

The Mount Message: Loving Your Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48 Lesson 8)

THE EXPERIENCE BIBLE STUDY

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Loving Your Enemies – What Happened To The Law?

1. Leviticus 19:18 commanded "*love of neighbor*" but the context is that neighbor only included "fellow Israelites".
2. There is **NO** command to hate the enemy in the OT but there are statements that God "hates all evildoers" (Psalm 5:5) & statements that apply others do, and should do, the same (Deuteronomy 23:3-7; 30:7; Psalm 26:5; 139:21-22)
3. The primary meaning is **NOT** personal vindictiveness or disdain BUT the religious rejection of those who don't belong to God's people and keep God's law.

What Does Jesus Mean?

1. This is not based on a *humanitarian ideal, a doctrine of human rights or some type of strategy to win the enemy over.*
2. Jesus bases this command on: **a)** his authority to set his own command in tension with the law in 5:43; **b)** on the nature of God who loves all impartially (5:45); **c)** the promise of an end-time reward (5:46)
3. The idea of reward is not motivated by selfishness but by the *radical life-style change* the disciples are called into.

Is Jesus Asking For Too Much?

1. Jesus challenges, commands them to be perfect (vs. 48) and their pursuit of perfection is not to be diluted for comfort neither should it be understood in the Greek sense of absolute moral perfection.
2. It is against the backdrop of *humanity's fallenness* that the disciple is called to be perfect - "wholeness" is the intention.
3. Biblical "wholeness" or "perfection" means serving God whole-heartedly, to be single-minded in devotion to the one God, just as God is one. It is the ethical stance appropriate to a monotheistic faith.

Let's Pray!

Closing

Lord God, this command **challenges** us to alter our perspectives. It **forces** us to examine our own hearts and to reevaluate how we define faith in you. Give us the **grace** to serve You whole-heartedly, with our complete beings. Give us the **power** to be more patient and understanding of ourselves, so that we may live a true life of love that glorifies and honors Your name. In Jesus name, Amen!

