

Matthew 5.43-48 - "Being made Whole"

*"You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself I am the LORD."* - Leviticus 19.17-18

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**As we enter into the last section of chapter 5** we find ourselves faced with a final and emphatic push into what we call our "righteousness", and it is fitting that it ends with a topic like love. In this context it seems, on the surface, like Jesus is calling us to something that is the opposite of love, because in on heads and hearts, enemies are not to be treated with love - that is in fact what makes them our enemies. We see this in the OT in regard to sin (Lev. 20), and in John 18.12-24 He speaks against unjust punishment. **There is an important distinction here.**

Love within this context however, still seems a little bizarre, not to mention *prayer*. I can my best to help out someone who is clearly not out for my best interests. How can I love someone who, in my eyes, is rather *un-lovable*? It really comes down to our definition of the enemy at hand.

*"So the **ultimate cause** of any misery or lack of joy is separation from God, and the one cause of separation from Him is self. Wherever we are unhappy it means that in some way or other we are looking at ourselves and thinking about ourselves, instead of communing [and seeking to glorify] God. ...And as I understand the teaching of the Scriptures, holiness eventually means deliverance from this self-centered life. **Holiness, in other words, must not be thought of primarily in terms of actions [even those directed toward us by others], but in terms of attitudes toward self.** It does not mean essentially that I do not do certain things & try to do others. There are people who never do certain things that are regarded as sinful, but they are full of pride of self"* - Martyn Lloyd-Jones

If we know that Jesus is initially less concerned about our *external* enemies in this passage than us, we need to filter what makes them our "enemies". Are we the one who is cherishing hostility against them or they us? Have we ever made any "positive" movement in terms of love? If they are still our enemies at that point, then we are called to love and pray for them. But why?

*"Love for enemies is a reflection of the character of God Himself"* - R.T. France

- 1) Like Father like son.** To show that we are indeed the Sons of God (v. 44-45), through, *the proper outworking of the relationship*. It is not about what we do not do, but what we do *and* why we do the things we do.
- 2) To open our eyes see that they are the object of God's love** (v.45-46), as we are (Rom. 5.10). If that is true, then we are called to stand with them, to walk with them, and to have a chance to point to the work of Jesus in our lives.
- 3) We are interceding on their behalf** because they cannot do it themselves.
- 4) It is in this process that we being made "whole"**(v.48). He is the Standard, not us. We are being called even further into the realm of Christ - for we are being pierced - first our hearts in showing our deep roots of sin, then our physical reactions to those sins, and now the quiet corners of our spiritual person - we must now love & pray for them too. And maybe that isn't all that surprising considering the work we hope that might be done through and in us.