

Conflict would be radically diminished if we followed Yeshua's commandment to love our enemies



43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. 44But I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute you! 45In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.46If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47If you are kind only to your friends,5:47 how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. Matthew 5:43-48

## **Divine Love Towards Our Adversaries**

In today's global environment there are so many things that have a potential to divide us. Masks? Vaccines? Vaccine passports? Personal liberty vs. collective safety? What about your thoughts on systemic racism, global conspiracies, election fraud, the media, or where you think our country needs to go? And these are just the tip of the iceberg of so many other issues. I have yet to meet anyone who believes 100% of what I believe at the present moment related to these or other issues. And, I don't even agree with myself from just six months ago!

It is so easy for me to default towards pride and dogmatism with my perspectives and judgements towards others. I can easily become blustery and boisterous and repeat zingers of talking points that I've recently heard that come against the "bad guys" of those standing against what I presently believe. I suppose I am seeking for something secure to hold onto in the midst of tenuous times, and at the end of the day after my most vigorous of conversations I find myself empty and spent...and needing His activity in my heart.

Yeshua promised us that in the days directly preceding His return that ethnic groups would war against each other (Matthew 24:7). He also claimed that every people group would hate us as Believers because of our identification with Him and that many of us would be persecuted and killed (Matthew 24:9). Yeshua then prophesied that many would fall away from Him and that the love of many would grow cold because of the increasing lawlessness (Matthew 24:12). In other words, we ain't seen nothing yet as it relates to what is yet to come!

What is the solution to the present and upcoming problems yet on the horizon? The only thing that we have that will be stable enough to hold onto is a Person! Yeshua came to suffer and die for us the first time, and He promises to return again to drive the wicked from the earth and to rule and reign in righteousness (with us!) from Jerusalem. We will only make it on this narrow-path life journey if we have consistent life-giving interactions with Him. I believe a crucial part of correctly interacting with Him is to walk in His foundational words as found in the Sermon on the Mount. If we take Yeshua's words at face value then we are called to pray for, bless, and to be kind in our words and actions towards those who oppose us. In other words, Yeshua-followers are not to have any tit for tat enemy interactions. The hateful interactions and interplay is to stop with our consistently loving, merciful responses. It takes a present-tense relationship with God to do this! We can't consistently conjure up loving attitudes towards our adversaries without Him.

I remember being significantly convicted last year by having hatred well up in my heart as I observed a political figure who I felt was causing great

damage. If only I had the power to "take them out" so that they couldn't cause any more harm. But, the problem is that there is only One who is qualified and competent enough to "take out" the wicked...and that is the One who first laid down His life as a bloody sacrifice to pay for the sins of all who would reach out to Him in humility. I'm jaded and compromised...and so are you. We are commissioned to follow our Lord in submitting to weakness, taking up our cross, and laying down our lives for those who don't deserve it...any more than we deserved His ever-present mercy and love. As we grow in our revelation of His love and mercy towards us then we'll grow in our love and mercy towards those we interact with.

I look forward to discussing and hearing summary thoughts related to the Sermon on the Mount in our groups this weekend. In the coming calendar year, we will move on to studying different sections of the Scriptures, but I know that I'll forever be changed as I continue to strive to apply Yeshua's words as found in this vital sermon to my life. I hope the same is true for you too.