

Acting Like Your Father Even When It's Difficult

Matthew 5:43-48

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Matthew 5:7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

Matthew 5:9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

Matthew 5:10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 5:11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:43-48 “You have heard that it was said, ‘ You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

- I. **You must love both your neighbors and your enemies because that makes you most like your Father.**
 - A. Jesus teaches you to live that out as a city on a hill, meaning to display your Father’s love so that those around you will know that you are your Father’s children and honor God because of it.
 - B. You will be persecuted by other religious people because of your obedience to Christ.
 - C. Showing mercy and love for your enemies are some of the most Godlike qualities because they are the least humanlike.

II. You should not confuse your Father's love with your Father's approval.

Romans 5:6, 8 "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly....but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

1 Peter 3:18 "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit..."

- A. Your Father is not afraid to send rain on the just and on the unjust because your Father is not afraid that well-intended, informed religious people will not approve of His love.
- B. Do not be afraid of other people who will confuse your love for your approval.

Proverbs 29:25 "The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is safe."

- C. The fear of man appears in at least two ways for the Christian. Both are sinful.
 - 1. Fear of what the world will think.
 - 2. Fear of what other Christians will think.

Jesus knows that even His best disciples are not impervious to the great weakness that is the fear of man. That is why He addresses it in the gospels.

Galatians 2:11-14 "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, Cephas was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came Cephas drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with Cephas, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

III. You will not be free to take advantage of the unique opportunities God is giving you if you fear other people misunderstanding your obedience.

- A. God calls us to be unapologetically obedient to Him.

IV. You will persevere in the midst of persecution only when the Father is your standard.

- A. The standard is impossible so there is no room for boasting.
- B. You must desire our Father's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven so much that we start to think like Him as far as our human minds are able.

Romans 12:2 "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Philippians 2:5-11 "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

- C. The goal of your love is to please your Father and not a man-made Utopia so you are free from the burden of worldly standards of love.
- D. The goal of your love is to please your Father and not to please man so you are free from the burden of your tribal standards of love.