

# Love Your Enemies

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Date: 18 May 2025

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ]     Good morning. It's great to worship with you. And for those of you who know me, my name is Sean. And it's my joy and privilege to preach God's word to you this morning.! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, verse 43 to 48.
- If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand. We'd love to give you a copy to use. We are coming today to the last and climactic section of the six contrasts that Jesus sets up between the contemporary Jewish misapplication of the Old Testament law and his true interpretation and fulfillment of the Old Testament law.
- And so this is the sixth and final contrast that he sets up. We're in Matthew chapter 5, verse 43 to 48. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word.
- Heavenly Father, we love you because you loved us first. And when you command us to love our enemies, we know that you do not command us to do something you haven't already done for us.
- So, Lord, we ask for an outpouring of your love by your Spirit into our hearts this morning so that out of the overflow of that love, we might love even our enemies.
- [ 1 : 3 6 ]     In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. If you're able, please stand for the reading of God's word. We stand to honor God as we read from his word. From Matthew 5, 43 to 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 son 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?
- [ 2 : 4 3 ]     You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Please be seated. Who doesn't want to have only friends and no enemies?
- But unfortunately, in this world, we do have enemies. People who are hostile toward us. People who, for one reason or another, want to see us fail.
- People who wish ill on you. Even more sadly, sometimes, the enemies in our own lives are people who are close to us. Jesus says in Matthew 10, verse 36, and a person's enemies will be those of his own household.
- How should we treat such people? This passage flows naturally from verses 38 to 42, in which Jesus taught us never to repay evil for evil, but as sinful people that we are, we always tend to limit and circumscribe God's commands, to contain it and make it manageable.
- And that's exactly what they did with this command to not resist the evil person. Jesus' audience was likely thinking to themselves, sure, that of course we should love our friends and neighbors.

[ 4 : 09 ] We shouldn't repay evil for evil to our neighbors and friends. But surely that doesn't apply to our enemies. They are, by definition, hostiles.

People who hate us. People who are in conflict with us, and contending against us. So surely that doesn't apply to them. But Jesus doesn't leave that loophole for us.

He commands us explicitly, love your enemies, like father, like son. So I'm gonna talk about this passage in three sections.

First, I'm gonna talk about the rule. Secondly, I'll talk about the reward. And third, I'll talk about the resemblance that God calls us to. First, let's talk about the rule that Jesus gives us.

Once again, he quotes from the Old Testament to start off. This time, the quote comes from Leviticus 19, verse 17 and 18. It says, If you examine verse 43 in light of this Old Testament passage, against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

[ 5 : 22 ] I am the Lord. If you examine verse 43 in light of this Old Testament passage, the first half looks good. You shall love your neighbor. It does leave out a phrase, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, but I don't think that's meant to be a significant detail, because if you look at the Jewish scribe in Mark 12, 33, or the Jewish lawyer in Luke 10, 27, they both mention love your neighbor as yourself.

So I think the Jews of Jesus, they understood that, and here Jesus is just paraphrasing what they said. The problem is not with the first half, love your neighbor, but with the second half.

They were saying, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. In Leviticus 19 that we just read, it doesn't say hate your enemy. So where did they get that idea, that that was the biblical truth?

In Leviticus 19, 17 to 18, he says, You shall not hate your brother, and that's the same command as, You shall love your neighbor. They understood that correctly, that hate is the opposite of love.

But because the object of the command in Leviticus 19 is your brother and your neighbor, the sons of your own people, it says, they understood this command to apply only to their fellow Jews.

[ 6 : 43 ] Once again, this is the natural, sinful human tendency to be legalistic, to limit and contain God's law. Instead of trying to understand the heart of the law, the spirit of the law, instead of trying to obey the law to its fullest extent, they were legalistically obeying only the superficial letter of the law so they could say, Oh, I did it.

Check that box. You can see this clearly in the community rule of the first century Jewish sect called the Essenes. It says there, You should love all that God has chosen and hate all that he has rejected.

Love all the sons of light, each according to his law in God's design, and hate all the sons of darkness, each according to his guilt in God's vengeance. Here's another example in the Halakha, which is a collection of Jewish laws derived from both the written and the oral laws.

Rabbi Maimonides writes, With regard to a Gentile idolater, it is forbidden to save their lives if their lives are threatened. For example, if such a person fell into the sea, one should not rescue him.

Leviticus 19.16 states, Do not stand idly by while your brother's blood is at stake. This does not apply with regard to such individuals because they are not your brothers.

[ 8 : 12 ] Admittedly, this is from the latter centuries, but this is the exact sentiment that Jesus is addressing during his day. Jesus is confronting this attitude and showing us that love your neighbor and hate your enemy is not a faithful interpretation of the Old Testament teaching.

In fact, if they looked closely, in that very same chapter of Leviticus 19, if you go down a few verses later, in verse 34, it says, You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself.

For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God. God doesn't allow us to restrict the word neighbor only to our brothers or fellow Jews or people who share our ethnicity or race or whatever because God commands the Israelites to treat the stranger and the sojourner like the natives, it says, to love them as yourself.

The Old Testament, like the New Testament, commands us to love our enemies. Here's another example. Deuteronomy 22, verse 1. It says, You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray and ignore them.

You shall take them back to your brother. This is how you should love your brother, your neighbor, a fellow Israelite. But look at a similar command in Exodus 23, verse 4. If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you should let it go astray as far as it can.

[ 9 : 44 ] No, that's not what it says. It says the exact same thing that it said that you should do to your brother and to your neighbor. Bring it back to him. The Old Testament demands the same loving treatment of your enemy as your brother.

Sometimes, even as Christians, we can believe the lie that the Old Testament is, the Old Testament ethic is sub-Christian, that it's barbaric, but that cannot be true because the God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament and he doesn't change.

Let me give you an example from the New Testament, the classic text about loving our enemies, Romans 12, 17 to 21. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine.

I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.

[ 10 : 54 ] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. If you could leave that up there for a little bit. You could see two quotes there. I think the first quote is in the previous slide.

The first quote was, vengeance is mine. Where is that from? That's from the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 32, verse 35. What about the command?

If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink for you. He will heap burning coals on his head. Where does that come from? The Old Testament. Proverbs 25, 21 to 22.

The New Testament command to love our enemies comes from the Old Testament. But what does it mean to heap burning coals on his head? Having burning coals heaped on your head is not a good thing.

In Psalm 140, verse 9 and 10, when David is praying to God for deliverance from his enemies, he prays, ask for the head of those who surround me. Let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them.

[ 11 : 56 ] Let burning coals fall upon them. Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise. So having burning coals heaped on your head is not a good thing.

It's a bad thing. But that raises a question, doesn't it? Doesn't that sound kind of vindictive and unloving? Didn't Jesus just tell us to love our enemies?

It would be vindictive and unloving if this were referring to our own personal vengeance. But in scripture, burning coals always represent divine judgment.

In the vision of Ezekiel, prophet Ezekiel, in Ezekiel chapter 10, verses 1 to 8, an angelic being a man in linen cloth takes burning coals from where? From the throne of God.

And then he scatters it upon Jerusalem as God's judgment over this sinful city. Burning coals are the judgments of God. By repaying wickedness done toward us with kindness, by refusing to take vengeance into our own hands, we store up God's wrath upon our enemy's head.

[ 13 : 13 ] It's like what we see in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 5, verse 8, we are told that the golden censer that is at the altar of God, it's heavenly throne room, it's the prayers of the saints.

It's prayers of the saints that are described metaphorically as a golden censer. And these saints are praying to God, oh Lord, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

They were martyred, so they did not take vengeance into their own hands. They did not resist the ones who are evil. They paid the ultimate price and were killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. So they love their enemies and they're crying out for vengeance because that was not right.

That was wrong. And they're crying out and these prayers, that's the golden censer later in Revelation 8, an angel takes the golden censer and then, which is the prayers of the saints, and then he puts the fire from the altar, aka the burning coals, into that censer and then he spreads it, which then becomes the seventh seal of God's judgment.

When we refuse to avenge ourselves, we leave it to the wrath of God and God's justice will indeed have its way. Does this mean then that when we repay our enemies' evil with kindness, that we should do so gleefully?

[ 14 : 36 ] Ah, you think I'm being nice to you. I'm just heaping burning coals upon your head. No, of course not.

That's the wrong attitude because we're supposed to love our enemies. That's the command. Our refusal to avenge ourselves should be an expression of love for them. Proverbs 24, 17 to 18 warns about that precisely.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles. Lest the Lord see it and be displeased and turn away his anger from him.

Our attitude instead should mirror God's attitude towards sinners. In Romans 2, verse 4 to 5, it says that God has forbearance and patience and kindness toward evildoers and that that kindness is meant to lead us to repentance.

But in the immediately following verse, it says that, but if they do not repent, if they are impenitent and hard, then they are storing up wrath for themselves on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

[ 15 : 48 ] Similarly then, we love our enemies with kindness and forbearance and patience in hopes that we might, by our kindness, lead them to repentance.

repentance. But if they refuse to repent in the end, you can be assured that there will be justice, that burning coals have been being heaped up. In fact, I would argue, though this might seem counterintuitive to some of us, that a robust faith in divine vengeance is necessary in order for us to love our enemies and not avenge ourselves.

This is how we make sense of parts of scripture like the conquest of Canaan when God orders the destruction of the wicked nations as well as the imprecatory psalms, the imprecatory psalms where the psalmist invoke curses of God's judgment upon the enemies of God.

These are never intended to be personal vengeance, but prayers for divine vengeance. Let me give you an example of an imprecatory psalm.

Psalm 139, 19 to 22. David prays, Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God. O men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent.

[ 17 : 15 ] Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies.

David says he hates his enemies, these enemies. Doesn't that contradict Jesus' teaching? I don't think it does because of a couple reasons. First, it's clear from the context that these are not his personal enemies.

They are enemies of the Lord God. They speak against God. They take God's name in vain. The hatred that David feels is not a sinful personal spite or hatred toward his personal enemy but a righteous anger in response to sinners who rebel against God.

Righteous indignation toward the enemies of God. He is not motivated by a personal vendetta. He's consumed instead like Jesus when he drove the money changers out of the temple.

He's consumed by the zeal for the glory of God. In fact, David is so certain of his integrity when he prays this that later on in that same psalm he asks God, come search me.

[ 18 : 23 ] Search me and know my heart. See if there's any grievous way in me. And second, David is not taking vengeance into his own hands in this situation.

He is simply praying for God's justice. Prayer for God's justice and love for our enemies are not mutually exclusive.

Yes, we should love our enemies. And we should pray for those who persecute us. We should do good to them. But when injustice cannot be righted, when injustice is not righted, it is morally imperative for us to pray for God's justice for the sake of the vindication of God's name, not for our sake.

If you think about it, whenever we pray, Marantha, whenever we pray, come Lord Jesus, justice, we're actually praying for the judgment of the wicked because Jesus promises that when he returns that he will bring justice and avenge the righteous.

We are longing for God's justice and vindication whenever we cry, how long, oh Lord? if we have a hard time stomaching that kind of cry for divine vengeance, it's probably because we don't take sin as seriously as God takes sin.

[ 19 : 54 ] A.F. Kirkpatrick, a theologian, writes on his book, The Book of Psalms, men have need to beware lest in pity for the sinner they condone the sin or relax the struggle against evil.

In Matthew 23, even Jesus pronounces woes on the Pharisees and the scribes. There is a time and place for the imprecatory psalms, but you better search your heart because many people sin in this regard instead of obeying God's command to love our enemies.

How then should we treat our personal enemies? People who wish ill on us and harm upon us see how David treats his personal enemies which is very different from the earlier psalm we looked at in 139.

In Psalm 35, verse 11 to 16, he writes that his enemies rose up as malicious witnesses! against him, false witnesses trying to frame him and corner him.

They repaid him evil for good. They rejoiced at his stumbling. They mocked him and tore at him without ceasing. That's how his enemies treated him. But, he says in the same psalm, when they were sick, I fasted and prayed for them.

[ 21 : 10 ] I went about as though I grieved for my friend or my brother. That's how we should treat our personal enemies. maybe there's a co-worker or a peer at school who tends to discredit you, is always maybe taking, stealing credit from you, engaged in this one-upmanship against you, delighting in your failures and rejoicing in his triumphs over you.

Instead of harboring this selfish ambition and rivalry and trying to sabotage them, love your enemies by helping them, by seeking their success, by praying for them.

Maybe you have a manipulative boss who guilt trips you, pushes you around, all to advance his own personal agenda.

Makes you do all the hard work, but when it's time to take credit, he takes the project for himself. Instead of repaying him evil for evil by putting in minimal effort and undermining your boss at every turn by second-guessing every decision he makes and then gossiping about him behind his back, do your work, love your enemies, do your work with diligence and wish for your boss' success.

love your friends. Maybe you have a friend who betrayed your confidence, but you resolve, instead of lashing out, you resolve to give that friend the benefit of the doubt and to continue to speak well of that friend.

[ 23 : 02 ] Maybe you've been ghosted or abandoned by a loved one. Maybe you were neglected by a family member. Maybe you had a spouse or a boyfriend or girlfriend who was unfaithful to you.

Love your enemies. You choose to forgive them and love them nonetheless. Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.

Prayer is a wonderful antidote to personal hatred. it's really hard to keep hating someone that you're praying for. So pray for your enemies.

While Jesus was being crucified by wicked men, Jesus prayed for them in Luke 23, 34. Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Likewise, Stephen, when he was being stoned to death by evildoers, prayed in Acts 7, verse 60, Lord, do not hold this sin against them. How can they be so magnanimous toward their enemies?

[ 24 : 13 ] It's because they knew that they know not what they do. They knew that they were blinded by Satan, the ruler of this world, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. So instead of being vindictive, they were compassionate and merciful toward sinners.

I remember being particularly affected, impacted by a testimony of a pastor from Rwanda named Antoine Ruta Isire.

I heard him for the first time at a missions conference. He grew up during the Rwandan genocide in 1994 in one year, or actually even less than one year, in a period of 100 days.

Rwandan genocide claimed a million lives. A million people killed in 100 days. As a Tutsi, Ruta Isire grew up hating the Hutus.

The Hutus had killed Ruta Isire's father. Hutus had gotten Ruta Isire kicked out of school when he was 15. Hutus had made him lose his teaching job when he was 25.

[ 25 : 30 ] Later in his life, Ruta Isire finally decided to open the Bible that someone had given to him that had been collecting dust on his shelf, and God opened the eyes of his heart by his spirit, and he met Jesus.

He said he read through the entire Bible three times in six months, and then he said to God, Lord, here I am. Use me. He became a pastor.

He started preaching regularly, but he still hated Hutus. And then one day he came to this passage where Jesus prays, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Ruta Isire felt convicted by the Holy Spirit. He knew God was telling him, you need to forgive the Hutus. And he was so resistant to the idea, he said that he yelled out loud to God, no!

I will not! And for the next two weeks, he was in a crisis of faith.

[ 26 : 50 ] He knew he could not go on with his faith in the Lord Jesus unless he forgave. He recalls, quote, I made a list of specific people that I hated with cause, but the Lord told me I had no cause because Jesus forgave the good and evil people upon his crucifixion.

I wept as I forgave those I hated. the most painful experience is to forgive, but I have now become a reconciler.

After that point, Ruta Isire went to prisons, preached the gospel to many Hutus and led them to the Lord, expressed the forgiveness that they can find in Jesus Christ.

who is it that you are having a hard time forgiving today? This is the rule of Christ.

Love your enemies. Jesus knows that this is a hard command and he's very gracious to us. He gives us not one, but two motivations to help us to do this.

[ 28 : 18 ] The first motivation is our heavenly reward. It's my second point, the reward. It says in verses 46 and 47, 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. The basic, ordinary, natural, human decency, Jesus says, is not enough.

You must do more than that. Christians must do more than what others are doing. Our righteousness, as Jesus said earlier in chapter 5, verse 20, must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Only then can we expect heavenly reward. Matthew speaks of rewards more frequently than any other New Testament author. earlier in verse 12 of the same chapter, Jesus said, rejoice and be glad when people persecute you and see all kinds of false things, evil against you because of me.

Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. In chapter 6, which Ed will preach on in a couple weeks, Jesus speaks repeatedly about the importance of practicing our righteousness in secret rather than for show.

[ 29 : 39 ] He says that if we are seen doing our good works and admired and praised by people as a result, then he says you will have no reward from your father in heaven because you already received your reward here on earth by men.

This is helpful for understanding our passage. Why is there no reward for loving those who love us? because when you love people who love you back, you already get your reward.

You pat your back and they pat your back. You give them a massage, they give you a massage. You greet them and they greet you. You give them, oh, you're so great, you're amazing. Oh, they tell you you're so great, you're amazing. You got all your rewards.

Luke makes this explicit in a parallel passage, chapter 6, verse 32 to 36. If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them and if you lend to those, skim forward, if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners lend to sinners to get back the same. But love your enemies and do good and lend expecting nothing in return and your reward will be great.

[ 30 : 56 ] The reason why love for enemies is rewarded by our father in heaven is because there's no reward for loving our enemies here on earth. You get nothing back in return. If we are looking for rewards here and now, we will never love our enemies.

I mean, think about it for a moment. Is there, can you think of anything more unrewarding than loving your enemies? you don't get the satisfaction of vengeance.

You don't get the satisfaction of justice. You just swallow your pride and say, oh, hey. Hey there, enemy.

And then they just glare at you and give you the cold shoulder and walk away. Okay. you help them. Oh, fine, I hope you help them out and then you get nothing back and you're in need and then they don't do anything for you.

Who wants to keep doing that? Christians do because we are not looking for an earthly reward but a heavenly one. Our heavenly father never reneads on his promises.

[ 32 : 17 ] If he promises a reward, he will surely give it. And he promises us, Jesus says in Matthew 10 42, that not even a cup of cold water that we give to one of his followers will go unrewarded.

If that's how a cup of cold water to one of the disciples of Jesus gets rewarded, then how about a cup of cold water for an enemy? Hebrews 6 10 says, for God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown.

God will not overlook the love that you show to your enemies because God sees and he's not unjust. He will reward you. Sometimes I think as Christians we can be a little bit sheepish about seeking heavenly reward.

we ask, isn't it sinful and selfish of us to pursue heavenly reward for ourselves? Shouldn't we be more altruistic?

Shouldn't we do good deeds not for some reward but out of our gratitude and obedience toward God? God? Well, of course, if there were such a thing as a Christian who has no love for God whatsoever but he just obeys these commands just thinking about that heavenly reward like, oh, I don't want anything to do with God but oh man, I want that.

[ 33 : 50 ] Well, yeah, that would obviously be wrong. But here's the key. Such a Christian does not exist because only those who love God truly obey him from the heart.

Love for God and obedience to God cannot be severed from each other and many passages of scripture teach this. Jesus says in John 14, 15, if you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And why do we love God? We love, it says in 1 John 4, 19, because he first loved us. It always starts with God, doesn't it? Philipians 2, 13 says it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Without God himself empowering us by his spirit, we cannot ever hope to love our enemies. We cannot obey that command and do his works. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

All that to say, only a Christian who sincerely loves God and desires to please him will forego earthly rewards in pursuit of heavenly rewards. So don't be bashful about driving hard for those heavenly rewards.

[ 35 : 22 ] That is how God wants us to think, to keep a heavenly perspective. God offers us these heavenly rewards to encourage us, and there's no selfishness to be motivated by them.

Let me ask you a question. I think, are we hosting the Olympics next? Yeah, so if you ever watch the Olympics, I love watching the track and field events, the sprints especially, or the, you know, not the marathon, it's just too long, you can't watch it for that long.



But when you watch the Olympics and you see a runner cross the finish line first, and then you see the runner just collapse on the floor with just overwhelmed with emotion, their chest heaving, and they're just kicking their hands and their faces, and they're crying, and why are they so overcome with emotion?

Because they lived for how many years of their life with nothing but that moment as their goal? That's what they lived for.

That's what they sacrificed for. That's what they gave up their life for. That's what they had in mind when they gave up all the good delicious things that other people eat that they cannot eat.

[ 36 : 45 ] That's what they were thinking about when they went through all those grueling exercises with blood, sweat, and tears. That's what they were driving for. And how many of us look at that and then think to ourselves, oh, how selfish.

I can't believe he just won a gold medal just so he could be a gold medalist. That's so selfish. Who thinks that way? None of us think that way.

Because there's something good about persevering and running toward a gold like that. Is there idolatry there?

Yeah, probably, but I'm just, don't worry about it. Yeah, just stick with the point that I'm trying to make. Yeah. And ultimately, the gold medal for that man redounds the glory of his country too, doesn't it?

do you know that, do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one receives the prize?

[ 38 : 04 ] So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9, 24 to 25. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable wreath.

God will not overlook your love for your enemies. You will be rewarded for it. And that reward will ultimately redound to the glory of God the Father.

It will be no selfish thing. That's the first motivation, heavenly rewards. And here's the second motivation, resemblance to our heavenly Father.

It says in verse 45, 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.

This does not mean that the condition of our sonship is our good works, our love for our enemies. It doesn't say that we become children of God by loving our enemies.

[ 39 : 10 ] Galatians 3, 26 is clear. It says, for in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. We are saved by grace through faith alone.

Christians are saved and adopted as sons by grace and through faith alone, not by our good works, not by loving our enemies. What does it mean then that we should love our enemies so that we may be sons of our Father who is in heaven?

The expression son of something is a Hebrew idiom that doesn't always refer to literal paternity. For example, when Psalm 89 verse 22 refers to the wicked, it calls the wicked a son of wickedness.

Wickedness doesn't have children. This is a metaphor. Proverbs 31 verse 5 describes those who are afflicted literally as sons of affliction. Deuteronomy 3.18 describes courageous men as sons of valor.

So when Jesus says, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven, he's not talking about your status, but about your resemblance. The followers of Christ are already adopted children of God, but when we love our enemies and do good to those who hate us, we act like God.

[ 40 : 26 ] We behave like God. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Verse 48 clinches this interpretation.

You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Again, it's not about status, it's about your resemblance. We ought to act like God, not so that we can become sons of God, but because we are sons of God.

Like Father, like Son. We all expect children to resemble their parents, don't we? I remember seeing a doctored photo on the internet of a family with a gorgeous couple, like they looked like models, the father and mom, and then they had like three or four children, and they were so ugly.

Yeah. It was an advertisement for plastic surgery with the tagline that read, the only thing you'll ever have to worry about is having to explain it to the kids.

We expect a handsome couple to have handsome kids, don't we? I mean, look at my kids. Just kidding. I know it's from the Hannah side, everybody tells me.

[ 41 : 58 ] Yeah. We expect intelligent people, an intelligent couple to have intelligent kids, don't we? likewise, as those who have been united with Jesus Christ, God's only son, by faith, we share in his sonship.

That's why he calls us sons, because we're in Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is fitting that we resemble our heavenly father who blesses even his enemies by making his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

Did you notice that possessive pronoun, his? It highlights God's benevolence. It doesn't say God makes the son rise. It says God makes his son rise on the evil and on the good.

We humans live like, live as the entitled people, like we like, as if we're entitled to this rising son, oh, that's our son. Every day we count on it.

But God says, no, that is my son. Every time it comes up, it's an expression of my grace toward you. My grace, mercy, and blessing to you.

[ 43 : 16 ] We take it for granted, but the son that keeps us warm and makes the crops grow and infuses our skins with vitamin D is his son. And God makes it rise on the evil people and on good people.

He doesn't have to do that, yet he does that. God sovereignly and providentially makes the sun rise every single morning, even on the very people who rebel against him and besmirch his name.

In the same way, he makes the rain come down, makes the crops grow to cool the hot summer days, fills the land with water for us to drink. The rain doesn't come of its own accord.

Yeah, sure, evaporation, condensation, but who upholds the universe by the word of his power? Who upholds and maintains the laws of nature?

It's the creator, the Lord God. He sends rain to us. It says in Acts 17, 25, God himself gives us, all mankind, life and breath and everything else.

[ 44 : 31 ] It says that in him we live and move and have our being. Every single moment that we live, we are alive because God sustains us and gives us breath.

Every day we receive a thousand undeserved gifts of God's grace and yet so often we fixate on the one or two things that we don't have that we wish we had.

And then we grumble against God. We resent him. Instead, if we knew the reality, if we knew the true state of things, every single one of us would abound in thanksgiving and worship and praise every waking moment of our lives.

God. He reminds me of God.

Oh, that group of people at Trinity Cambridge Church, they must be sons of God, children of God. God loves those who rebel against him and hate him.

[ 46 : 21 ] His enemies, that's his common grace that God extends to all of humanity. But incredibly, for us, his chosen people, God extends much more than common grace.

He gives us his special grace, saving grace. He does that by giving his only son, Jesus Christ, to us.

If we are honest with ourselves, I think we would all admit that this kind of teaching can be quite discouraging on one level. I mean, which of us can claim to have obeyed God's commands and love our enemies perfectly?

I was really encouraged by this excerpt from the Martin Lloyd-Jones sermon. He's the studies in the Sermon on the Mount. I know we have a group of people in our church who are on their own going through this book that I recommend.

Nat, can you raise your hand? Yeah, if you guys want to participate in the study, we'll talk to Nat. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones is one of my own personal heroes of the faith. And so, sometimes when I think of guys like him, I think, oh man, of course, when I feel really bad about myself sometimes, that's the accusation that I hear from the enemy.

[ 47 : 34 ] He's like, well, yeah, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones would never do the stuff you do. I mean, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones would never struggle with the stuff you do as a pastor. That's the kind of stuff that I hear in my own head.

And then I read this, and I was so encouraged, because he says this is discouraging. He says, is there anything known to us that is more discouraging than the Sermon on the Mount? Take this passage from verse 17 to the end of this fifth chapter.

These detailed illustrations given by our Lord as to how we are to live. Is there anything more discouraging? We feel that the Ten Commandments, the ordinary moral standards of decency, are difficult enough.

But look at these statements about not even looking with lust, about going the second mile and throwing in the cloak together with the coat, and so on. There is nothing more discouraging than the Sermon on the Mount.

It seems to throw us right out and to damn our every effort before we have started. It seems utterly impossible. But at the same time, do we know of anything more encouraging than the Sermon on the Mount?

[ 48 : 42 ] Do we know of anything that pays us a greater compliment? The very fact that we are commanded to do these things carries with it an implicit assertion that it is possible.

In our own strength, no, it isn't. It's impossible. Christ in us, it is possible. And isn't it an amazing compliment that God, the creator of the cosmos, calls us His children.

Says, hey, you're my kids. So do this. Follow my example. Be like me. We read from Romans 5, 8 to 10 earlier in the assurance of pardon.

God shows His love for us, His special people, His chosen people in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since therefore we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God.

For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by His life. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, not because we were sincerely reforming our ways and starting to put our life together.

[ 50 : 08 ] Isn't that often our standard? For our enemies? I need to see some real remorse, you know. I gotta see you start making some changes.

God didn't do that. Jesus didn't do that for us. We were sinners. While we were still sinners, Jesus died to reconcile us to the Father.

He says that He did this, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Jesus didn't die for us to reconcile us to the Father while we were raising the white flag and seeking terms of truth with God.

No, we were pounding against Him, marching against Him, rebelling against Him, resisting Him at every turn by living for ourselves and living for us to satisfy our own pride.

That's why it's not wrong, as the song, How Deep the Father's Love, says. It was our mocking voice that calls out among the scoffers who are at Jesus' crucifixion. It's our sin that held Jesus there on the cross until it was accomplished.

[ 51 : 23 ] We did that. We were His enemies. And yet while we were still His enemies, Jesus died for us.

I'm so grateful for this truth because I know myself, and if God had not loved me first when I was still His enemy, I would never love Him.

It's because Jesus loved me well while I was still an enemy of God that now I am a son.

Reconciled to the Father. A participant at the table of the Lord. A member of the family of God, the household of God. So do you know, let me ask you, do you know the love of the Father who makes His Son shine on the good and the evil?

Do you know the love of the Son who died for the sake of His enemies? Then and only then, we can love our enemies like Father, like Son.

[ 52 : 48 ] Let's pray. Father, thank You for loving us while we were still Your enemies.

Jesus, thank You for dying for us while we were still Your enemies. And oh, we are so grateful that we are no longer Your enemies, but that You have adopted us as Your sons and daughters, united to Jesus Christ, Your Son.

Oh God, we can never hope to repay You for that. And You don't expect us to.

We simply love You in return. We worship You. We submit to You. Help us with the love You have given us to love the enemies in our own lives.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.