

"Love Thy Neighbor And Thy Enemy"

"Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? and if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others: do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:43-48).

This is the sixth (and final) contrast between teaching from the Law and Jesus found in this chapter; the only contrast in which the principle from Moses is not an exact quotation. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor" is from Leviticus 19:18, but the remainder, "Hate thine enemy" is not found in these precise words. Still, the spirit "Hate thine enemy" was there. Israel was to make no covenant with other nations and when they did, it displeased God. Some of Israel's most devout men expressed hatred for their enemies as well as some of the Psalms which did also (1 Chron. 20:3, Psa. 137:8f; 139:21, 22). J.W. McGarvey says that the expression "'hate thine enemies' was a true representation of the law in its practical working, that it taught hatred of one's enemies" (*The Fourfold Gospel*, p 247).

When Jesus was "tried" by a lawyer as to what one must do to inherit eternal life Jesus said, "What is written in the law? how readerst thou?" (Lk. 10:25). The lawyer answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Some think these two were part of the ten commandments. They were not, but constituted a synopsis of it: "love the Lord thy God" covered the first four commandments; "Love thy neighbor" covered the latter six.

Jesus told the lawyer he had given the correct answer, then bade him, "This do and thou shalt live" (Lk. 10:29). The lawyer desired to justify himself, so he asked, "And who is my neighbor?" (Lk. 10:29). At this point Jesus gave a parable called "The Good Samaritan" (Lk.10:30-37). The parable illustrates how one is to love his neighbor and his enemy. Jesus' parable gives three different attitudes toward a fellowman who needs: the attitude of the robbers who beat the man, took what he had and left him for dead. Then there was the attitude of the priest and Levite who

ought because of their "occupation," (joined with the fact that the man was a fellow Jew), to have been filled with compassion and rendered assistance to the man. But they were indifferent to his needs. Then, there was the Samaritan. The man by the wayside was his national enemy, neither Jew or Samaritan lost any love on the other. But the Samaritan didn't look to see what nationality the man was; he was a fellow human who was in trouble and needed help. And the Samaritan helped him.

Jesus taught us to pray for those who spitefully use us. He backed up His words with deeds. He prayed for His enemies on the cross: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Paul wrote, "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men...If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirst, give him to drink. In so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head" (Rom. 12:18, 20).

Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which of the three proved to be neighbor to him?" and the lawyer responded, "He that showed mercy to him" (Lk. 10:36f). Who is my neighbor? The person who needs my help! In this parable the neighbor whom the Samaritan was to love, was his enemy! Thus, "love your enemies, do good to them that hate you" (Lk. 6:27). In other words from our Master, "Go and do thou likewise" (Lk. 10:37).

Jim McDonald