

### Love Your Enemies

Jesus commanded us to love our enemies. To bless those who curse us. But how exactly do we do that? When someone says to us, “May you rot in hell!” should we respond, “Bless you, friend!”? Jesus’ words seem to be interpreted in this way by most of modern Christianity, but does this make sense? Is it even possible for a rational mind to sincerely respond in such a manner? Does Jesus want us to pretend to feel something we do not really feel?

Does loving your enemies mean you should trust someone who has regularly stolen from you in the past to deposit your paycheck in the bank for you? Does it mean you try to hug a man who is about to kill you with a knife? I’m serious! These are real-world examples and they need honest, scriptural, real-world answers.

The Christian world believes they *should* behave like the examples above – and yet in practice, when someone wrongs them, they usually go tell everyone who will listen about it and then conclude “but I forgave him, and asked God to bless him!”

**Psalms 62:4** ... *they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.*

Surely you know this person, the one who remembers and resents every wrong anyone ever did to them, and talks about it all the time. You’ve no doubt met him or her in church! Of course, when they actually talk to the person who wronged them, they pretend to be pleasant and fake a sweet disposition but as soon as their back is turned, they go back to ranting over the way this person wronged them. They “bless with their mouth”, but curse inwardly.

How can you do better than that – how can you truly love your enemies? Let’s find out in...

### LESSON 28: LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

As always, let’s start by reading the source command in **Matthew 5:43-48**, and the other version in **Luke 6:27-35**. What if your enemy’s car breaks down, should you stop and help him? **Exodus 23:5**. What if his dog runs away and you find him? **Verse 4** (I updated the examples to “car” and “dog” to better relate to our time). Should you try to get even yourself? **Proverbs 24:29**. Should you be happy when your enemy has problems? **Proverbs 24:18-19**. Should their happiness or success bother you? **Verse 20**. What do you get for loving your enemies? **Proverbs 25:21-22**.

Is this something that only applies to brethren, or should we also love enemies in the world? **1 Thessalonians 5:15**. What will happen to those who reward your good works with evil? **Proverbs 17:13**. How should you respond to their evil works? **Proverbs 20:22**. Did David save his enemies’ lives? **Psalms 7:4**. How did he treat his enemies? **Psalms 35:11-15**. Why should we be so tolerant of their evil works? **Luke 23:34**.

You've read most of these verses before, or at least heard them mentioned, because this is a favorite Protestant teaching. On the surface, it seems pretty self-explanatory... but when you look at other scriptures, you start to realize these verses alone leave a lot of things unanswered...

For example, how did David, a man after God's own heart (**Acts 13:22**), bless his enemies? **Psalms 140:9-10**. How is asking God to rain burning coals upon your enemies "blessing" them? Did David ask anything else for his enemies? **Psalms 58:6**. How did Paul show love for those who taught a false gospel? **Galatians 1:8-9**. How did he "bless" a man twisting the truth? **Acts 13:8 -11**.

These are practical examples of very harsh things; but if these are our examples, then we have to reconcile "loving our enemies" with these people pronouncing curses upon their enemies. To do that, we have to ask the question... "What is a blessing?"

## A DICTIONARY

All the Christian world pretty much interprets Jesus' command to "bless them that curse you" to mean that, no matter what someone does to you, you should tell them "God bless you" and pray for good things to happen to them. But that's not what it said; not exactly. But before we get into that, we need to know what the word "bless" means.

Something we will be doing many times in the coming lessons is *building a dictionary*. A major problem with religions today is they use words differently than God uses them. For example, in the previous lesson you learned the world's idea of what the word "love" means is very different from God's definition of love.

That means you can be in complete literal agreement with someone – and yet have a completely opposite viewpoint – because you're both using the same words, ***but those words mean something completely different to you than they do to them.***

For example, if you and someone in the world both look at a rebellious child and say "we just have to love him more!" you would both agree – yet you would each have a totally different meaning behind the words! He is probably thinking "we just need to be more patient with him, give him his way more often, allow him to find his own path" – thinking that is love – while you might be thinking of **Proverbs 13:24 (NKJV)** "*He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly*". He considers spanking a horrible crime and thinks you should go to jail for it; yet you both agreed completely when you said "the child needs more love". But what you MEANT was completely opposite!

Over the next half-dozen lessons or so, you're going to learn how to define a wide variety of words from the Bible; words like mercy, meekness, pride, humility, arrogance; these words and others are completely misunderstood by the world. When they read the Bible, they read – and agree with – the words God said, **but learn something completely different from what God was trying to teach them.**

Why? Because men have interpreted God's true meaning out of these words and substituted their own meanings instead – and in many cases they have actually substituted Satan's meanings! Because of this, modern Protestant teaching is terribly flawed, and it often directly contradicts the true teaching of the Word of God ***even when they use the same words He did!***

In a sense, they're reading God's Word in a different language; they're reading a standard Protestant interpretation of those verses, a sort of "pseudo-translation" instead of reading what God literally said. Unfortunately, that's true of all of us; we all have ideas we've picked up here and there that "translate" parts of the Bible into a different meaning; most of what you've done in this course is to unlearn that and go back to what the Bible really says.

A mind cluttered with deeply embedded false teaching is what prevents us from seeing the clear and simple truth of God. It's much more difficult to unlearn false doctrine than it is to see the truth with a clear and simple mind.

A sixth grader without religious training of any kind, if given a Bible and told that it was infallibly true, would easily and automatically come to believe most of the truths you have learned in this course. Which may be one meaning of Jesus' words in **Luke 18:17**. He would certainly never come up with a trinity, heaven, hell, Sunday, Easter, or Christmas!

We need to sweep aside these interpretations that have been handed down to us and find out exactly what God *meant* when He said "love". When He said "love", He didn't mean "mercy", or He'd have said "mercy". When He said "mercy", He didn't mean kindness, compassion, grace, blessing or hope; He said what He meant to say. He meant mercy.

These words are not all "one big bundle of goodness", they are separate and distinct emotions, concepts, and ideas that must be kept separate if you are to ever understand what God wrote in His Word.

Without knowing it, you've already done this for words like "grace", "hell", "holy spirit", "God" and so on; but now you need a systematic study of some of these other words. Understanding exactly what God meant is crucial to clearly understanding how we should interact with our fellow beings.

We need to clearly define what a blessing is. Looking up "blessing" in an English dictionary might give us an idea, but it is likely to be a completely wrong idea, *because that dictionary was not inspired. It tells you what men think the word means, NOT necessarily what God thinks the word means.*

We can go back to the original Greek and Hebrew and look up the Strong's concordance definition of those words; that's a little bit better, often good enough – but it suffers from the same flaws. Nobody speaks ancient Greek today, it's a dead language. So the definitions you see in Strong's came from three sources:

1. Word of mouth. There is a pretty much solid chain of Greek, Latin, and/or Hebrew-speaking scholars tracing back to the time of the Bible. So there is a general idea of what these words mean – but in 2,000 years of translating Greek into the local dialects of Latin and later the other languages of Europe, minor shifts in meaning can develop – and they have.

For example "decimate" originally meant "to destroy/kill a tenth of something". Now it means "to destroy a large portion of, to almost completely destroy". What these Greek-speaking scholars, who taught other scholars, who taught others, etc., think a word means is not necessarily what God originally meant.

2. The second source is contemporary writings. For example, the Greek word *Tartaroo* found in **2 Peter 2:4** is used nowhere else in the Bible; however, in classical Greek writings (first-to-tenth centuries B.C., mostly), such as Homer, the word was used to describe the underworld

where the Titans were imprisoned. This fit the Protestant idea of hell, and so the English translators called it “hell” in the Bible. But that isn’t what God meant at all.

3. The third way is the only correct way of defining the word; seeing how it is used elsewhere in the Bible. That’s what we did with the word “hell”. We saw that people in hell “know not any thing”, are “asleep”, are “in the ground”, and can be brought back up again from it; all of which told us the Protestant idea of our souls going to an ever-burning hell when we die, is simply wrong. We learned the proper definition, based on how God used the word *hades* is simply “grave”.

And that’s what we’re now going to do for “blessing”. I went through that explanation at length here because I am going to refer back to it often in coming lessons. Much of what you must learn now is going to involve redefining some of these important words, and redefining your thinking as well.

Modern Christianity, through false doctrine and private interpretation, has blurred the meaning of many key words which were supposed to teach us about the nature of God; they wave their hand and dismiss the plain meaning of many scriptures because “obviously it doesn’t mean *THAT!*” – *thus making the Bible fit what their church teaches, rather than making their church teachings fit the Bible.* So let’s un-blur those words and start to focus on them, one at a time.

## WHAT IS A BLESSING?

Before turning to commentaries and dictionaries, let’s see how God translates the word. You do this by looking up all the places in the Bible where that word was used and seeing what each one says. Using a concordance or a Bible program on computer, look up the word “bless” (or “bless\*” on most computers, to search for bless, blessed, blessing, etc.).

*Bless* is used 117 times in the Bible, and usually I’ll read through every single one of those to find the answer; what we’re looking for are things that require a certain definition. For example, read the first few passages, **Genesis 12:2, 17:16, 22:17**; these passages all refer to God’s blessing to Abraham. What was that blessing? These verses all tell us the blessings were *literal physical things God was going to give Abraham*. What did Abraham’s servants call the blessings? **Genesis 24:35**. So again, when God “blessed Abraham” **God specifically DID things for Abraham**. These blessings were physical THINGS.

I won’t drag you through every passage in the Bible – you can do that yourself, and should; but let’s hit some of the high points. In **Genesis 27:26-41**, while Isaac blessed Jacob, he also specifically said it was God who would be doing the actual blessing (**verse 28**), and the blessing would take place at some later date (**verse 33**). And again, that blessing was a list of good things that would happen to Jacob.

Jacob pronounced similar blessings on his twelve sons in **Genesis 48** and **49**. Moses did the same in **Deuteronomy 33**. These passages also double as a prophecy, since God fulfilled them, and they tell us much about who and where those tribes are today. But that’s another lesson.

What did Jacob consider a “blessing” to be? **Genesis 32:11-21, 33:1-11**. Note that this “present” or “gift” *was Jacob blessing Esau*. **That tells us that giving someone a present, or doing good to them, is blessing them. That is an important cornerstone to our definition.**

If you read the “blessings and cursings” chapters, **Leviticus 26** and **Deuteronomy 28**, you see again **that a blessing is a specific act of goodness performed by God to man, man to man, or man to God. On the other hand, a curse is a specific act of harm.**

Through the rest of the OT, you can read through and find that definition fits every place it’s used; that’s how you know it’s right. But now let’s move to the NT. **Matthew 5:1-12**, these people are blessed **WITH a specific reward; a good thing they will receive for their suffering today.** Meek inherit the Earth, poor in spirit inherit the kingdom of heaven, mourners will be comforted, etc. These are the specific blessings they receive.

**It is very important you see that in all of this, a casual, generic, simple “God bless you” has never once been used! It is always a SPECIFIC blessing they ask God to give, a specific ACT someone does, or a specific THING they give someone; that is what blessing means!**

How did Jesus bless us? **Acts 3:26**. Can blessings sometimes be spiritual? **Ephesians 1:3**. But are those spiritual blessings *still specific things*? **James 1:12**. And who is blessed? **Revelation 22:14**. Does hearing the law alone make you blessed? **Luke 11:28**.

Those verses tell us a blessing is not something simple like saying “God bless you”, but **ALWAYS** something **specific**. Always something like “God grant you understanding”, or “may you live a long life”, or “here, you look cold, take my coat”. Men blessing other men, or God blessing men, always fits into that definition.

And it turns out, blessing God is no different; can we feed God if He is hungry? **Psalms 50:12-13**. So what do you do to please – bless – God? **Verse 14**. What sort of sacrifices please Him? **Hebrews 13:16**. What does God want from us? **Micah 6:6-8**. What does He like? **Amos 5:21-24, Hosea 6:6**. What makes God happy? **1 Samuel 15:22**. What does God value above all else? **Mark 12:32-34**.

So if you want to do something nice for God, you do what He loves; what He loves above all else is righteousness. People who don’t harm each other; that is how you bless God – obey Him. It’s not really any different from Jacob giving Esau a sheep as a blessing, Jacob was just giving Esau a gift he knew he would appreciate. When you keep God’s law, you are giving God the same gift.

## A BLESSING WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

In **James chapter 2**, James goes through a long series of examples to prove that faith not backed up by works is dead, being alone (**verses 17-26**). The conclusion is obvious – someone who says “I have faith!” but doesn’t have WORKS to go with that faith *truly doesn’t have faith at all*. Because the proof of the faith is in the fruits it produces.

This was James’ main point, so it’s not surprising that no one ever thinks to reverse the analogy James used in **verses 14-16**. James says if you tell someone who has no food or clothes to “go in peace, may you be warmed and filled” – have you really helped that person? Have you blessed them at all, to send them away hungry but saying “God bless you!” as they left? It’s a rhetorical question James asks, the obvious answer to which is “of course not”.

He later concludes that “faith without works is dead”. If you reverse that thinking again, you arrive at the conclusion that “love without works is dead” as well. Or in this specific case, since he was using a blessing “depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled” as an example, you might say “*a blessing without works is dead*”.

Saying “God bless you” to someone hungry on the street does not fill their belly. So *not* helping someone, but *saying* “Bless you!” is worse than a waste of time. It’s pretentious posturing – the works of a hypocrite – for a blessing without works is dead.

## INDIRECT BLESSING

Above we mentioned three types of blessings; God to man, man to man, and man to God. But there is a fourth type which you will see in a moment; first, whom does God bless? **Psalms 5:12, 115:13**. When God blesses you, what do you get? **Genesis 49:25**. What is it that God blesses? **Deuteronomy 33:11**. So when God blesses you, He uses His power to make your life better; He gives you gifts from His possessions.

Now, how do men bless each other? **Judges 1:13-15**. So Caleb blessed Achsah with “upper springs, and the nether springs”. How did Abigail bless David? **1 Samuel 25:18, 27**. What did Naaman the Syrian call the gift of silver and clothes he wanted to give Elisha? **2 Kings 5:15-24**.

So men bless other men by using their power to make someone’s life better, and giving them gifts of their possessions. It’s really no different, excepting that we have much less power to bless than God does. And who blesses whom? **Hebrews 7:7**. A poor man does not give a blessing of money to a rich man; it’s always the other way around. Someone who is weak does not bless a strong man by moving a heavy burden for him. The stronger or more powerful always blesses the weaker.

And that leads us to a fourth type of blessing; an indirect one. So far we’ve dealt with three direct blessings; men-to-men, men-to-God, and God-to-men. The fourth one is men ASKING God to bless other men *for* you. This is an indirect blessing, since while it is our wish this person be blessed, we don’t do any of the actual work.

When David blessed the men of Jabeshgilead, who was doing the actual blessing? **2 Samuel 2:5-6**. In **2 Samuel 6:18**, did David bless the people – or did God? He blessed them “in the name of the Lord”, meaning although David said it, it was God who would be doing it.

Many of the blessings recorded in the Bible fit this pattern; asking God to bless someone. Now we have to go back to the source scripture and ask...

## YOUR BLESSING... OR GODS?

When Jesus commanded us to “bless them that curse you”, did He mean for us to ask HIM to bless people FOR us... or for US to bless people *directly*? In other words, did He mean we should ask GOD to feed them, clothe them, heal them, etc.; or for US to help them, feed them, do good to them?

I’ve never heard anyone stop and ask that question. But it’s so obvious! If YOU are commanded to bless someone **you shouldn’t pass the buck to God and try to make Him do it for you!**

Remember, the second part of the command is to “pray for them that despitefully use you”, which means to ask GOD to help them; *therefore the first part of the command must be telling YOU to do it first!*

Think about it this way. Suppose you pass by someone begging money, and you feel they should receive something. If YOU bless them, it means turning loose of a few dollars or your coat or giving them a ride or something like that. It takes effort and perhaps sacrifice on your part.

It's a lot easier to simply ask God to bless them for you. It won't cost you a thing, you can simply fire off a quick 20-word prayer to God for this person, forget about them, and you can get on with your life. But why would God help somebody you're not willing to help? I mean, if it's not important enough for you to help them yourself, *why should God bother with it, since it obviously doesn't matter that much to you??*

If it mattered to you, YOU'D be helping them. If you're too lazy, disinterested, selfish or busy to bother... if you're only asking God to do it to salve your conscience or get out from under the responsibility... then God is probably not going to do anything about it. After all, He's known this person was begging for a lot longer than you have, and He hasn't done it yet; why do it now?

If it meant enough to you to give them your own shoes, then perhaps it might matter enough to God to help this person because you asked; but if you can't be bothered, why should He bother to listen to your prayer about them?

These are difficult questions – not Biblically difficult, but emotionally difficult and morally shocking – and we'll study them in detail in a future lesson. But for now, the point you need to notice is that **God commanded you to bless them first. THEN He said you can pray for them and ask Him to bless them for you. *If you haven't done your part of the blessing, why should He do His?***

## HATING YOUR ENEMIES

It's easiest to understand the command if you think about what you *would* be doing, if God *hadn't* commanded you to bless them. When someone slaps you, your instinct is to slap them back. But God said... **Luke 6:29**. When someone steals from us, our instinct is to “get even”, either by stealing it back, or stealing something else from them. But God said... **Matthew 5:40**.

When someone harms us in any way, our soul burns for vengeance. But God said... **Romans 12:19**. Are we allowed to repay ANY evil? **Verse 17**. That is how we “hate” our enemies; he broke the commandments and hurt us, so we feel we have a “free pass” to get away with breaking the commandments to hurt him back, just to get even. Is that what God told us to do? **1 Peter 3:9**.

To us, it seems perfectly fair; he stole from me, I can steal from him. But God expects more from us. Why? **1 Peter 3:16-17**. If you suffer wrongfully, how should you feel about that? **1 Peter 2:19-23**. If someone steals from you, and you steal back from him, then you both get called before a judge... you're both sinners. You both stole. You both hurt your neighbor. Yes, he started it, but when you used his tactics **you became no better than he is**.

**It doesn't matter who started it. What matters is who hurt his neighbor, and who didn't.** So if you're going to suffer, as Peter said, make sure it is for “well doing”, not “evil doing”. If you are punished for your sins and take it patiently, who cares? Big deal – you just got what you deserved. But if you are punished for GOOD deeds, and take *that* patiently, then you have something worth rewarding in God's eyes. And that means when you are in trouble, God will hear you – all from the same context in **1 Peter 3:10-15**.

Paul had a similar piece of advice in **Romans 12:14-21**. You'll notice many of those statements echo **Matthew 5** and **1 Peter 2-3**; that's because this is all part of one package, with each author making sure their readers knew this foundational piece of truth. Above all “*repay no man evil for evil*”; because when you commit sin to pay a sinner back, you become no better than he is.

## STEALING FROM A THIEF

For many years, I have enjoyed starting conversations with questions like “is it wrong to steal from a thief?” – you learn a lot about a person by how they answer questions like that. In general, the vast majority of people believed that no, it was not wrong to steal something back from him, since he had no right to it in the first place. Technically, it still belonged to you, so it wasn’t stealing. Or so their reasoning went.

But how does that square with **Luke 6:29**? Obviously, it doesn’t. So eventually, most of them were forced to cave in and admit it *was* wrong to steal from a thief. And that leads us to the punch line – the real reason for asking. I mean, really, how often do you even have an opportunity to steal something of yours back from a thief? The REAL application for our time is something else altogether.

Most people today download copyrighted music and videos off the internet without paying for them – illegally, according to the Supreme Court. Of course, so many people do it that practically no one is ever actually prosecuted... but is that the point?

These people usually justify their actions by saying “well, record companies charge way too much for music; and I do buy *some* CDs... I’m just evening the score and making it more fair”. (I know this because that’s what I used to do).

And then there’s the issue of software. It’s easy to justify stealing from Microsoft because everyone knows they’re evil anyway. And it’s not like they’d miss the money! And it’s not really STEALING, because you wouldn’t have paid for their overpriced software anyway; they haven’t actually lost anything, so you’re not technically stealing!

And so what if you were; Microsoft stole most of their software from someone else anyway! You’re just getting even. They owe the world for what they stole. So what’s the big deal?

Those arguments and others like them are typical responses to this problem. Again, I know – not only have I argued with dozens of people about this, but I myself am a reformed software pirate and hacker. I know every justification there is. **And that’s all it is – justification for sin.**

God commanded us not to steal from a thief. Most of the justifications for pirating movies, music and software revolve around the companies being evil and the prices being criminal. All of which is true – **but that doesn’t give you the right to steal from them.** God gave us a principle in **Luke 10:7** – repeated several times in the Bible – the worker is worthy of HIS hire.

Note it does *not* say “the laborer is worthy of whatever price YOU THINK is fair”. It says he is worthy of the fee HE thinks is fair! If you think it is unfair then *hire someone else! THAT is your right.* But do you have the right to unilaterally change his wages? **Genesis 31:7.** If you agree with someone on a price, are you bound to that price – however fair or unfair it may seem? **Matthew 20:1-15. He has a right to any price HE sets. And you have the right not to buy from him. Not the right to steal from him.**

If you don’t like Microsoft’s prices, replace Windows with Linux and MS Office with Open Office. No one is compelling you to buy from Microsoft. But if you want the convenience and ease of some of Windows’ products, then you have to pay their prices. Doing anything else is stealing. Yes, stealing from a thief... but stealing nonetheless.



The same goes for music. If you don't like the price of buying music, subscribe to some cheap online music service – a legal one. Or just listen to the radio. If you don't like the radio, do without music altogether. Whatever happens, you have no right to steal music just because you want it. No matter how evil the person or corporation behind the music might be.

One final note on this subject; remember the lesson on the covenants. I am glad software pirates and Dot-Communists are out there (a Dot-Communist is someone who believes everything on the internet should be free... or at least, paid for by someone else). The corporations ARE mostly evil, and they DO need someone to balance the score *but it cannot be New Covenant Christians*.

The Old Covenant allows, even encourages, you to get even with your enemies. Eye for an eye is the crowning principle of that covenant. So those under the Old Covenant have the God-given duty to fight for justice, and they can legally retake things that were stolen from them **but you and I cannot**.

Software pirates provide a valuable moderating balance to evil mega-corporations. Their theft from the corporations helps to keep their empires in check. But we cannot participate in such activities; we must be strictly above board. Why?

## BLAMELESSNESS

It's best to answer that question with a story from Daniel. In **Daniel 6:1-3**, the king of Babylon put Daniel in charge of basically the entire kingdom; an office roughly equal to Britain's prime minister. Daniel being a foreigner from a conquered nation, this did not set well with the native politicians. So they sought an excuse to get Daniel in trouble (**verse 4**). **They could find nothing wrong with Daniel at all**.

Understand there were probably hundreds of crooked politicians in on this, using all their resources to dig up some scandal on Daniel and could find NOTHING. So they had to resort to something else (**verse 5**). They knew they could manipulate the king through his own vanity (**verses 6-9**) into making a law that would be contrary to the laws of Daniel's God. Thus they could use Daniel's own integrity and dedication to His God against him.

Daniel, knowing this new law had been passed, deliberately, openly defied their new law. He did it quietly – not making a big scene, he simply continued to obey God's laws, knowing he would get caught (**verse 10**). Remember, we keep the laws of the land only so long as they don't conflict with God's laws (**Acts 5:29**). Then the whole story of Daniel in the lion's den (**Daniel 6:11-23**). And then the men who were behind the plot were fed to the lions in Daniel's place (**verse 24**).

For the purposes of this lesson, the point is simply that these men put all their efforts into finding some place where Daniel jaywalked or fudged his taxes and they couldn't find ANYTHING. Because Daniel fulfilled the command in **Philippians 2:15**. He was blameless – there was nothing anyone could say against him, because as you learned in Lesson 23, true Christians are *very* civilly obedient.

How did Jesus command us to act? **Matthew 10:16**. Why? **1 Peter 2:12**. When the Gentiles call us "evildoers" – which they will – those need to be lies, not based in things we actually did. When they are, they will see by our deeds that we do in fact serve the true God.

Does the command to be blameless extend to everything, and everyone, over which you exercise authority? **Titus 1:6-7**. Does this command apply to women as well? **1 Timothy 5:14**. Does the Bible contain a sample list of ways in which we should be blameless? **1 Timothy 3:1-7**. This was specifically

written about preachers, but only because these traits are REQUIRED in them; people in the church can still be growing in the understanding of God, but before they are given a position of authority in the church they MUST meet these basic requirements... although I have never met a preacher who did. In God's church, they must.

So to summarize, a major reason why we in the NC are not allowed to steal from thieves is that, in the eyes of the world we look just like the people we're stealing from. Even if, in the grand scheme of things, our cause is just, it looks evil to the world and can easily be used to discredit every true thing we say. Our enemies will hate what we say, and be desperate to find something – we dare not give them a valid justification, as David did (**2 Samuel 12:14**).

Hypocrisy – even apparent hypocrisy – gives an excuse for everyone to reject the truth we have to offer (**Romans 2:17-24**). So by not getting even with our enemies, we are obeying the command in **1 Thessalonians 5:22**.

## THE LAST STEP

Loving your enemies is the ultimate goal, as you learned in the last lesson. That's because true love for your enemies is based on true love for your friends. Is there anything particularly noteworthy about loving your friends? **Matthew 5:46-47**. Even the prostitutes and lawyers and gangsters in the world love those who love them. Do you have to do MORE than that to stand out? **Verse 20**. Why? **Verse 45**.

Why should you try to stand out? **Luke 6:32-35**. God is a God of law. Unfairness bugs Him. He needs to see justice done; if someone causes harm to someone else, He needs to see that person punished, and the other person comforted. The law requires this.

Yet God is not micromanaging the world today because it is not time to judge the world (**John 12:47**). So He just watches. But does God keep an eye on certain people? **Psalms 34:7**. Over whom does He watch? **2 Chronicle 16:9**. And when He sees them suffer an injustice, it troubles Him. And He tries to make His accounting books balance. He might do that today, or at His return or in the second resurrection; but sooner or later, will everyone have to settle up with God? **Romans 14:10**. How much detail will God judge? **Matthew 12:36-37**.

Your enemies will have to give account of their deeds at some point – and their words. God won't forget. But here's the problem; *what if God goes to judge that person for their deeds against you... and finds they have an excuse?*

In other words, if someone slaps you, God will put that as a black mark in that person's cosmic ledger. But if you slap that person back, suddenly you have one too. There is nothing left for God to judge, because you're even – just like you wanted to be! If God goes to that person and says “why did you slap him??” he will surely respond “well he slapped me too!” and suddenly God has no need to intervene to deliver you *because you delivered yourself*. When you got even, you left God with no reason to help you!

But there's another problem – a larger one. Two wrongs don't make a right. Two misdeeds don't cancel each other out and make you both square in the eyes of the law. Two wrongs... are two wrongs you still both have to pay for. When David murdered Uriah, who did he sin against? **Psalms 51:4**. **All sin is against God**. They usually affect other people and us as well, so they are *also* sins against the person you wronged, **but ultimately all sin is a personal affront to God**.

When someone sins against you and you sin back against them to get even, *you're even in each other's eyes...* **But you both still owe God, against whom you BOTH sinned! You can sin against each other for eternity, and you will only get deeper in debt to the Law – to God.**

When you get “even”, of course you didn’t really “deliver” yourself. You actually just got yourself in deeper by retaliating. Because what the other person thinks is “even” is probably different from what you think is “even”, so you’ll have to keep one-upping each other indefinitely. The problem isn’t resolved, and probably never will be, and now you’re just as guilty as the other person and God can now justly leave it to you to solve by yourself. What did God command us? **Romans 12:18**. Even if that means you sometimes suffer wrong? **1 Corinthians 6:7**. And what if you *don't* do it – what will God do? **Matthew 5:25-26**.

You’re supposed to get along with your enemies as much as possible. If necessary, it’s better to suffer loss than to engage in a battle on their level – whether it is with words, fists, or lawyers. But if you DO decide to get into a battle over it, and it goes against you, God says you’re on your own – if you get thrown in prison over it, **justly or wrongfully**, you can rot there until you’ve paid your debt.

**God won't solve problems for you that you want to solve yourself. When you take matters into your own hands, you take them out of God's.**

## GETTING EVEN WITH YOUR ENEMIES

Paul told us in **Romans 12:20-21** that if your enemy is hungry, you must feed him; if he’s thirsty, give him water; why? *“For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head”*. Think about it this way; if you *don't* feed your enemy, he is simply hungry for another few hours. That’s hardly a very satisfying payback, after the way he treated you! But if you DO feed him, then you will “heap coals of fire upon his head”. That’s more like it, right? If you want payback done right, *you have to leave it in God's hands*.

What does God say to His enemies? **Deuteronomy 32:35-43**. You cannot possibly compete with that, and it is shallow and shortsighted of you to try – natural enough of course, for we want to see vengeance done NOW, by US... even if you used every resource at your command to make your enemy’s life miserable, you couldn’t possibly compete with God’s resources or creativity – could you? **Micah 5:15**. Then will the righteous know their debt has been settled? **Psalms 58:10**.

Then there’s another thing; does God like it when you steal from Him? **Malachi 3:8**. That context is specifically about tithing, but it’s obvious God resents being stolen from. Who claims all vengeance? **Psalms 94:1**. So when you take vengeance yourself, you’re taking something from God that He claims for Himself – the right to “get even” with the unrighteous. Needless to say, stealing from God is unwise.

## WHY WE SHOULD APPRECIATE OUR ENEMIES

On a physical level, our enemies – whether they are family, bosses, ex-friends, thieves, politicians, you name it – can make our lives extremely difficult at times. But, in our time at least, they seldom actually do violence to us, or threaten our lives. And every time someone wrongly harms us or falsely condemns us, it actually helps us.

When someone calls us names and breaks off a relationship because of our beliefs, what does God say? **Luke 6:22**. How are we blessed? **Verse 23**. If we abandon family, friends, or property for His sake, will

He make it good? **Mark 10:29**. Will God forget the work we have done for Him, or the loss we have suffered in His name? **Hebrews 6:10**.

To revisit the “cosmic ledger” analogy, every time someone behaves as an enemy *and we don't retaliate*, God stacks that up in our “God owes us” column. He promised to repay any loss caused by obedience to Him, and if we get our act in a pile good enough He will usually do it in this life as well as the next.

When you feed the rich, they repay you; God doesn't need to worry about it (**Luke 14:12**). When you feed the poor, they can't repay you (**verses 13-14**) and since imbalances bother God, He'll *have* to step in and pay you back (**Proverbs 19:17**).

When you practice your religion to receive praises from men, does God need to repay you? **Matthew 6:2, 5**. Why? **Verses 1, 4**. If you fast to get noticed by men, does God notice? **Matthew 6:16**. On the other hand, if you help people who cannot repay you, does God pick up the check and pay their bill? **Matthew 25:35-40**.

In a sense, God is teaching us how to manipulate Him; He *has* to repay loss suffered on His behalf. The more debt you can accrue in heaven, the better off you are. Does God command you to “manipulate” Him this way? **Matthew 6:19-21**.

**On the other hand, every time you do a favor and someone repays you, that is payment you are *not* getting from God.** Every time you get slapped and you slap back, it's a blessing you *won't* get from God. Every time you repay a wrong – or get repaid for doing a right – you rob yourself of heavenly blessings.

Does this mean you should never work? **Ephesians 4:28**. Did Paul leave us an example of hard work to receive wages? **2 Thessalonians 3:8-10**. Was it physical, manual labor? **1 Corinthians 4:12**. None of this says we shouldn't work and get paid for it – but when we do “good deeds”, whatever those might be, seek to be paid by God, not men. He pays better.

When our enemies harm us, in a sense we're “working” to earn a payment from God. Especially if they hate us for saying or doing something He told us to say or do. And that leads me to...

## SOMETIMES LOVE IS SOMETHING ELSE...

Sometimes love isn't a glass of water to a thirsty person, or helping someone move or taking a bullet for them. Sometimes it isn't even turning the other cheek or watching a thief go free because of a corrupt legal system. Sometimes it is something even more than all of that. Sometimes it is correction.

Jesus left us many examples of how to bless people. Everyone knows the “Greater love hath no man than this...” verses. But everyone ignores this one...

**Acts 3:26** *Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to **bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.***

God sent Jesus to bless us BY TURNING US AWAY FROM OUR SINS. Now this isn't simply talking about dying for our sins, or being resurrected to give us life; this is talking about literally turning us away from our sins; *causing us to stop committing them! That is the greatest single blessing Jesus gave us – turning us away from our sins!*

Sin is what separates us from God. Sin is why God isn't here today, dwelling with Man. But on our own, we are blundering around in the dark, groping through the woods not knowing what right and wrong is, not knowing what sin is or how to stop it. We all need someone to tell us we are sinning, HOW we are sinning, and that we should stop it! **This is the greatest single blessing Jesus brought us! Without that, His death and resurrection would have been meaningless!**

When Jesus said "go, and sin no more" *that was turning that person away from their sin!* What makes a person blessed? **Psalms 119:1**. If you want to bless a person you need to get them "*undefiled in the way*" and get them to "*walk in the law of the Lord*". Which is of more help to a person? A glass of cold water from a well – or a glass of living water? **John 4:7-15**. **Getting them closer to God, if possible, is a much greater blessing than filling their belly!**

Think about it this way. What is the bottom line of the entire Bible? **Matthew 7:12**. You should treat even your enemies as you would want to be treated; so ask yourself; if you were sinning, bringing harm to yourself and others... would you want to be told about it?

Even if you weren't particularly looking for the answer, wouldn't you want someone to at least try? If you rejected it, that's fine, it's on your head then... but at least you'd want someone to try. Right? Well... what you want men to do to you, do to them.

If you want to REALLY bless someone, MAKE THEM WALK IN THE LAW OF THE LORD – in whatever way it takes to do that! Make them undefiled in their works – in the best, most efficient way you can! Sometimes that's just turning the other cheek; sometimes it's rebuking someone, telling them how wrong they are! Sometimes it's calling them a son of the devil (**John 8:44**)... and sometimes it's as simple as something physical (**Matthew 10:42**).

That's why David cursed his enemies sometimes; but other times he fasted when they were sick. He was doing whatever he could to bless them, and some needed saved with fear, and some with compassion (**Jude 1:22-23**). Whatever he did, he sought their good before his own – but their "good" sometimes looked pretty harsh on the surface. Why is that? **Hebrews 12:11**.

Sometimes what our enemies need is a swift kick from God; sometimes that's exactly what it will take for them to take a good look at their actions and come around to righteousness. Of course, we have no right to administer that judgment ourselves, but we *can* ask God to "break their teeth" for us. IF we ask that with THEIR good in mind, and not our own vengeance. This would not be pleasant for them... but possibly afterward it will "*yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness in them*".

On the other hand, sometimes we don't see any way our enemies can be converted; so we simply quietly turn the other cheek and walk away. A perfect example of this is in **Genesis 26:17-22**. Isaac re-dug these wells which his father had made –he had a legal right to them, but the heathens around him claimed them for themselves. He could have stayed and fought – most of us would have – but instead he simply moved and let them win.

The first well he named *Esek*, "contention"; then they wanted the second well too, so he again simply left and named the well *Sitnah*, "strife". Then he dug a third well, and this time they left him alone, so he knew that's where God wanted him to be. He called that well *Rehoboth*, "wide places", because he said "*For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land*". When there was strife and contention he couldn't peacefully resolve *within the law*, he simply moved on looking for a place where God had "made room" for him.

Remember, you can work all you want, but... “*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain*” (**Psalms 127:1**). If God isn't with you well, your house, or your job... you're wasting your time anyway. If God isn't protecting your possessions, you're locking your house in vain. Much more on that in another lesson.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Loving your enemies is not really complicated. It is difficult to force yourself to do at first, and even more difficult to really feel, so love for your enemies is your instinct, your initial, automatic response. That is a long time coming.

But the actual nuts and bolts of loving your enemies is quite simple. Ask yourself how you would treat your best friend, and then treat your enemy that way. You will come up with all sorts of excuses not to do that; all sorts of justifications why you should do this or that to him to get even. But that's all there is to it.

You understand how to love those who love you – at least, you have the basics down by now. Apply that understanding to your worst enemy, and that's how God expects you to treat him. And Jesus left us that example in **1 Peter 2:21-23**.

We are to bless them that curse us. Whether that means we help them fix their car when it breaks down on the roadside, or whether that means we tell them their religion is not the religion of the Bible, we seek their good above our own.

Sometimes the most good you can do for someone is to call the police on them. Because left unchecked, they'll only commit more crimes and harm themselves and others even more. Sometimes the most good you can do is to be an example of bearing their insults and affliction silently (**Matthew 27:12-14**). The situation is always different, what matters is that you do whatever you believe will help your enemy the most.

You owe him nothing but what **Romans 13:8-10** says you owe him – complete obedience to the law, which says “love your neighbor as yourself”. Jesus raised that bar, so that you must not only love your *neighbor* or friend as yourself, but also “love your enemy as yourself”.

Loving your enemies and blessing them that curse you means doing whatever is best for HIM, ***regardless of what he is doing to you, or how you feel about him!*** Cast that aside, and ask yourself **what is BEST for him**, and then do it – irrespective of whether he is lying to you, or throwing you to the lions. This is truly the foundation, the true essence, of all the law and the prophets.

Why do you have to do that? **Matthew 5:45**. ***Never forget you are being groomed to be a child of God.*** This life is a training period where you learn how to get beyond your own emotions and seek the good of others above your own. You are going to be great in the world tomorrow, if you overcome in this life; what does that mean? **Mark 10:42-45**.

In God's system the greatest, most powerful people are the servants of all. Even Jesus came to serve, not to be served. A major part of that – much harder than ladling out soup to the homeless or visiting sick people – is learning to set your emotions aside and seek their good before your own; even when they annoy you or even harm you.

**A righteous leader does not have the luxury of indulging in his own emotions.** You have to set them aside and seek the good, try to find out how the law judges this person or situation and then dispassionately do it – whether it is to the rich or poor, your friend or your enemy. **Loving your enemies today is training to “be the children of your Father” - Luke 6:35.**

Whether that means treating him as a publican and having no company with him, cursing him with boils, giving him a drink, rebuking him for his sins, or helping his donkey down the road. That’s the sign of a mature Christian, as you learned in the last lesson. Treating your enemies as if they were your own family.

**Ephesians 5:29** *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:*

So let’s wrap this up; do you want to bless someone? Help them get closer to God. That can take a lot of different forms, because different people need different things done to them to get closer to God. But THAT will bless them like nothing else can. And treat them as you’d treat yourself, no matter what they’ve done to you.

**Romans 13:9-10** *...Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.*

Love simply means obeying the commandments. And loving your friendly neighbor like you love yourself is not easy. But it’s a first step, a step that even carnal people in this world figure out to some extent. But obeying the commandments in dealing with those who hate you... and treating *them* with the same concern you would treat your sweetheart... that’s the test of a true Christian.

But remember, God said to bless them; He didn’t say to ask HIM to bless them for you. It’s your job to be a shining light in this world, even among the people who hate you. It’s your job to be an example for them. It’s His job to take care of you while you do that, and He’ll see to it that you get by just fine.

So don’t use meaningless empty phrases like “God bless you” to bless your enemies. That doesn’t fulfill God’s command; it just appeases your conscience and makes you feel good about yourself. Instead, really BLESS THEM – and God will pick up the slack and pay you back for the wrong they’ve done you.

When you’re really mature in your faith, you will not even desire to see vengeance done to your enemies for their sins against you. You’ll know “*they know not what they do*” – that they are ignorant and deserve grace (**Luke 23:34**).

What’s more, you’ll know they have plenty of other sins to answer for and there’s no reason for them to add their sins against you to the tally. That’s why Steven said of those stoning him “*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep*” (**Acts 7:60**).

When you learn to put these principles into practice perfectly, you will finally have fulfilled this goal of God’s for us...

**Philippians 2:15** *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*

This work is completely non-denominational and is meant to fulfill Christ's great commission to "*preach the gospel to every creature*" (**Mark 16:15**). **This publication is not to be sold**; "*freely ye have received, freely give*" (**Matthew 10:8**).

The Bible tells us to PROVE ALL THINGS, and The Simple Answers encourages people to do just that. If you cannot PROVE what you believe, you have no right to believe it! Many of the things we print are shocking because they are different from what you've heard, but if something we say offends or upsets you, we hope you will take the time to set aside your preconceived ideas and PROVE your point from the Bible to see if you truly have been right all these years.

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