



Like Father, Like Son

In our last session, we saw how Jesus taught us not to seek retaliation nor vengeance but to patiently endure in hardship and persecution. Christians are also told to be peacemakers (Matt. 5:9) and to bless those that persecute us and not to curse them (Rom. 12:14). How are God's people to bless those that try to inflict them with all kinds of harm? The book of Proverbs in 25:21 tells us that "if your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink." The reason for this was so that others "may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16b)

LIKE FATHER LIKE SON

Read Matthew 5:43-48

- 1) Do you think Jesus is introducing a new law? (v43)

- 2) Which passage does Jesus quote from the Old Testament? (v43)

- 3) How have the teachers of the law erred from the original teaching?

- 4) What persecution look like during the time Jesus spoke these words? What does persecution look like today?

- 5) In verse 44, we are given the command. In verse 45, we are given the reason behind the command. What are some reasons in this verse to which Christians ought to love and pray for those that persecute us?

- 6) How are Christians mean to love differently to those that do not know God? (v46-47)

- 7) What is meant in the phrase "be perfect...as your heavenly Father is perfect"? (v48)

- 8) Do you think anyone will reach a state of perfection in this life (i.e. never sinning, being perfect in love etc.)? What Bible passages would help us answer this question?



Conclusion

We can see that over time God's word has been added to with the phrase 'hate your enemies'. Jesus draws from Leviticus 19:18 which does not tell the Israelites to hate their enemies. Albert Barnes writes concerning the idea behind "hate your enemies" saying, "That we must therefore hate our enemy was an inference drawn from it by the Jews. They supposed that if we loved the one [our neighbour], we must of course hate the other."

Jesus corrects the people by stating that this command he gives them was always the initial intent behind God's purpose for this law. This can be seen in Romans 12:9-21 which draws from Proverbs 25:21-22 and the ideas seen behind the Old Testament commands such as Exodus 23:4-5 and Proverbs 24:17:18. From these passages we can see that God always intended his chosen people from the very beginning to love both God and all people who are created in His image. According to John Calvin, "Christ does not introduce new laws, but corrects the wicked glosses of the Scribes, by whom the purity of the divine law had been corrupted."

We have seen from the previous study that persecution might be in the form of physical abuse, financial or taking away the liberty and freedom of followers of Christ (Matt 5:39b-41). We also know from the early church that martyrdom became very common as it is now in some parts of the world.

In Matthew 5:45 Jesus tells his listeners that we ought to love our enemies and pray for them because that is what our heavenly Father is doing. If we truly love God and want to be more like Christ, we imitate his love. For we are told that God blesses both the righteous and the unrighteous. And Christ loved us while we were still enemies of God (Rom. 5:8). And God provides rain for both the wicked and the righteous (Matt. 5:45). We are also told that even an evil person might love their mother. Therefore, the difference between the love of those that have the Holy Spirit dwelling within them and those that do not know God is that one loves all people and the other only those that he or she benefits from.

True love is self-sacrificing so that the other might gain. Therefore, love your enemies since your heavenly Father loves his enemies. This will show if you are truly adopted as children of God. From the beginning God's chosen people were to be holy (be set apart from the world in their conduct and in love) in order that they might reflect God's light among the nations. This is still true in the new covenant which Jesus established. Therefore, in the last verse we are told to be perfect just like our heavenly Father. Let us love our enemies and pray for them as Jesus did.