

**Text:** Mt 5.43-48, Rm 12.17-21, 1 Thess 5.15, 1 Pt 3.9-12

I'm still reading the book *Love in Hard Places*; consequently, you will be getting more sermons on the topic.

Back in February, we covered the part of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus taught us to love our enemies. I looked back at my notes and saw that I dealt with the passage generally rather than specifically.

Today I am going to touch on it again, but I want to touch on three other passages as well. There will be a second message, probably next Sunday, which will deal with the same passages.

The Big Idea of this message is that Loving Your Enemies is a theme in the New Testament. It isn't an isolated teaching at all.

Perhaps you already knew that, and perhaps I have a complete grasp of the obvious!

Today we are going to put the four passages together. I think doing that reinforces how strong this teaching is for New Testament believers. When we contemplate it, we find that the imperatives it gives to us are revolutionary, demanding a radical departure from the old way of life to the new.

Read Mt 5.43-48, Rm 12.17-21, 1 Thess 5.15, 1 Pt 3.9-12

**Proposition:** The law of loving your enemies makes the Christian life and testimony radically different from the way of the world.

## I. The love to be imitated (Mt 5.43-48)

**Matthew 5.44-45** "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

### A. How to love your enemies: *pray for them*

1. The supreme example of this is Jesus praying for his enemies on the cross:

**Luke 23.34** But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

2. KJV adds “bless” and “do good”

## B. The consequence of loving your enemies

1. That you may be sons of your Father

2. But note, this isn't a requirement for salvation, rather it is a consequence of salvation

a. In the ancient world, a son would grow up to do what his father did

b. If you love your enemies, you will be acting like your father

The assumption is that God is already your father.

## C. The kind of love we are talking about: God's providential love for all mankind (sun and rain as gifts to evil and good)

1. Not the same as God's love

a. For the saints

b. For the Son and Spirit

c. For the obedient

2. Rather, the “universal, undifferentiated love in his providential provision for the righteous and the unrighteous alike.”<sup>1</sup>

3. Carson characterizes this love as *generosity* — your prayers for your enemies ought to be *generous*

## II. The foundation of our “love your enemies” ethic (Rm 12.17-21)

### A. Founded on Rm 12.1-2: I beseech you by the mercies of God

1. The mercies of God refer to the whole of ch. 1-11

2. In other words, the whole doctrine of salvation

### B. Our generosity towards our enemies is a consequence of our salvation

The parable of the unjust servant negatively illustrates. He is forgiven a massive debt, but will not forgive his fellow servant a much smaller debt.

<sup>1</sup> D. A Carson, *Love in Hard Places* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2002), 45.

C. Mt 5 urges us to love our enemies by appealing to God's example; Rm 12 urges us to love our enemies by appealing to God's mercy *to us*

See also 1 Peter 3.9-12, where 1 Pt 1.3 becomes the foundation of that exhortation:

**1 Peter 1.3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

### III. The calling to our “love your enemies” ethic (1 Pt 3.9-12)

A. The command to love our enemies is a *calling* (9)

1. We are “the called” as Christians, called into our new relationship
2. The calling is also to a new standard of behaviour, loving our enemies

B. Calling is not merely to *faith*, but to *life*

1. We think of the possibility of suffering as something to be endured, an unpleasant “occupational hazard” of being a Christian
2. The fact is, we are called to suffering, and we are called to offer blessing in return
3. If we are called to this, we are also expected to respond

#### Conclusion:

I had one more point I was going to cover on this today, but I think I will stop there. This might turn into three messages!

The theme today is that the idea of loving our enemies is much more than just a nice thing to do, a nice idea that Christians can do if they get a chance.

Loving our enemies is something that ought to be an active part of our Christian life – we should look for opportunities to do good to others, especially when those others do poorly by us.