

Matthew 5:43 to End. Christ Enjoins the Forgiveness of Enemies.

by Favell Lee Mortimer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of loving our enemies, not just our friends, and shows that this love is a duty and a choice that requires a renewed spirit and a new heart.

Scripture: Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 5:43, Romans 5:8, Colossians 3:14, 1 John 4:7

Topics: "Loving Enemies", "Christian Righteousness"

Description

Favell Lee Mortimer preaches on the command to love our neighbors as ourselves, emphasizing that every human being is our neighbor and we are called to love all, even our enemies. Our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees, requiring us to love those who hate us, speak kindly to them, and pray for them. This love is only possible with a new heart and is a reflection of the love God has shown us, even when we were His enemies.

Transcript

It is written in Lev. 19, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The Pharisees for many ages past had given a very imperfect explanation of this law. They had not explained the term "neighbor" aright. They had declared that it applied to those who loved us, and did not include those who hated us. But this was not true. Every human being is, in one sense, our neighbor. We are therefore commanded to love all. God had never said, "You shall hate your enemy;" for, though he had desired the Jews to form no friendships with heathen nations, he had never commanded them to hate or injure them from feelings of revenge. It was man who had added, "You shall hate your enemy." How easy it was to obey such a law! By nature we love our friends, and hate our enemies. As Christ said, "Even the publicans love those who love them." The publicans were people of very bad character, who generally defrauded in collecting the taxes, and who were therefore much despised--yet even they behaved with kindness and respect to their particular friends. The Pharisees had no reason to be proud of such righteousness as this.

Well might our Savior say to his disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Yet this is the sort of righteousness which men are still inclined to think sufficient to entitle them to everlasting happiness. How often people say, "Have I not been a good mother to my children, a faithful friend, a kind brother--what harm have I done?" They claim a reward from God for such goodness as this! But our Savior expects far

more from his disciples; he expects them to love those who hate them; to speak kindly to them, in spite of their abusive words, and to pray for them, notwithstanding repeated injuries. And yet even this conduct deserves no reward, because it is no more than our duty.

Do we say, how is it possible for us to do this? It is impossible, without a new heart. We are too sinful to do it. Those who have been renewed by grace are enabled to love their enemies. The missionaries who went to Greenland to dwell amid plains of snow and mountains of ice, were treated in the most unkind manner by the natives. Once the ship that was to have brought them provisions did not arrive at the expected time, and they were reduced to the brink of famine; for they could not procure food by hunting seals, as the natives did. The cruel Greenlanders mocked at their sufferings, and refused to help them. At length the ship containing provisions arrived. The missionaries might have gone back in it to their native country, but they remained in Greenland. Soon afterwards, many of the people were in need of food, as through their improvidence their summer stores were exhausted. Did the missionaries refuse to feed them? They shared their little supplies with them. The people were attacked with the smallpox; the missionaries nursed them with the greatest tenderness. This conduct had a great effect in softening the minds of the heathen towards their teachers, and in preparing them to receive their message. It is by such behavior we may show that we are the children of God.

How does God behave towards ungrateful man? Our Savior reminded his disciples that God sent rain, and the light of day, to all, even to those who hated him. But he did not then speak of a still greater proof of love--the gift of his Son. For a righteous man some might even dare to die; but God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet enemies, we were reconciled to him by the death of his Son. This shows us what kind of love we ought to feel for our enemies. The same kind that God feels for us. Not the love of approbation, (that we can only feel for the righteous,) but the love of compassion. It is this love that God felt for the world when he gave his Son to die for it. To love an enemy is to be perfect; for it is to have charity, the bond of perfectness. If we have this charity, this love to all, we are like God, though our love can never be so great as His.

If we earnestly desire the salvation of our enemies, then we may know that we are the children of God. Let us endeavor to melt their hearts by acts of kindness. Such efforts are often blessed to the conversion of sinners. A holy man was once, for the truth's sake, shut up in a prison, and obliged to share the cell with a murderer. The conduct of his wicked companion was so intolerable, that his fellow-prisoner complained of him to those who overlooked the prison. An order was issued that the murderer should be removed to another dungeon. When the unhappy man heard to what place he was to be committed, his dismay was great, for he knew that the damp and closeness of that dungeon would cut short his life in a few days. He implored his fellow-prisoner, with many tears, to ask that the sentence might be reversed. The holy man felt that it was his duty to yield to these entreaties. He requested that the murderer might be permitted to remain with him. His petition was granted, but with this condition, that he should complain no more of the conduct of his companion. The murderer was melted by the generosity of the man he had once hated and annoyed. He fell at his feet, and with tears of gratitude implored his pardon. Henceforth he listened to his instructions, and through the grace of God, repented, and believed the Gospel.

Source:

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