

## Love Your Enemies (*Part 1*)

*Romans 12:14-21*

**Thought for the Day:** With the grace and help of God, we can accurately show the character of the Lord to others by loving our enemies and blessing those who persecute us.

### **Matthew 5:43-48**

The Pharisees taught that it was right to “love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” We feel justified in hating those who hate us. But Jesus taught that, as children of God, we accurately reflect our Father’s character when we extend love, mercy and forgiveness to those who hurt us. One of the best ways of doing this is by praying for God to bless them. As God’s children, the standard we are to shoot for is perfection and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can love our enemies.

### **14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.**

- The examples of Jesus and Stephen. (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)
- Instead of hoping for the worst to befall our enemies, we are to hope and pray that God will show His undeserved favor and good will toward them.
- It is right to pray for truth and justice to prevail—but we must be ready to extend mercy, compassion and forgiveness. (Matthew 6:12-15 – note the emphasis on forgiveness).

### **15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.**

- What would happen if we rejoiced with our enemies when they were rejoicing and wept with our enemies when they were weeping? (Proverbs 24:17-18; Job 31:29-30; Psalm 35:11-14; Proverbs 17:5)

### **16 Live in harmony with one another... 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everybody.**

- Let’s be honest, there are some people that just don’t want to get along.
- After you’ve done all you can do, give yourself permission to cut ‘em loose!

### **Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.**

- No room for pride, *especially* in relationship to our enemies!

### **17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. *NLT*— Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.**

- Take the high ground—do the right thing for the right reasons.
- “If you defend yourself, then the Lord can’t defend you. Leave it in His hands.” (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 153*)

### **19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.**

- 1 Thessalonians 5:15; 1 Peter 3:9.

- Taking revenge will only escalate the situation; if we return evil for evil, we will only add fuel to the fire.
- "While seeking revenge, dig two graves—one for yourself." (*Douglas Horton*)

**20 On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."**

- "Always forgive your enemies; nothing annoys them so much." (*Oscar Wilde*)
- By returning evil with good, the Lord will use this to bring the person to the place of shame and remorse due to a guilty conscience, hopefully bringing about repentance and reconciliation.

**21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

- The best way to get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend.
- "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?" (*Abraham Lincoln*)

"Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offence against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offences of others, it proves that we have minimized our own." (*John R. W. Stott, The Life Application Commentary Series*)

"These verses summarize the core of Christian living. If we love someone the way Christ loves us, we will be willing to forgive. If we have experienced God's grace, we will want to pass it on to others. And remember, grace is undeserved favor. By giving an enemy a drink, we're not excusing his misdeeds. We are recognizing him, forgiving him, and loving him in spite of his sins—just as Christ did for us." (*The Life Application Commentary Series*)