

2/18/2024—Matthew 5:43-48—The Hardest Expression of Love

I. Context

- a. Immediately follows a call not to retaliate against evil acts; Jesus now turns to the relationship with those who may be deemed as enemies.
- b. Love your neighbor—*Lev. 19:18*; many then limited their love to who they considered neighbors—implying that it was okay then to hate one's non-neighbors, or enemies; OT never states to hate one's enemies, but many took that as an implied aspect of this command

II. Love your enemies

- a. Reminder that love is an action, not an emotion or a reaction (you do not need to have warm feelings toward them in order to show them love)
- b. V. 45—unconditional love toward enemies is a reflection of our Heavenly Father's love (c.f. *John 3:16*; *Romans 5:8*; *Luke 23:34*)
- c. Vv. 46-47—Christian love must go beyond love typically shown by that of the world, otherwise what makes us distinct?
- d. This is not suggesting we condone evil behavior of our enemies, but we choose to love them despite that.

III. How do I go about obeying this difficult command?

- a. Spend time reflecting on God and the core of the gospel; focus on God's holiness and greatness, and then on his love and forgiveness most fully expressed on the cross
- b. Change your perspective—take time to get to know people (Jesus often did this); are you struggling with hating certain groups (Immigrants, Black Americans, Russians, Muslims, MAGA People)?
- c. Just do it (despite how you feel); love is not about warm affections, it is about action
- d. Be mindful about how you respond to the culture war we are experiencing in our country today.
- e. Meditate constantly on the gospel—it will remove any feelings of superiority or entitlement and humbly remind you of your own need for unconditional love.