

INTRODUCTION

Flowers are a thing of beauty and an expression of sentiment which may mean, “I love you,” “Get well,” or “My condolences.” In keeping with the cynical spirit of our age, a new venture called Flowers of Extinction will deliver buds and petals guaranteed to be dead upon arrival. The offensive gift is designed as a way to get even with former bosses, jilted lovers, or whomever you would like to insult with revenge. It may sound like a clever retort, but it won’t meet with Christ’s approval.

Today I want to share something that will be impossible for you to do. Apart from the Holy Spirit working in our lives, you and I are totally incapable of doing what I am about to share. Yet, it’s a passage full of commands from our Lord Jesus Himself. In this text, I want you to note the ten commands He gave. This is the entire Sermon on the Mount in one chapter! This is traditionally known as “the Sermon on the Plain.”

Because Dr. Luke was a Gentile and the primary audience he wrote his gospel to were Gentiles, you’ll notice many of Jesus’ statements primarily dealing with His fulfillment of the Law as well as His reiteration of the Law in Matthew 5 and 6 was largely avoided in Luke’s compilation of material put together for this chapter. Nevertheless, what we are about to read is unnatural and impossible in our own strength. Let’s take a look:

EXPLANATION

[27] “But I say to you who hear, **Love** your enemies, **do good** to those who hate you,

- *“To those who are listening...”* are you listening to Him right now? Do you have “ears to hear?”
- *“Love your enemies”* – (1st imperative command) In the original language (the Greek), “love” here is *agapao*, which means “to welcome, entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly.” This is where we get the Christian idea to love unconditionally.
 - o How about you? Got any enemies? Anyone in your life you would put in this category?
- *“Do good to those who hate you”* – (2nd imperative command) He certainly personified this ideal as He was dying on the Cross and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).
 - o How about you? Do you think “Vengeance is Mine; I will repay,” says the Lord” doesn’t apply to you? Ouch!

[28] **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who abuse you.

- *“Bless those who curse you”* – (3rd imperative) What would it look like to bless your enemy today? Especially the one who accused you of something you didn’t do?
- *“Pray for those who abuse you”* – (4th imperative) Our tendency is to pull away, avoid, isolate, protect ourselves from further harm. Prayer is the furthest thing from our minds! Even King David in the Old Testament prayed against his enemies that God would strike them dead!
 - o How about you? Would you get upset, jealous or angry if God decided to bless your enemy?

[29] To one who strikes you on the cheek, **offer the other also**, and from one who takes away your cloak **do not withhold** your tunic either.

- “Offer the other also” – (5th imperative) This is not Jesus’ call to just take a senseless beating in the midst of violent harm being done to you. This command to *offer the other* cheek *as well* is often misunderstood. It means that there is risk involved in reaching out to people with God’s hope. But if one is struck down in rejection, the disciple is to continue reaching out.
- “Do not withhold your tunic either” – (6th imperative) is again an image of continually being totally at risk as one tries to keep contact with those who are hostile to what Jesus and His disciples offered.

[30] **Give** to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods **do not demand** them back.

- “Give” - (7th imperative) Jesus advocates a generosity and a desire to meet those in dire need with the command *give to everyone who asks you*. This may allude to begging; giving alms was viewed highly in the ancient world
- “Do not demand” – (8th imperative) is an example of showing forgiveness. This is an example of “going the extra mile” in Matthew 5:42. Wikipedia says, “The verse is a reference to the practice of “impressment” which, among other things, allowed a Roman soldier to conscript a Jewish native to carry his equipment for one Roman mile (milion = 1,000 paces/app. 1,611 yards) -- no easy task considering a Roman soldier's backpack could weigh upwards of one-hundred pounds. Jesus' point was that his followers must relinquish their individual "rights" in order to advance God's kingdom through self sacrifice.”

[31] And as you wish that others would do to you, **do so to them**.

- “Do so to them” (9th imperative). This is the “Golden Rule” you’ve probably heard of all your life. Imagine for a moment... a miracle happens tonight while you’re asleep in bed and the problem you’ve been having with your enemy goes away in the morning!
 - o How would things be different? What would be the first thing you would notice?

WHY DO ALL THIS?????

[32] “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? **<NONE>** For even sinners love those who love them.

[33] And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? **<NONE>** For even sinners do the same.

[34] And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? <NONE>
Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.

- Obvious to Jesus and to His hearers, there was little praiseworthy about a person who loved, served or lent money to those who would reciprocate. The hard part for us is the following contrast to these three ideas, summarizing the whole passage we're studying today.

[35] But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.

[36] Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (10th imperative) Isn't this heart and behavior what we see from God? Wow!

---HERE'S THE WHY/THE BENEFITS for loving our enemies:

- REWARD!
- It's the MARATHON view on life... perhaps the greatest mark of a Christ-follower in this life, the behavior that marks you as different by others... is the supernatural ability to love those who damage you. Whether that be a spouse, children, in-laws, a boss, a co-worker, a church leader, a neighbor, a friend, parents, etc.
- The character of these actions reflects the grace and kindness of God, bearing witness to a "line of descent" or relationship of the individual to God (*sons of the Most High*). There is to be a unique kind of ethic at work with disciples. Jesus refers specifically to *sons* here because in the ancient world sons had special privileges which were rarely accorded to daughters. However, Jesus is most likely addressing both men and women in this context, so women too would receive these same privileges.
- This is the kind of life behavior that warrants our Heavenly Father's assessment: "Well Done Good and Faithful Servant!"

SUMMARY

Has someone wronged you? Do you feel bitter about the injustice of a friend? I have a suggestion. Instead of scheming for a way to return evil for evil, love your enemies and former friends. Why not send them flowers? Instead of Flowers of Extinction, make your peace offering a Bouquet of Distinction.

May we become like Him in His selfless heart and behavior toward others so that He be glorified and that He honors us with His declaration that we are His beloved children who performed well, were faithful, and who mercifully loved those who chose not to love us.