **“neighbour”**. **“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”** (Luke 10:29). Many people so narrow down the definition or description of the neighbour to exclude strangers, sinners and enemies. True believers, citizens of the Kingdom of God, are to love everyone, and love their enemies too. Our love for our enemies (our real, not just imaginary enemies) must be sincere and scriptural, not superficial and insincere.

SPECIFIED LOVE FOR OUR ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43,44; Proverbs 25:21,22; Exodus 23:4,5; 1 Samuel 24:4-7,16-22; Romans 12:14,17-21; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9-12; Galatians 6:9,10; Luke 6:27,28.

There are heights and degrees of love, just like there are heights and degrees of grace or faith. Concerning love, there is **“greater love”**, **“great love”**, **“love”** (John 15:13; Ephesians 2:4; Romans 5:8). We are to love God more than all men. Our love for Christ must be greater than our love for father, mother, son, daughter, wife, husband or ourselves (Matthew 10:37,38; Luke 14:26,27; John 21:15). Our love for wife, husband or our children is more than our love for neighbours and enemies (Ephesians 5:25,31; Mark 7:27; 1 Timothy 5:4,8). We are commanded to love our enemies and that love is specified, well defined and described by Christ.

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies.” How are we to love our enemies? **“Bless them”** when they curse you. The word bless here means to speak well of or to; not to curse or slander. **“Do good to them”** though they hate you. We are not to harbour any form of hatred in our hearts towards our enemies. We do not love the character or approve the conduct of those who curse, hate or injure us but we pity them and pray for their salvation.

SACRIFICIAL LOVE IN EVANGELISING THE ENEMIES

Matthew 5:43,44; Romans 5:8-10; 9:1-3; 10:1-4; 1 Corinthians 9:16,19-22; Galatians 4:16-19; Colossians 1:21,22; Titus 3:3-7; 2 Corinthians 5:14-20.

“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.” This is one of the most sublime precepts ever given to man. Yet, the natural man counts it unreasonable and absurd. **“The natural man receiveth not the things of the**

Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14). ***"Love your enemies."*** Who can obey this command? None but he who has the mind of Christ. This one precept is a sufficient proof that we need a changed nature, a transformed heart, in order to follow Christ and obey His Word.

"Love your enemies." How? ***"Bless them, do good to them, and pray for them."*** We cannot change the hearts and actions of our enemies; and while their hearts are unchanged, they will continue to hate and harass us. God alone can change hearts and transform lives; so, we must pray that He will save and convert our enemies by His love and power.

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