

Matthew 5:43-48 & Luke 14:26

Love and Hate

PART 1 - LOVE

Matthew 5:43-48

"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 causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Questions:

Does the Bible command hatred toward enemies? Should you rejoice when misfortune and hurt occurs to them? If not, then who do you think came up with the idea of doing so?

Who is your neighbor? Someone once asked Jesus this question. Read his answer in Luke 10:30-37, and compare it with Luke 9:51-56, which illustrates the normal attitude the Jews had for the Samaritans. Do you have any relationships with others that could be characterized by the types of feelings described in Luke 9? What about relationships which are not quite as hostile, but which are still not what they should be? How do you respond in such relationships?

The Matthew passage refers to a tax collector and a Gentile (unbeliever). These were some of the most despised people of Jesus' day. Tax collectors served the Roman Empire (and often extorted money for themselves). The average Jew considered them to be traitors. A Gentile was a non-Jew. In this context, it would have referred to someone who did not worship and serve the God of the Bible. (Some translations use the word

"pagan.") Do you respond differently than these two types of people would have responded? Even *they* would have loved those who loved them back! Do you do any better? If the way you typically respond is similar to the way they would have responded, you are no better than they are. How can you change your response so that you will be able to be called a "son (or daughter) of your Father in heaven"? Think of some specific examples of ways you can change. (*God's* example of responding in love, mentioned in this passage, may help provide suggestions for how *you* can respond. You may also want to look at the characteristics mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13.)

Being "perfect," mentioned at the end of the passage, means essentially to live in a manner that is consistent with the character of God. Be like your Father! The saying, "Like father, like son (or daughter)" should characterize your life. Even the "children of the devil" can be characterized in this way, as seen in John 8:44. In that verse, Jesus was speaking to people who *claimed* to be children of God, but who didn't *live* like children of God. ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS! Who are you like?

PART 2 - HATE

CONTRASTING USES OF THE WORD "HATE" IN THE NEW TESTAMENT:

Jesus uses the word "hate" in a different sense in Luke 14:26: **"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."**

In the Matthew passage...

The focus is on your attitude toward *other people*. This type of hatred can be expressed in both active and passive ways. *Active* responses are things you *do*, which you shouldn't - things such as "getting even" (treating them the way they treated you), hoping that they "get what they deserve," being unkind, or having other expressions of hostility or dislike. *Passive* responses are things you *fail to do*, even though you should - things such as simply *not* showing kindness, or having a favoritism toward those who treat you better. It can even include acting kind to a person while ignoring his need of eternal salvation. In other words, what you *don't do* can be just as hateful (and sinful) as what you *do*.

In the Luke passage...

The focus is on your attitude toward *God*. In this case, your love toward God should be so great that, whenever there are conflicting interests between God and people, you choose to follow God. Your loyalty to God is to be greater than your loyalty to people (including yourself). It is because of this contrast - your willingness to give God "first place" over yourself and other people - that the word "hate" is used. In such a context, the focus is on a *relative comparison* between the two groups.

This passage in Luke does *not* contradict the passage in Matthew. The Matthew passage focuses on *absolute, unchanging obligations*, not on a relative comparison of priorities between two groups. As God's child, even while you were attempting to obey the requirements of the Luke passage, you would *continue* to have love for other people. You would *continue* to avoid favoritism, hostile actions, and any other type of conduct that would be condemned in the Matthew passage. But the Word of God (not people's opinions) would define *how* that love was manifested - and the Word of God will always tell you that love for God comes first.

- Down through the centuries, Christians have *often* been forced to choose between God and family. For example, in times of persecution, Christians have sometimes been told to deny Christ, or they (the persecutors) would hurt (or kill) members of the Christian's family.
- We must remember the distinction between *love for God* and *religion*. They are *not* the same. To exalt *religion* over one's family is very offensive to God, and does *not* fulfill our obligation to love God more than we love anything else (example: Mark 7:9-13).

VALUES CHART:

Classify the contrasting values and principles that you learned in this study. [If you use the word "hate," use it in the manner that the Matthew passage uses it.] You won't necessarily use all the sections in the chart.

OPTIONAL: Examine the passage in Luke 14:26 (which uses the word "hate" in a different sense) and include what it says in your outline.