

Love Your Enemy

I. The Kingdom's Character (Matthew 5:1–16)

Jesus reveals the Kingdom's character — transforming human weakness into divine identity.

5:3–10 — The Beatitudes: The inner qualities of Kingdom citizens.

5:11–12 — The Truth of Persecution: The cost of discipleship.

5:13–16 — Salt and Light: The calling to influence and illuminate the world.

II. The Kingdom's Law (Matthew 5:17–48)

Jesus deepens the Mosaic Law — moving from external compliance to internal transformation.

5:17–20 — Christ and the Law: Fulfillment, not abolition.

5:21–26 — Anger and Reconciliation: Murder begins in the heart.

5:27–30 — Adultery and Lust: Purity of intention.

5:31–32 — Divorce: Faithfulness and integrity in covenant.

5:33–37 — Oaths: Let your “Yes” be “Yes.”

5:38–42 — Retaliation: Nonresistance and generosity.

5:43–48 — Love for Enemies: The perfection of divine love.

After today we will begin III. The Kingdom's Devotion (Matthew 6:1–18)

Why This Section Comes Next (Very Important)

“Eye for an eye” dismantles personal retaliation.

“Love your enemies” dismantles personal hatred.

Matthew 5:43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

45 that you may be sons of your Father 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.

46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Eye for an eye removes the right to retaliate.

Love your enemy removes the desire to destroy.

The Core Question People Ask

“If we love our enemies, what about justice?”

Jesus is not abolishing justice.

He is reassigning authority.

Key distinction:

- Justice belongs to God
- Retaliation belongs to ego

This is the hinge everything turns on.

Scripture Makes the Distinction Explicit

Proverbs — Justice Is God’s Domain

Book of Proverbs

- “Do not say, ‘I will repay evil’; wait for the LORD, and He will save you.” (Prov 20:22)
- “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls... lest the LORD see it and be displeased.” (Prov 24:17–18)

Notice: The problem isn’t justice — it’s personal satisfaction in judgment.

Paul — The Final Clarifier

Epistle to the Romans

Romans 12 mirrors Jesus exactly:

- “Repay no one evil for evil.”
- “Never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God.”
- “If your enemy is hungry, feed him.”

Then immediately — Romans 13:

- God authorizes governing authorities to bear the sword for justice

That sequencing matters.

Paul separates personal ethics from institutional justice.

What Jesus Is Actually Protecting

Jesus knows something dangerous about humans:

- We confuse hurt with righteousness
- We confuse anger with justice
- We confuse power with authority

**Loving your enemy does not cancel justice.
It cancels our claim to execute it.**

The moment I take vengeance into my own hands,
I declare myself the giver and owner of life.

Authority over life belongs only to the one who gave it.

How do we bless those who curse us, do good for those who hate us and pray for those who spitefully use us?

Resentment prayer.

“that you may be sons of your Father 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.”
Sons of God?

Jesus was not addressing only males.

The phrase “sons of your Father in heaven” in Gospel of Matthew 5:45 is inclusive, not gender-exclusive.

Why “sons” is used at all

In the Hebrew and Second Temple Jewish context, “son of” is not primarily about gender — it’s about identity, likeness, and inheritance.

To be called a “son of” someone meant:

- to reflect their character
- to act in their ways
- to belong to their household
- to share in their inheritance

So “sons of your Father in heaven” means:

Those who bear the family likeness of God
— not “male children only.”

Why Jesus doesn’t say “children” here

This is subtle but important.

In the ancient world:

- sons were the legal heirs
- sons represented the father publicly
- sons carried the family name and authority

By using sons, Jesus is actually elevating everyone, not excluding anyone.

He is saying:

All who live this way stand in the full status of heirs.

That includes:

- men
- women
- the poor
- the powerless
- the socially invisible

Which is radically leveling in that culture.

The immediate context proves this

Jesus ties “being sons of the Father” to doing what the Father does:

- God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good
- God sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous

So the “sonship” is defined by imitating God’s indiscriminate goodness, not by biology.

If it were male-only, the logic collapses — because women are clearly included among those called to love enemies and reflect God’s mercy.

How the rest of the New Testament confirms this

Later writers make this explicit:

Epistle to the Galatians 3:26–28

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Epistle to the Romans 8:14–17

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God...

The Spirit Himself bears witness that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs — heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.”

Why this matters theologically

If Jesus were excluding women here:

- the Sermon on the Mount would fracture
- God's character would become partial
- love of enemies would become selective

Instead, Jesus is doing the opposite:

He's redefining family around love, not lineage.

“When the New Testament says ‘sons of God,’ it means full heirs — and Scripture explicitly says that includes male and female alike.”

In Matthew 5, Jesus removes personal hatred (love your enemy) and grounds us in God's perfection, not human restraint. Because it is an active choice to change our own hearts and will to God.

It's refusal to impersonate God.

Perfect?

Why Act as God, Be perfect as God but not Impersonate God?

This passage exposes another character trait of God. - Perfection.

I don't stand here as someone who has mastered this teaching.

I stand here as someone who is being mastered by it.

Everything Jesus says here confronts me first.

If I ever speak as though I'm exempt from it, I've already violated it.

Removing the False Assumption

A problem begins when people hear:

“Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect”

— Gospel of Matthew 5:48

and assume:

- moral flawlessness
- sinless performance
- spiritual superiority
- an impossible standard meant to shame

That interpretation immediately contradicts the rest of Scripture and human experience — and Jesus does not contradict Himself.

Jesus is not demanding human flawlessness. He is pointing to divine completeness.

What “Perfect” Actually Means Here

The word Jesus uses (teleios) does not mean “never failing.”

It means:

- complete
- whole
- brought to its intended end
- undivided

So Jesus is not saying:

“Achieve God-level performance.”

He is saying:

“Do not be divided between God’s way and your own.”

That fits perfectly with the context:

- loving enemies
- refusing vengeance
- reflecting the Father’s character

We are not perfect beings.

But God’s love is perfect.

So when:

- we love instead of retaliate
- forgive instead of dominate
- give instead of grasp

we are not becoming perfect people —

we are participating in a perfect act.

And in that participation, something happens:

We experience the fullness of what God is.

That joy, that peace, that clarity —

that is perfection being tasted, not owned.

All acts of God are perfect.

So when the Holy Spirit moves:

- the act is perfect
- the love is perfect
- the intention is perfect

Even if we are not.

And because love is reciprocal:

- when we give it, we receive it

- when we serve, we are filled
 - when we surrender control, we experience joy
- That's why obedience feels like life when it's real.

I only love God as much as the person I love the least.

In Human Standards:

If no one sees you as an enemy, you're not important

If no one talks behind your back, you're not relevant

If someone tries to take advantage of you, it is because you have value

If someone tries to put you down, it is because you are already above them

Hate only comes from below, never from above