

# THE RED LETTER LECTURES

## NOTES

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Jesus' Teaching on Neighbors and Enemies  
Matthew 5:43—48

#### I. Neighbors

You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." — Mt. 5:43

##### A. *Love your neighbor . . .*

1. There were two great commandments in the Law, which were the foundation for all of the Law.  
*See Mt. 22:34-40.*
2. "Who is my neighbor?" was a question posed to Jesus. His reply was the one who shows mercy.  
*See Lk. 10:37*
3. A neighbor is anyone in need of help.
4. The Law also commands love of the same depth for the sojourner, the resident alien in the land.  
*See Lev. 19:33-34.*
5. This is another part of the Law that Israel refuses to honor today. This is at the heart of the Israeli-Arab conflict.

##### B. *and hate your enemy . . .*

1. This phrase is found nowhere in Scripture.
2. Most likely a principle drawn by the scribes and Pharisees from the Law. *See Lev. 19:18.*

#### II. Enemies

But I tell you: **LOVE\*** your enemies and **PRAY\*** for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. — Mt. 5:44

Read Boice, pp. 140-49.

Mt. 22:34-40: Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: "Love your neighbor as yourself." All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Lk. 10:37: The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

Lev. 19:33-34: "When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Lev. 19:18: Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

A. **LOVE\* your enemies . . .**

1. An Imperative Command.
2. The word for love is *agape*, which is best translated, "unconditional love" or a love that is without discrimination—loves even when the object is hateful or unlovely.<sup>11</sup>
3. Love is a description of God. See *1 Jn. 4:7-8*.
4. It is impossible for us to love our enemies this way, unless God gives us that kind of love—which He does when we become born again. See *Rom. 5:5*.
5. An enemy is one who is hostile and expresses hatred toward another, to the point of preferring to see you dead rather than alive.
6. An enemy is not someone who may disagree with you or even be opposed to your values.
7. Our ultimate enemy is the devil. See *1 Ptr. 5:8*.

B. **PRAY\* for those who persecute you . . .**

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Jesus was very clear to His disciples that hatred and persecution would come. See *Jn. 15:18-20*.
3. So what is the Christian response? Pray.

C. **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**

1. To be a heavenly son was to be like the Father who displays His love without discrimination.

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.  
— Mt. 5:45

- A. God is fair to all and treats sinners and saints alike as

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<sup>11</sup> *Boice*, p. 141.

1 Jn. 4:7-8: Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Rom. 5:5: And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

1 Ptr. 5:8: Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Jn. 15:18-20: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also."

far as His creation. Sun and rain were necessary for the raising of crops for food, etc.

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? — Mt. 5:46-47

A. *if you love those who love you . . .*

1. Lit., "If you *agape* those who *agape* you."
2. This is talking about believers responding to believers. There is no reward in doing this because that is commanded by our Lord as a result of our being His disciple. See *1 Jn. 4:11-12; Jn. 15:12*.

B. *do not even the tax collectors . . . pagans . . .*

1. Look around you. Birds of a feather flock together. Even the unbelieving culture demonstrates "love" toward one another at times.

*C.S. Lewis helps us on this point:* "The rule for all of us is perfectly simple. Do not waste your time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him. If you do him a good turn, you will find yourself disliking him less . . . The difference between a Christian and a worldly man is not that the worldly man has only affections or 'likings' and the Christian has only 'charity.' The worldly man treats certain people kindly because he 'likes' them; the Christian, trying to treat every one kindly, finds himself liking more and more people as he goes on—including people he could not even have imagined himself liking at the beginning."<sup>12</sup>

**BE PERFECT\*** therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. — Mt. 5:48

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*1 Jn. 4:11-12:* Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

*Jn. 15:12:* My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in *Boice*, p. 144.

A. *Be perfect . . . as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

1. An Imperative Command.
2. Lit., "you shall be perfect." "You are to be perfect" (NAS). Future tense.
3. Perfect (teleios). Lit., "complete, full, wanting in nothing." Can be used in a relative or absolute sense.
4. God's perfection is absolute; our perfection is dependent upon God doing the work in us.
5. How does He do that in us?
  - a. He perfects our record. *See Heb. 10:13-14.*
  - b. He perfects us in this life through His sanctifying work. *See Phil. 3:12-15.*
  - c. God makes us perfect at our physical death. *See Phil. 1:21; Phil. 1:6; 1 Cor. 15:42-44.*
6. Jesus followers are to be as mature or perfect as God in the ways that they love. We can be because we have God's love.

III. Commandments in this section of study.

- A. **LOVE your enemies**
- B. **PRAY for those who persecute you.**
- C. **(You) BE perfect.**

IV. Assignment

- A. Boice makes the statement that in his research on the Sermon on the Mount, he discovered that the NT almost always speaks of God's love in the context of the cross.
  1. How many scriptures can you find that confirm that statement? List them in the margin.

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Heb. 10:13-14: Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Phil. 3:12-15: Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.

Phil. 1:21: For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Phil 1:6: . . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1 Cor. 15:42-44: So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

**Scripture Assignment:**

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## A Jew, a Palestinian, and a Border Crossing

*This is a true story of Aaron, a Messianic Jew, who doesn't have a hateful bone in his body. He used to have plenty of bitterness but Jesus delivered him from it all.*

While serving in the Israel army (IDF) and encountering numerous conflicts with Palestinians, Aaron saw things that were hard to forget. He dealt with his pain by burying those memories deep inside. Close friends were killed in suicide bombings that specifically targeted Israeli soldiers. Hezbollah terrorists used women and children as human shields in Lebanon. Shoot-outs with Hamas in the Gaza Strip were some of the worst experiences of his life. All of this contributed to Aaron's hate for Arabs, Muslims in particular. Aaron would be the first to say that Israel didn't do everything right, either. That bothered him too, since he was a part of it. He didn't sleep well.

Miraculously Aaron opened his heart to Jesus as his Savior a few years after his military service. Over time he was also released from the anger that had controlled him. An Arabic pastor preached one Saturday in the messianic congregation that Aaron attended. Aaron cried throughout the sermon, as God began to replace his hatred for Arabs with love.

Aaron became friends with Palestinian believers in the West Bank, in places like Ramallah and Bethlehem, and began to visit them. Since he didn't look Jewish, he was able to move around in Palestinian areas with ease. They studied the Bible and prayed together; but since many of these believers had come from a Muslim background, Aaron was careful as he met with them. He developed a love for his new friends and soon realized what it was like to live on the other side of the fence between Israel and the Palestinian territories. Some of Aaron's Jewish friends who weren't Christians told him that he had lost his mind. To them he was becoming friends with the enemy.

Aaron's friends weren't the only ones who thought he had lost his mind. Suspicious Palestinian guards often questioned him on his way in or out of the West Bank. On one occasion he was interrogated and accused of being an Israeli spy.

One day their suspicion turned to violence. Israel had just completed a military campaign in Jenin, so the West Bank was tense. Aaron had stayed out of Ramallah during the conflict, but he felt that things had settled down. Hamdi was one of the Palestinian guards that day at the border crossing only a few miles from Jerusalem. He was a committed Muslim and had been in several battles with the IDF. As Aaron got in line, Hamdi questioned him about why he was in the West Bank. Fearing that if he was too specific some of the Palestinian believers might be compromised and eventually persecuted, Aaron kept his answers short and somewhat evasive.

Aaron certainly knew how to defend himself, but he had decided in advance that if he was ever attacked for being a believer he wouldn't fight back. Since Jesus didn't fight back when he was questioned before his crucifixion, neither would he.

Getting nowhere with his questioning, Hamdi, out of frustration, slapped Aaron's face. With no Israeli guards in sight and the Israeli military out of the West Bank, Hamdi realized he had the chance for which he had long been waiting. He would beat the Jew until he begged for mercy. And beat him he did. Hamdi enjoyed it for a while; but when Aaron took every punch in silence, Hamdi's determination to make a fool of him faded. Aaron lay on cement, covered in blood.

But then it happened. Hamdi says he learned a lesson that would change the entire trajectory of his life. Aaron slowly arose and looked Hamdi directly in the eyes. Then, in all sincerity, he said, "I am sorry that I made you angry. I pray that you will forgive me. I know things are probably tough here in the West Bank for you and your family. I am going to pray to Jesus for you. I know that you hate me, but Jesus said to love your enemies." With those words Aaron leaned forward and gave Hamdi a hug. Then he was on his way.

As Hamdi was telling me this story just a few months ago, he said this was the most powerful moment of his life. "I could not forget those words. They replayed in my ears over and over for the next few days. I realized that the people of my religion have plenty of weapons. We've had the best swords for 1,400 years now! We have plenty of hate that makes us want to kill anyone who gets in our way. But we don't have love. How could a Jew take that kind of beating from me and then turn around and show love to me? I had to find out."

Hamdi went on a quest, and God led him straight to some new believers in the West Bank. They answered all of his questions and the power of the Holy Spirit pierced his heart. He got on his knees and gave his life to Jesus.

Hamdi grew in his faith rapidly. He accepted Jesus' love and forgiveness about ten years ago, and now pastors a church somewhere in the West Bank. The turnaround has been miraculous.

"Islam is cracking from the inside," Hamdi says. "They thought that all Christians hated them, just as I did. But now they are seeing love. It's our job to bring it to them. It took a Jew to show me how God's love operates. He should have hated me for all I did to him, but he loved me. God has now sent me to bring this message to Palestinians who need to know about the love of Jesus. When a believer has the Word of God and the love of God in his heart, this is irresistible."

Taken from *Breakthrough, The Return of Hope to the Middle East*, Tom Doyle, pp. 51-53.