

- ***Read Matthew 5:43-48*** On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen, a man of Islamic persuasion, entered a night club in Orlando, Florida that caters specifically to practicing homosexuals. Mateen was not there to party or engage in the activities of the club, but he was there to engage in gross actions of wickedness and hatred. Armed with firearms, Mateen proceeded to kill 49 people and injure 53 more. This was the deadliest terrorists attack since the attacks of September 11, 2001 which were also carried out by Islamic terrorists. The reason I point out the Islamic connection is because of assertion by many that the Islamic faith encourages its tenants to seek out to harm those who do not subscribe to faith in Muhammed as the last true prophet of God. There are some who would disagree with this assertion, but that is not the point of our discussion this evening. Whether it is accurate to say this or not based upon the Quran, it is a reality that these individuals murdered hundred and thousands of people who they claimed to be enemies of their faith.
- This idea of harming those who oppose a person's faith is foreign to the teaching of Jesus. In fact, in the text we read just a few minutes ago, Jesus, in the great mountain message, dispels the notion that we are to hate our enemies and seek to kill them simply because they disagree or hate us. In this our second lesson on difficult sayings of Jesus, we will consider the teaching of Jesus concerning His command that we are to love our enemies.

I. DIFFICULTY OF SAYING: Loving our enemies completely goes against human nature.

- A. Again, Jesus is trying to raise the bar for citizens of His great Kingdom that He had come to this earth to establish. He is trying to break down some false notions of what God expected out of people who would bear His Name upon them.
- B. These people had heard it said all throughout their lives that their responsibilities were to love their neighbors, but they had no responsibility to love those who opposed them as their enemies. For these Jews those people would have been Gentiles...either Samaritan or Roman in ethnicity.
- C. Many Jews hated the Romans and longed for the days when they would be uprooted from their lands and for the Jews to once again have their freedom. Some Jews, the Zealots, would even take those feelings a step farther and plan and execute attacks on the Romans in efforts to drive them out. The Apostle Simon might have even belonged to such a group.
- D. Regardless, Jesus says that citizens of His Kingdom are to live above that standard, citing that even the tax collectors and Gentiles love their neighbors and hate their enemies. **(vv.46,47)**
- E. You see, it is human nature for us to love those who do good by us and hate those who would seek to harm us. This teaching is so difficult because Jesus is calling us to suppress human nature to hate our enemies in order to love them even as He loved us even when we were His enemies. **(Rom. 5:8-11)**

II. We should not celebrate the death of our enemies.

- A. It is very easy for some to see the events that took place nearly a month ago and rejoice that those who are enemies of the cross have been put out of this life. The fact that an Islamic terrorist was killed causes some to rejoice, while others cheer on the deaths and injuries of many practicing homosexuals who stand in direct opposition to the cause of Christ and His standards of morality.
- B. In fact, one "Christian" went on a rant talking about how he was perfectly ok with the murder of the 49 homosexuals at that night club. This man, who doesn't deserve to be named, said that it was "good news" that "there's 50 less pedophiles in this world, because, you know, these homosexuals are a bunch of disgusting perverts and pedophiles."
- C. It is easy for us to see an occasion such as this and fall into a mindset along these same lines. We might not be as extreme as this individual, but we very well might say something along the lines of "good riddance" or we might even be apathetic towards this type of loss of life because they people were enemies of the cause of Christ.
- D. However, let me strongly suggest that Jesus does not celebrate the death of a sinner. God does not celebrate the fact that another soul has passed from this earth without being cleansed by the blood of His Son who died for them. Shame on us if we would even celebrate the fact that a soul has been condemned to hell. God would much rather that the person turn from his wicked ways and live, and we ought to have that exact same mindset, as well. **(Ezek. 18:23)**
- E. We ought to mourn the loss of life, especially of our enemies because they have lost out on the chance of redemption through the blood of Jesus.

III. We should pray for our enemies' repentance & salvation.

- A. Instead of praying for our enemies demise, we ought to pray for their salvation. Not to say that we cannot pray that their evil deeds be stopped. We most certainly should pray for their evil to cease, but we should pray for its ceasing because they have found Jesus in their lives.
- B. Jesus says this exact thing. We are to pray for those who are our enemies. **(v.44)** We know that there are many people in this world who want for Christianity to be diminished. They are willing to do just about anything in order for the cause of Christ to be put out fully. Many of those people are of the homosexual and Islamic persuasion...so how are we to think towards them? Are we to desire for their deaths so that their evil will stop? Or should we desire and pray that their hearts might be softened towards the trust of God's Word?
- C. Remember, even as enemies of Him, Christ still left everything in heaven in order to come to this earth and give His life for us so that we might have the opportunity to be saved. **(Phil. 2:5-8)** Even while He was being crucified on the tree, Jesus still prayed that His torturers might be forgiven of their sins and find salvation through God. **(Luke 23:34)**
- D. If we are to imitate Jesus in our lives, then should we desire that our enemies would repent and experience that same wonderful salvation that was afforded to us? Certainly, that is the truth. We ought to pray for our enemies. We ought to pray that their evil cease. However, we ought to pray that their evil cease because they have found the redemptive message of Jesus and His death for them.

IV. We can love our enemies without condoning their actions.

- A. This is a very important point for us to consider as we close this evening because this statement has come under heavy attack by some within different communities. Specifically in this case, some within the homosexual community have raised their voice and said that they want none of our prayers or well wishes if we have or continue to disapprove of their lifestyle. They would say that it is hypocritical to assist them in their trials if we will not approve of their life choices. Is this a line of thinking that is valid? Is it true that we cannot sympathize and love our enemies without condoning their actions?
- B. The sad reality is that this is exactly how some people feel. Don't believe me? Then go read the article entitled "No, We Cannot Weep Together". Then do yourself a favor and wash that mess out of your mind by going and reading Doy Moyer's article, "Can We Weep Together or Not?". In his article, Bro. Doy does an excellent job of showing the absurdity of saying that we cannot love and sympathize with those with whom we disagree. Think about this...this would mean that parents cannot sympathize and love their children unless they agree to condone their immoral lifestyles of drug abuse and rampant fornication. It means that we cannot show love, sympathy, or empathy for anyone unless we agree with every single belief and practice of that person. You see how crazy that becomes? It is absurd.
- C. The truth is that we can love and sympathize with those who have been wronged, even if they are enemies of the cross. We can hope for their healing and most importantly their salvation. After all, Jesus sympathizes with us in our temptations and weakness even those He does not approve of any sin on our behalf. **(Heb. 4:15)**
- D. Our Savior says that we must love our enemies. We can love them and sympathize with them without condoning their behavior. I can and must love and show concern for those practicing homosexuals who are wronged by others. I can and must show love and concern for those Muslims, atheists, or whoever they might be when they are wrong even though they would be considered my enemy because of the cross. I can love them, pray for them, and hope for their salvation which means that they change their ways. I can do all of that without compromising my faith in the truth of God's Word.

Many teachings of Jesus are easy to understand...yet they are much harder to put into practice. To love one's enemies just isn't something that comes naturally to us. If someone is against us then it is easy to want them to be put down. If they are put down then we can easily be tempted to rejoice in that...but Jesus demands that we rise above our natural inclination to hate our enemies. We are to love our enemies. We are to desire for their repentance and salvation. And we are able to love our enemies and long for their salvation without condoning their sinful actions. May God help us to have hearts of love for our enemies...not hate...but love. May we imitate the love that Jesus had for us as His enemies, by loving and desiring the good for our enemies in just the same way.