

Matthew 5

Loving the enemy

Outline

The Messiah defines the true nature of Kingdom life: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

- a. The character of Kingdom people (5:1-12)**
 - 1. **Attitude toward self: humble hunger for righteousness (5:1-6)**
 - 2. **Attitude toward others: passion for peace (5:7-9)**
 - 3. **Attitude toward enemies: joy in face of persecution (5:10-12)**
- b. The calling of Kingdom people (5:13-16)**
 - 1. **Salt: "I have been crucified with Christ" (5:13)**
 - 2. **Light: "Christ liveth in me" (5:14-16)**
- c. The conduct of Kingdom people (5:17-7:27)**
 - 1. **In respect to moral purity (5:17-48)**
 - a. **The letter of the law. (5:17-20)**
 - b. **The spirit of the law. (5:21-48)**
 - 1. **with respect to how we treat others (5:21-26)**
 - 2. **with respect to how we treat marriage (5:27-32)**
 - 3. **with respect to how we treat oaths (5:33-37)**
 - 4. **with respect to how we treat evil doers (5:38-42)**
 - 5. **with respect to how we treat our enemies (5:43-48)**

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, ' *You shall love your neighbor*, and hate your enemy.'⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you ⁴⁵ in order 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. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more {than others}? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

A. How are we to harmonize Jesus' teaching with the Old Testament commands to kill Israel's enemies? (for more material on this subject go to apptoteach.org theology files #511, #705, #905, #912)

- 1. **"Holy War"** is not a Muslim invention. Moses and Joshua were the first to engage in campaigns of "ethnic cleansing." Cities outside the land of Palestine do not need to be entirely destroyed, but attacks on cities inside the land require destruction of all life (Deut.20:10-18). This practice is known as the "ban" (**MRH** "herem") or "the law of anathema". To put a city under the ban was to devote its occupants to Yahweh for destruction. It is often translated "completely destroyed" or "devoted": Deut.7:1-2, 20:16-17 "When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess

and drives out before you many nations . . . then you must destroy them totally . . . and show them no mercy. Do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them . . . as the Lord our God has commanded you.”

2. Examples of Psalms that call down God’s wrath on our enemies. (NIV)

- *Psalm 58:6-10* ⁶ Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; tear out, O LORD, the fangs of the lions! ⁷ Let them vanish like water that flows away; when they draw the bow, let their arrows be blunted. ⁸ Like a slug melting away as it moves along, like a stillborn child, may they not see the sun. ⁹ Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns -- whether they be green or dry -- the wicked will be swept away. ¹⁰ The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.
- *Psalm 59:5* ⁵ O LORD God Almighty, the God of Israel, rouse yourself to punish all the nations; show no mercy to wicked traitors. Selah

3. How are these Psalms to be interpreted?

a. Carnal Vindictiveness

This view interprets the imprecatory psalms to be uninspired examples of carnal rage. C. S. Lewis held this view.

b. Poetic Hyperbole

This view attempts to reconcile the imprecatory problem by simply attributing the forceful language to poetic hyperbole and exaggeration in order to make a point.

c. Predictions of Doom

This interpretation attempts to explain away all the imprecatory psalms as no more than a prophetic prediction of coming doom. This interpretation denies that the psalmist had any desire to personally see justice done in his time.

d. Law Against Grace

This interpretation states that the imprecatory psalms were fine examples of living under law instead of grace. But now that we are under grace instead of law, we should not consider these prayers to be valid.

e. Incomplete Revelation

This view states that the imprecatory psalms are examples of an incomplete revelation and Old Testament ethics and therefore are not worthy of imitation by New Testament Christians who have access to the fullness of God's revelation.

f. Spiritual warfare against sin

This view reads the imprecatory psalms and the “herem” passages as poetic hyperbole describing our struggle against Satan and sin. The objects of our wrath are not flesh and blood but the spiritual forces of darkness and sin. No matter what the original intent of the psalmist may have been, the reader who looks back through the lens of the Kingdom of God in Christ, uses the psalms as examples

of spiritual warfare. These passages are also a powerful window into our understanding of the Cross, where Christ satisfied the just wrath of a holy God. This is my view.

4. Propitiation means that the death of Christ fully satisfies the demands of a righteous God with respect to judgment upon the sinner.

a. Key texts.

- **Rom.3:25** “whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.”
- **1 Jn..2:2** “and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.”
- **1 Jn.4:10** “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins.”
- Heb..2:17; Lk.18:13; Matt.16:22; Heb.8:12

b. The just wrath of God against sin requires satisfaction.

1. The O.T. makes this clear. Job 21:20; Jer.21:12; Ezk.24:8,13
2. The N.T. also speaks of God’s wrath. Mk.3:5; Lk.21:23; Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7; Jn.3:36; Rom.9:22; Eph.5:6; Col.3:6; Rev.6:16; 11:18; 14:10; 16:19; 19:15

c. The wrath of God in the Bible is distinct from the pagan concept of an angry god venting his temper on his subjects.

1. It is not the question of satisfying a vengeful God, but satisfying a God who is just, righteous and holy in all of His dealing.
2. This God not only demands complete satisfaction but is also the God of love who sent His Son to make propitiation.
3. The picture of a human being placating an angry deity is not characteristic of N.T. teaching.

d. The results of propitiation

1. God is justified in forgiving sin.
2. God is justified in bestowing righteousness.
3. God is justified in bestowing all grace on sinners. There is no basis for double jeopardy. Our sin will not bring God’s wrath to us if we are in Christ.

5. The reason for the display of God’s Wrath

a. Punishment for sin

- **Leviticus 18:24-28** “Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. **Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.** . . . And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.”

b. Protection for God’s people

- **Deuteronomy. 20:17-18** “**Completely destroy them** -- the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites -- as the LORD

your God has commanded you. Otherwise, **they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods**, and you will sin against the LORD your God.”

c. Herem – (dedicated to destruction)

- **Joshua 6:17-19** “The city and all that is in it are to be **devoted** (*herem*) to the LORD... But keep away from the **devoted things** (*herem*), so that you will not bring about your own **destruction** (*haram*) by taking any of them... All the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the LORD and must go into his treasury.”

6. The significance of the Cross

a. Jesus bore God’s wrath on the Cross

- **Isa.53** “⁴ Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. . . . ¹⁰ But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. ¹¹ As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.”
- **Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46** “My God, My God, Why has Thou forsaken Me?”
- **Rom.3** “²⁴ Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; ²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; ²⁶ for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
- **I John 2:2** “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (The world here must mean both Jew and Gentile not every single person because there are clear references of God’s wrath associated with the final judgment.)
- **1 John 4:10** “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

b. Christians escape God’s wrath.

- **John 3:36** “Whoever puts his faith in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see that life, for God's wrath remains on him.”

- **1 Thess.5:9** “For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
- **Rom.5:9** “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”
- **1 Cor.3:14-15** “If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”
- **1 Thess.1:10** “...wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.”
- **Eph.2** “¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, that no one should boast. ¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

7. God’s wrath after the Cross

a. The Gospels warn of coming wrath.

- **Luke 3:7** John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?”
- **Luke 12:49** [Jesus:] "I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled!"

b. The Epistles warn of present wrath.

- **Rom.1** “¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women

exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, ²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. ²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; {they are} gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; ³² and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

- **Heb.12:29** “For our God is a consuming fire.”
- **Eph.5:6** “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

c. The Epistles warn of future wrath.

- **Rom.12:19** “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath.”

8. The Christian’s relationship to God’s wrath

- Because the wrath of God has been poured out on Christ at the Cross, those in Christ by faith escape it.
- The propitiation of God’s wrath at the Cross is available to the whole world but (like eternal life) is applied only to those who by faith are “in Christ.” Those who are outside the Christian faith still may face God’s wrath.
- Discipline (which is an expression of compassion) should be distinguished from wrath, which is an expression of judgment. Christians will experience discipline but not wrath.

Distinctions between “wrath” and “discipline.”

God’s wrath	God’s discipline
For Punishment	For Correction
Motivated by justice	Motivated by compassion
II Thess.1:8-9 Nahum 1:2	I Pet.4:17-19

B. The nature of Christian love

1. The great commandment

Matt.22:36-40 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?”³⁶ And He said to him, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.*”³⁷ This is the great and foremost commandment.³⁸ The second is like it, *You shall love your neighbor as*

yourself. On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

2. The root of Godly Love
 - a. Love for God
 - b. Love for those He loves
3. Love moves us toward the beloved with a resolve to understand the deepest longings of their soul and a commitment to help them reach them.
4. Christian love is not natural to the world in that it is extended to our enemies.
5. Jesus' call to love our enemies is not:
 - **Pluralism** where there are no enemies and no evil just differences. Jesus asks us to love real “enemies” and not resist real “evil.”
 - **Rehabilitation** where the goal is centered on changing the enemy.
 - **Emotional** in that the Greek word used is not a word that demands an emotional connection. “Agape” is a word that is best described as an unconditional commitment to the welfare of another.

C. The “neighbor” was distinguished from the “enemy.”

1. The Rabbi's made a distinction between brothers (neighbors) and foreigners noting that they were to be treated differently. Lev.19:18
2. It should be noted that most of the exhortations to love in the New Testament are with reference to others within the covenant of faith (Christians). This makes Jesus' teaching in Matt.5 distinctive and significant.

D. Christian love is about what we do.

1. Blessing others
2. Promoting peace
3. Leaving judgment to God

E. Christian love is about who we are.

1. Children of God
2. Distinct from the world
3. Human
 - We bear the image and likeness of God in the flesh.
 - We are to be salt and light.
 - We are called to Love.
4. Christian love is not a rejection of self so much as a renewed image of self.
5. Christian love along with hope and faith defer judgment to God while extending His grace to others.

F. Love of the enemy does not mean:

1. Doing what they want.
2. Liking what they are.
3. Affirming what they do.

G. Love of the enemy does mean:

1. Having no malice toward them.
2. Caring for their real needs.
3. Sacrificing for their ultimate good.