

Love Your Enemies

Father, thank you for reminding us that Jesus is the Messiah, that He is Lord over all, that He is Lord in Uganda, that He is Lord also in United States. He is Lord in Germany, He is Lord in Ghana. Lord in other places of the world. Lord, we want to be exalting His name as we are opening your word. Speak to us, make us more like Jesus.

There are people here who don't know you as personal Lord and Savior. I pray that you would reveal yourself to Him, to them as Lord and Savior. We pray this in Jesus name and all God's listening people said, Amen. Amen. If you have a Bible, would you mind opening your Bibles with me in Matthew chapter five?

If you don't, there should be a Bible in front of you in the back chairs. And if you don't own one, make this Bible yours as long as you want. You read it and we want to give it to you as a gift from us and as you're opening there and continue our series on the Sermon on the Mount. I was thinking this week about a book that I read a few years ago was written by a fellow Romanian immigrant to the States. Her name is Virginia Pro Dan and she wrote the book.

She actually works as a lawyer right now for alliance of Defending Freedom. And she wrote a book called Saving My Assassin. Saving My Assassin. Now here's what she wrote. So she was a lawyer in the communist regime and atheist and didn't have anything to do with God.

At one point someone shared the gospel with her and she became a Christian. She kept doing her law job and she continued to be a lawyer, but now she was defending Christians. A lot of pastors, actually, I know some of the pastors that she defended during that time in the early 80s, and this did not sit well with the communist regime. So at one point, after several warnings, they send an assassin to kill her. So this guy one day comes into her office and pretends to be a client and went to her office and was just alone with her.

And after a few minutes He says to her, I'm here to kill you. I've been sent by government orders, put a gun on the table and said, anything else you want to say? And she did not panic, she did not run, did anything like that. And she said, you know, you are not the enemy evil and Satan is the enemy. And you don't realize that you are in bondage to Him and all the system is in bondage to Him.

But I want to share with you about someone who can free you up from this bondage. Before you kill me, let me just share a few words. She went on to share the gospel with Him, told her about Christ, told Him about Christ. And not just that. Before she finished, she said, you know, I also want to tell you I'll forgive you.

I forgive you for what you're about to do. You're going to kill me. I get that. But I want to tell you that's the heart of Christ. This guy, actually in the book, He says that He couldn't really pursue to do what He wanted to do.

He couldn't point a gun to her, so He just ran out. And she never seen Him until years later, after the communist block fell, she met Him and found out that He actually ended up being a believer and became a Christian and used that moment in their life, or His life to turn around. But Virginia talks about in her book that it wasn't her feelings or safety that made her share. It was truly a love that she had for this man in front of her. And she said, as I was praying for Him, as I was thinking about what I'm about to say, she said, these are the verses that came to my mind.

This one verse, it's from Matthew 5, verse 44, that we're going to tackle this morning. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. That's the verse that she could remember the times of dire need. So with that in mind, I want us to read this passage and see what it actually says and how it can be encouraging to our hearts. 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 makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same. You therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Now, if you've been with us for a few months, you know we've been tackling the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus talks about the qualities and their characteristics of someone who is part of His kingdom, someone who is part of the kingdom of heaven.

And He talks about at the beginning that people who are part of His kingdom should be happy people. They're happy people because they are redeemed people. They're broken people. They're humble people. They're people that know that everything they have is given to them by God and is a gift.

And they are fine with that. They're actually satisfied in that that's what gives them happiness and the freedom. But Jesus doesn't just stop there. He goes on to say, here's the morals and the ethics of the kingdom of God. And these were there from the beginning.

Unfortunately, the scribes and the Pharisees did not see this like this in the law that was given to Moses. So they came up with their own interpretations and the law of Moses got to be distorted. And by the time of Jesus life and ministry, all of those commandments became totally different ones. So Jesus is going back and says to them, hey, this is not what was intended. So what I want us to look at first is to see the rabbinical teachings on loving others.

And rabbinical comes from the word rabbi, which means teacher in Hebrew. What happened with the teaching? How did they end up where they end up? Again, Jesus starts in verse 43 by saying, you have heard that it was said. Now, I mentioned that Jesus is not pitting himself against the law of Moses.

He's not saying, hey, you've heard in the past that God said this, but I'm telling you something different. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And if you look at the Old Testament law, you see that the principles are there of what He's about to say. But unfortunately, the religious leaders kind of twisted those words. That's why He says, you have heard it said, and I mentioned to you a few weeks ago.

Then whenever Jesus actually quotes from the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew, He's always saying it is written. They always point back to the Scripture. Here He's using the words, you've heard it said, meaning you've heard it distorted. You've heard it popularized by the religious leaders, but this is not what it was meant to be. So what are you here being said?

You hear that people say to you or teachers, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Now, again, this cannot be based on the Old Testament for a few reasons. One is the Bible actually in Leviticus 19:18, says, Love your neighbor as yourself. And if you see they left out a small detail as yourself. So instead of focusing on who to, excuse me, how to love as yourself, they're starting focusing on who's my neighbor.

But that's not the emphasis of the Old Testament law. If you think that this is bad, it gets worse. The scribes added to the biblical revelation the words and hate your enemy. Now where is this in the Old Testament? It's in the book of second opinions.

If you want to look it hard, you can find it there.

It's their opinion, but it's nobody's else opinion. Hate your enemy. That's not in any Old Testament, Bible or book. So how do they come up with that? Before you're too hard on them and you're trying to point fingers, I want you to see how they could come up with this conclusion.

It's a wrong conclusion, but it's not too hard to fathom this conclusion. Again, it's a wrong one. I don't want to give them credit. I just want you to see how they end up here. Here's why I think there's some kind of insistence or allusion to the fact that God might hate His enemies or we are called to hate our enemies.

Deuteronomy 7:2. And when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them. This is God speaking to the Israelites about the Canaanites. When you defeat the Canaanites, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

Also the Lord promised to defend Israel, to fight for enemies, and to put curses on their enemies who hate and persecute Israel. This is Deuteronomy, chapter 30, verse 7. And of Psalms, listen to Psalm 11, verse 5. The Lord examines both the righteous and the wicked. God hates those who love violence.

Psalms 139, verse 21 to 22. O Lord, shouldn't I hate those who hate you? Shouldn't I despise those who oppose you? Yes, I hate them with total hatred. For your enemies are my enemies.

Do you see how some of this text talk very strongly about people who oppose God? So it's not a far stretch to see how this rabbi thought. You know what I think? We are called also to love our neighbors, but to hate our enemies. Even though God actually never says that.

And I want to make this very clear. Even though there's a place for righteous anger and wrath towards God's settled enemies, the Bible never commands us to hate individual enemies. Yes, God is the one who deals with enemies as a class and He actually judges people and nations. But we are never endorsed or commanded to hate individuals. Yes, we can hate the class of the people in the world to say, hey, we are hating worldliness.

We, we hate sin. We hate the people who do this. And that. But we're never encouraged or commended to hate individuals in daily life. We have no right to adopt the eternal perspective.

One day God will judge people for their wickedness, but we cannot classify people. The man standing before us may be wicked, but we don't know whether He will repent or not. Similar to what happened to our assassin guy in the opening illustration. And remember Apostle Paul? He was an enemy of the church.

And the church was never encouraged to hate Paul. Actually, the encouragement was to pray for Paul and others like him, because God has a plan. You never know how the person in front of you can be the most wicked person in front of you. You never know how God might turn them around and might use your kindness even to turn the person around. So let me summarize here.

We are never encouraged to hate individual people. We hate sin. We hate the systems of worlds, system or a nation or a class of people, or wicked. But we're never encouraged to hate individuals. In the Bible, that's a very important point.

Now also, Jesus goes on and talks about here's what He means and what God meant through this law, verse 44. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. And this is a supremely radical. Look at it. Alfred Plummer, an old Bible scholar, said, to return evil for good is devilish.

To return good for good is human, but to return good for evil is divine. I would say that even praying for your enemies is supremely divine. Now, the fact that Jesus mentions enemies here, plural, suggests that Jesus means personal enemies who are presently doing us harm. He's not thinking about Satan the enemy. He's just talking about people around us.

To the men on the street, the mere idea of loving His enemies is absurd and offensive and beyond His capacity to comprehend. It offends His natural sense of right and wrong. But Jesus commands a love without limits, which love loves everyone, regardless of what they say or do to us. Now, this is revolutionary. This is totally radical.

Whatever culture you grew up in, whatever culture you're part of, you don't do this. Now, it's important to make some emphasis here on what does love mean? The word here, the verb is agapao comes from the noun called agape. And some scholars point out that this word describes not so much an emotion, but a will to perform a sacrificial act. Will to perform sacrificial acts.

And the next verses seem to imply that love in this context represents more than the deeds that we perform for our enemies and our feelings. Now don't get me wrong, I don't think that we are allowed to hate someone while at the same time do good things for them. But what He's saying here is that when you love someone, it's not so much about what you feel, that you feel the butterflies and the goosebumps. I cannot wait to love this person. No, what He's saying is that it's more about the deeds you're doing.

You might not feel so great about them, but that's not the point. And you might not even love them as you love someone really close to you, as you love your wife or kids, your husband, your family members. So it's not the point of loving them as everyone else. That's just almost not only impossible, it's ridiculous to think that you can do that. What the call is here is to do certain acts of kindness, love.

And again, this verse seems to be pointing out to this, Jesus in essence transforms our enemies into neighbors. And perhaps there's no story in the Bible that illustrated this better than the parable of the Good Samaritan. It's a parable. It's a story that Jesus comes up with in Luke, chapter 10, verse 25 to 37. He wants to make a point.

He's wanting to explain to the people He's talking to about who is the neighbor. Listen to this account from Luke 10:25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put Him to the test, to put Jesus the test, saying, teacher, what shall I do to inherit the eternal life? He said to Him, what is written in the law? How do you read it?

And He answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength and all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself. And He said to Him, you have answered correctly, do this and you will live. But He, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, and who is my neighbor? Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and He fell among robbers, who stripped Him and beat Him and departed, leaving Him half dead. Now, by chance, the priest was going down that road, and when He saw Him, He passed by on the other side.

So likewise, a Levite, when He came to the place and saw Him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as He journeyed, came to where He was, and when He saw Him, He had compassion. Just stop there for a second. So the situation here is of such that this guy comes to Jesus and He says, who is my neighbor? I've done everything I was told from The Bible, I think I'm great.

And Jesus saying, have you loved your neighbor? Oh, yeah, but who is my neighbor? Because He's thinking just the people around Him. And Jesus gives this parable as an illustration to Him. And when He gets to the word Samaritan, this is where it takes a different dimension.

Why? Because Samaritans were arch enemies to the Jews. So when He hears that there's a Samaritan who stopped to help a fellow Jew, most likely this guy who was beaten up was a Jew for Him, for the listener, was a shame, shock. A Samaritan would have compassion. Why would He do that?

It doesn't stop there. He went to Him and bound up His wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then He set Him on His own animal and brought Him to an inn and took care of Him. And the next day He took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, take care of Him and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

He said, the one who showed Him mercy. And Jesus said to Him, you go and do likewise. So what Jesus point is here is very important, is to point out that there were few leaders here who were supposed to help and they didn't. And the one who shouldn't have helped the enemy helped. Now this is important because a lot of people read this parable and they made the same mistake I did when I was in seminary in Romania.

I remember actually this class very, very vividly. Probably shared this with you in the past where we were in this class. And the professor said, okay, how would you interpret this parable? And immediately our reaction is to find the spiritual meaning behind all these characters. So you start to think like man, the Good Samaritan resembles Jesus.

The Pharisees and the Levi's represent the religious leaders of our day who are very hypocritical. The innkeeper is probably the church or God, and the oil is the Holy Spirit. And you keep thinking. And then the professor asked us, so who do you think the donkey is? Like, we don't know.

And He turns around and says, the donkey is the one who comes up with this kind of interpretation of this text. That was us. Because the point is not of that for this text, the point is here to resemble who is our neighbor. And we call it even the Good Samaritan. But I'm not sure if you paid attention.

There's no mentioning of Him being good. We call it the Good Samaritan, He was just a Samaritan. What Jesus is trying to say to this parable is that the standards of God's ethics and morals and how you love your neighbor are pretty high. Everyone around you is your neighbor, even the one that you despise. So nothing new under the sun.

Everyone is our neighbor. Now, why does Jesus command us to love like this, our enemies? Two reasons that He says here in verse 45 and verse 46. First, verse 45, it makes us resemble God. Verse 45.

So that you, when you do this, you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and He sends rain on the just and on the unjust. I hope you understand here that what He's saying is that you are like father, like son. Like father, like daughter.

And I hope that you're not misunderstanding here. He's not saying that loving your enemies makes you a child of God. He's not saying that. What He's saying here is loving your enemies shows that you are a child of God. So loving your enemies is not the means through which you become a child of God.

Loving your enemies shows that you are a child of God. Because there's nothing you and I can do to become children of God. It's solely up of His grace and mercy. In other words, we show the world that we are children of God by acting like our heavenly Father. God loves His enemies by sending rain and sunshine on them.

And instead of instant judgment, the Bible actually says that God's mercies and kindness should lead someone to repentance. He doesn't just judge us on the spot because He wants to have mercy with us. He wants you and I and all the people out there. When He. We look at the sun and the moon and the stars and the rain and the wind.

When you go up to Yosemite, when you go up to the lake, and you see all the creation around you to say, lord, you thank you so much for creating these things around me. And I bow my head to you. By the way, did you see that? It says there His son. They're not Mother Nature's son or the stars and the moon.

They're not Mother Nature. Mother Nature has a father, and that's Almighty God. Don't buy into this kind of junk. It's God's son, God's moon, God's earth, God's everything and God's disposition. Even though, yes, there's a time when He judges sin, there's a time when He's going to have limits to His patience.

But overall His disposition as a God is a God who always wants to be kind and loving to His people and to people in general. That's why He's patient. That's why He waits. He wants everyone to come to repentance. A second reason why Jesus commands us to love like this our enemies is because we want to be distinguished from the world.

We want to be distinguished from the world. Verse 46 and 47. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? Now tax collectors are probably not favored among good jobs today.

If you're a tax collector, if you're for IRS, well that's probably not very popular with your friends. Especially if you're one of those who knocks at people's doors or businesses to get their taxes. If you don't like the job. Now, 2,000 years ago was 10 times worse.

You were committing national treason. You were seen as a pariah of the society you were working for. The Roman government instilled their taxes on your fellow Jews. And these guys were not just bringing the taxes in, they were crooked and they were rich in their lives and their belongings. And He says, Jesus says that even those disgusting double-crossing tax collectors love their own tax-gathering buddies.

So if a person loves only His friends, He's doing no better than a swindling tax collector. So you love your friends who reciprocate your love. So what? Now that's not a big deal. You're doing the same thing as everyone else.

Jesus underscored His point with His next statement in verse 47. And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same. And I don't want you to miss this. Follower Jesus should do more.

That's the word I want to focus on. More than what is common among non-believers in the way they show love. It is this more. That is the distinctive quality of the Christian's love. Now the famous British preacher Martyn Lloyd Jones, who lived like 100 years ago, died 50 years ago.

He pointed out something that I wanted to read to you and I put it up on a slide, I think for you as well. Listen to His quote, this quote. The Christian is the man who is above and goes beyond the natural man at His very best and highest. There are many people in the world who are not Christian but who are very moral and highly ethical men whose word is their bond and who are honest, just and upright. You never find them doing a shady thing to anybody.

But they're not Christian, and they say so. They don't believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and may have rejected the whole of the New Testament teaching with scorn, but they're absolutely straightforward, honest and true. Now, the Christian by definition here is a man who is capable of doing something that the best natural man cannot do. He goes beyond and does more than that. He listens to this, exceeds.

He's separate from all others, and not only from the worst among others, but from the very best and highest among them.

Now let me ask you this. Is there a more in your love for others?

Is there something about your love and my love that cannot be explained in natural terms? Is there something special and unique about my love to others that is not present in the life of the non-believer? Let that sink in for a second. If I had to spend the week with you and you spend the week with me, or a month with you or with me, the way I love my friends, the way I love people

in general, the way I even love my enemies, is it more than the most ethical, moral person who doesn't know Christ?

I think that's a legit question, isn't it?

That's something that I was very convicted by, and I hope you're convicted by. We're called to have more. That's why we tell the world we're different than what you are. Not only because we have the passport in our in our pocket and we're like, hey, we're safe to heaven. We need to show that we're different.

People need to see that in our lives, in the way we could, we conform ourselves to the ethics of Christ. In the way we live our lives, we need to show that we're different. We cannot afford to respond the same way as a non believer responds, because we have Christ in our lives.

And I think that's something we need to let that sink deep in our lives and thoughts.

These are important questions. Because if there's nothing more to our love, if we love only those with whom we have something in common with and who treat us well, if there's nothing more than that, we are perhaps not Christians at all. And I know that it's a strong statement, but I stand by it.

I didn't say we must perfectly exhibit the more of His love. But is there a more?

Is there more? And if you feel already discouraged, it doesn't stop here. It keeps going. So listen to verse 48. You, therefore must be Perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, you feel down.

Let's go even more down from the air, by the way. Actually, the standard is even higher. You need to be perfect. And by now, the listeners who paid attention to what Jesus was sharing probably have rightly concluded that the moral ideals that He presented are great, but they are unattainable. And Jesus confirms this.

You need to be perfect. Now, to be perfect means to be complete, utterly morally right. God is like that. Complete, utterly morally right. And if we're honest with ourselves, regardless of your background, regardless of where you grew up, regardless of how you were raised, you have to admit, as I admit, we are not perfect.

Actually, let's be honest. Nobody is perfect. Nobody is. And the Bible confirms it in Romans 3:23. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

All of us fall short. All of us.

Then the obvious question is, what am I supposed to do then? And the answer to that question is, you stop trying to make your own righteousness and trying to turn to you to get help or to others. Turn to God. You see, we have this tendency in us to try to get ourselves right, to prove to the

world that we're not so bad, to prove to God that we're not so bad. So we try to do good deeds and in charity and make ourselves feel good about ourselves.

Write a check or maybe help the poor, help this or help that. We think that our good deeds outweigh the bad deeds. Now, the Bible is very clear. We cannot do that because we need to be perfect. Let me just say this.

A few years ago, I had this dear friend, older, had a lot of money, and He was just wrestling with a lot of guilt through His life. And He's trying to go from one church to another to figure out where He can find this absorption of His sins. Feels like He doesn't have any more guilt. So He finally went to this Catholic archbishop who was here in Central Valley or California, gave a lot of money and did the confession and all the charity and all that. And He got a diploma that now He's right with God or something like, I don't know what their language is.

And He had this picture with the archbishop giving Him this, like, diploma or certificate that is now in good standing with God. And I was at His home, and He shows me this picture. He was very proud of himself. And I said, hey, man, on a scale from 1 to 100, 100 being perfect, 1, totally depraved, where do you feel like you find yourself off of doing all this stuff, on a scale from one to another, it's like, man, I'm somewhere around 80, and I think I'm going to 85% of being good. So I'm getting there.

And I said, hey, I have some bad news for you.

And He looks at me, what's wrong? And I said, the bad news is you need to hit perfection. And here's the worst news. You have to have perfection from your track record. Like, who's going to expound you from that?

Like, you cannot. And I read this verse to Him. You need to be perfect, like, past, present, and future. And He looks at me totally deflated. Now, who can go to heaven, man?

Then is anyone perfect? And I'm like, no, that's exactly the right place to be. When you realize that there's nothing you can do to be right with God, that all the religion you're pursuing in the world is not going to make it. You can do a lot of charity. You can do mission work.

You can give money to the poor, giving money to the church. You can read your Bible, you can sing in choirs. You can preach the word of God. It doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is for you to get on your knees and say, God, I cannot do it.

Because here's the thing. God made a way where seems to be no way. And God's way has been a perfect one. He sent His son, His perfect son, Jesus Christ, to live a perfect life, inwardly and outwardly, the perfect life that you and I should live. But we cannot.

And the Bible says that He, the perfect one, took the penalty of your sin and my sin on His shoulders and died on the cross on our behalf, to expunge and to clean and to wash our record, to

perfect us in front of Christ, in front of God. So when we're in front of God, God gives us Christ's righteousness, His perfection unto you. He treats us, when you trust in Jesus Christ, when you ask forgiveness for your sins and believe in Jesus Christ, He treats you in that moment as if you've never sinned. Not only that, He treats you as if you've always done the right thing because of Christ. And God wants to perfect us, He says, through the way He first gives you justification, right, standing with Him.

And then there's a process in which reality is like, we still have flesh on us. And I'm talking here not about the physical part, but the spiritual part. We are dealing with our old self. And there's a process in which God, until we get to go to Heaven. He's trying to deliver us from the power of sin.

He's sanctifying us more and more. We become more perfected, if you will. And one day we will be perfect. But not in this earth, on this earth, but in heaven. When are we going to see Him?

The Bible says when we're going to see Him, we're going to be like Him. So there's hope for us. And there's hope also in this world. Because I hope if you ask any Christian who actually worked hard trying to be more like Christ, He would tell you that His life 20 years ago is different than now. He's more like Jesus.

If you truly work hard at it and do you put the. Put in the holy sweat, I call it. If you put holy sweat and put off the old self, put on Christ, you. You'll be a better man, a better woman of God. So there is this work of perfection that He does in us.

Now, a few more applications as we close this morning. Loving our enemies is to treat others the way God the Father in Christ Jesus has treated us. Paul says in Romans 5:8. But God proves His own love for us and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:10. While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son. One pastor says, when we love our enemies, we will imitate our Heavenly Father and grow towards the perfection that salvation in Christ will eventually complete in us. And He goes on to say that loving our enemies comes from a heart of humility.

Loving our enemies comes from a heart of humility. Now, how does it look like to practically be humble towards our opponents? How do you develop a love for people you don't like? Here are a few things. First, make it a point to obey Jesus.

Command to pray for those who oppose and insult you. Pray for them by name.

Make it a point to pray for those who oppose you and insult you and pray for them by name. I always say, and I've done it more recently than probably I should have done it earlier in my ministry. But I've started to tell people, especially when I do counseling for couples, they don't get along, they don't like each other, they feel like there's no more love. And I say this, start praying for each other. Five minutes a day, five minutes.

And you might think it's easy, but I promise you have the 30 seconds, you'll be like, oh, I don't know else to pray for them at least five minutes. Start praying for the person that you feel like they're you're not getting along with. You know what's going to happen when you pray at least five minutes, your heart will soften towards that person. Your animosity is not going to be so high. You start to see them as human beings with souls.

They're made in the likeness of God. It might not solve your problem, it might not restore your marriage, but you won't have hate towards them. You won't have animosity. You'd have more compassion. Pray for those who oppose and insult you.

Second, bring all criticism back to God in prayer.

Take all your disappointments to God before you go to the person, tell them about your disappointments with them. Go to God and tell Him about your disappointments with people. I promise He's going to really help you to not be so vitriolic, so conflictual. Give those disappointments to God where you're convicted that you have wronged someone. Be humble enough to go back to that person and seek forgiveness.

I've seen this many times where you have someone who has been wronged maybe a hundred times by this one person and they wrong this person maybe twice and they say, you know what? I don't want to go and ask forgiveness because look what they've done to me a hundred times. I am right to be wrong at least for this two times. And I won't say forgiveness. Probably you've seen it in your own lives.

I want to tell you though that for those two, you probably should ask forgiveness because here's the thing, that's the right thing to do. You did the right thing in the right way and leave the results to God. And maybe those moments of asking forgiveness or at least make them think about how they should probably respond as well. But that's not your job, is it? You do the right thing in the right way and leave the results to God and rest in the Lord.

That's a saying that Pastor Chuck had many times and I think it's a great one. Go and ask forgiveness. Don't think about the hundred times that you were wronged. Think about the two times or one time you wronged them and ask forgiveness for that. Third, practice good listening skills with people who disagree with you.

Listening to our opponents is a lost art, isn't it? Especially in our world today. We don't listen well. We think that we already know what they're going to say. We don't ask questions, at least questions that are open ended and truly want to listen.

But you'll see that a lot of times when you ask questions. It might not change your position towards these people. You might still say, hey, this is wrong what they're doing, but you have some understanding where they're coming from. By the way, I want to make sure that I'm not

misunderstood when I say love your enemy and love people. I'm not saying you have to approve of what they're doing and jump on their bandwagon.

Love is selfless and does these that are selfless. But love doesn't endure sin and approves of sin. I hope you hear that. But love is this feeling of like doing things for the person who opposes. You get prepared for potentially contentious meetings by praying in great detail about what you're about to face.

Putting on the spiritual armor Paul listed in Ephesians 6.

When should we do this? All the time. I find myself driving to different meetings and I'm praying, even meeting sometimes with family members who I know that I might not be walking with the Lord so closely. Or maybe they're. They have different views.

I pray, lord, give me wisdom to know what to say and not to say. To keep my mouth shut when I need to keep it shut, to realize that there's no place where I need to leave my guard down. You see, a lot of Christians think that we are just Christian. Life is like a walk in a park in Woodward park. Just a stroll in the park.

Hey, man, it's great. Roses and daffodils, whatever they have right now in season, nothing. Some geese here and there that kind of obstruct my way, but nothing else. Heat. But it's all fine.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christianity and the Christian walk is a warfare you cannot afford not to be on your heels, on your toes. Excuse me. Or whatever, one of those. You have to be ready all the time. All the time.

Pray. Ask other people to pray. Don't trust yourself. Trust God. Because when you wing it, sometimes not going to help.

And you're going to try to justify yourself. It doesn't help. Just recognize I need to be always dependent on the Lord.

Understand that some opponents really are the children of the devil and will never be reconciled to biblical doctrine. But also know that some of the bitterest enemies, the hardest enemies right now could become staunch allies later. You never know how. How your involvement and your example will change their lives. There's more here, but I hope you get the picture.

I want to leave you with this. This question. Just take it with you home. Am I loving people more? More than the world loves them?

Don't think about others in your life. This is a question for you. Ask this question between you and the Lord and ask yourself, am I truly different when my family or friends or others, even my enemies say, man, that gal, that guy, I know I disagree with them, but I know they love me and they love others. It's just something about them, man. That's a question I want you to think about.

And then if you're not a Christian, I want to remind you again, stop trying to get yourself together, to get your act together again. There's churches who say, hey, if you want to come to Christ, you have to come to church. You have to stop drinking, stop doing this, don't do that. No, you cannot do that. Good luck.

But the church is not a museum for saints, as a hospital for sinners. You are meant to come here as you are, because God, I promise you, will not let you leave here as you came. If you truly bow your knee to Him, you ask Him to change your life, He will truly change your life. He will give you freedom in Christ. Trust Him.

Come to Him. Let's pray. Father, thank you for your word. I thank you, Lord, for the reminder that Jesus is king. And not just that.

Jesus asks us to live by a different standard and we recognize it on our own. We cannot do this. This is impossible. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, with your grace and mercy, we can live lives that they're resembling more of you being different than even the world we want to love more in a way that resembles God. Father, help us to resemble you more.

Give us grace. Give us mercy. And as we approach this table, we are reminded that your disposition towards us is one of love and acceptance and kindness. And as we partake of these elements, we are reminded that you have given Christ to die for us so that we could have access to your throne of grace and mercy. Be with us.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.