

Redefining Enemy Treatment

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[0 : 00] Jesus Christ. Tonight we'll study the final of six examples that Jesus used to contrast His teaching! with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

Those examples follow Matthew 5 20 where Jesus said, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

We've seen Jesus redefine anger, lust, divorce, swearing, and retaliation. In Matthew 5 43-48, Jesus is redefining enemy treatment.

So let's read those verses now. Again, this is Matthew 5 43-48. Jesus said, 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.

[1 : 14] 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. Jesus' teaching in these verses is easy to understand, but it's difficult to do.

Jesus commands us to love our enemies like God loves them and to pray for their salvation. That's the main idea for tonight. Jesus commands us to love our enemies like God loves them and to pray for their salvation.

Nowhere had God's standard been so corrupted as in the way the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees viewed themselves in relation to other people. Nowhere was it more evident that they lacked the humility, the mourning over their sin, the meekness, the yearning for true righteousness, the mercy, the purity of heart, and the peacemaking spirit that are to belong to God's kingdom's citizens.

Like the other examples Jesus cited, the religious leaders' teaching was partially true. Also, like the other examples Jesus cited, the religious leaders had twisted the teaching to suit their own purposes.

[2 : 37] Jesus will set the record straight as he explains the true meaning of the Old Testament scripture. We'll break tonight's passage into three sections, starting with verse 43.

And in that verse, we see the leader's explanation. The leader's explanation is your first blink. Jesus said in verse 43, You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

As we've done with the other examples, let's see how well the scribes and Pharisees' teaching matches up with the Old Testament teaching. The scribes and Pharisees' teaching starts out well. They told the people, You shall love your neighbor. That part is biblical. Listen to Leviticus 19.18. God is speaking in Leviticus 19.18, and he said, You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. You shall love your neighbor as yourself is a command that's often repeated in the New Testament. Love for others shown in sympathetic concern and actual care for them had always been God's standard for human relations.

[3 : 54] So far, the religious leaders' teaching seems solid, but do you notice something missing in what they said in Matthew? The religious leaders were teaching people to love their neighbors, but listen to the last part of Leviticus 19.18 again.

God said to love your neighbor as yourself, and the religious leaders were omitting the as-yourself part from their teaching. Leaving off the as-yourself part was intentional.

We can prove that by going to Luke 10.25 and following. So go ahead and flip over to Luke 10. We're going to be in Luke 10.10 for a little bit. For proof that the religious leaders knew that they were to love their neighbor as themselves, look at verses 25 through 28 first in Luke 10. In these verses, we see an exchange between Jesus and a lawyer, and that's a person who was knowledgeable in Old Testament law. The lawyer asked Jesus a question, and starting in verse 25, it says, And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit 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 with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.

[5 : 23] And he said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. The religious leaders' teaching ignored what the law said about loving your neighbor as yourself, but you can see here that they knew what the law said.

Why would the people in Jesus' day want to leave out the part about loving your neighbor as yourself? It's a little harder to do, isn't it?

And think about this. Is human nature any different today than what it was back then? Another thing was wrong with the religious leaders' teaching, and that is something that we'll see as we continue with the rest of the Luke 10 passage.

The religious leaders were guilty of narrowly defining who their neighbors were. We see that in Luke 10.29. The same lawyer asked Jesus a second question.

Luke 10.29 says, But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor? The implication is that the lawyer will be glad to love his neighbor if he can impose limits on who his neighbor is.

[6 : 38] Jesus answers with the parable of the Good Samaritan, and he forces the lawyer to admit that God has a much broader view of the definition of our neighbors. Listen to Luke 10.30-37, and here Jesus answers the question about who is our neighbor.

Jesus replied, Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

He said, We could spend a lot of time talking through this parable, but suffice it to say for tonight's purpose that two religious figures, a priest and a Levite, ignored the beaten man's predicament. A Samaritan, someone the Jews would treat with disdain because he was half Jew and half Gentile, was the person who came to the wounded man's aid. The Samaritan demonstrated the behavior of a neighbor, and the lawyer had to admit that.

The words of Scripture were fully known, but only partially taught and practiced. Frequently, they were even contradicted by a rabbinic tradition.

[8 : 40] As with other scriptural standards that seemed too demanding, the one concerning love of our neighbors was reduced to a humanly acceptable level. The scribes and the Pharisees' teaching also had another problem.

We've seen how they left out the part about loving your neighbor as yourself, and then narrowly defining who the neighbor was when they did try to define it. They even added something worse. The religious leaders were teaching people to hate their enemies.

Nothing in Scripture teaches us to hate our enemies. To justify their false teaching, the religious leaders' twisted parts of Scripture dealing with God's judgment rather than individual relationships. And that's important enough to say again, because we need to understand that. Nothing in Scripture teaches us to hate our enemies. To justify their false teaching, the religious leaders' twisted parts of Scripture dealing with God's judgment rather than individual relationships.

What the religious leaders used to justify their claim of hating your enemy were commands that had to do with a nation, not an individual. The religious leaders ignored this important distinction and application when they wanted to pervert a law to satisfy their fleshly desires and to pamper the people.

[10 : 00] Let's look at examples of Scripture that the religious leaders wrongly used to justify their teaching to hate enemies. One excuse the Jews may often have made to justify hatred of Gentiles was based upon God's command for their forefathers to drive out the Canaanites, Midianites, Moabites, Ammonites, and other pagan peoples as they conquered the lands and possessed the promised land under Joshua.

But those ancient inhabitants of Palestine were among the most vile, corrupt, and depraved known to history. They were unbelievably immoral, cruel, and idolatrous.

Human sacrifice was common among them. Even their own children were sometimes burned alive as an offering to their pagan deities. They were a cancer that had to be cut out to save God's people from utter moral and spiritual corruption.

Israel's harsh dealing with these people was entirely as the instrument of God's judgment. God's people were never to return evil for evil, cruelty for cruelty, hatred for hatred.

The idea that Gentiles, even wicked ones, were to be personally despised and hated originated from the heretical Jews' own pride and self-righteousness. When we look at God's commands to drive out the immoral pagan people, the wording is clear that God used Israel as the instrument for His judgment.

[11 : 25] Listen to Exodus 33, verse 2. Again, this is Exodus chapter 33, verse 2. And God is speaking to Moses. He said, I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Then Moses is speaking to the Israelites in Deuteronomy chapter 7, verses 1 and 2. And Moses said, When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction.

You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. So do you see how God is the one who's executing the judgment here? Israel is just the group that is carrying out that judgment. Joshua made the same point to the Israelites in Joshua 3.10. And Joshua said in Joshua 3.10, Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites.

People like the Moabites, the Amorites, and the Midianites had deliberately rejected the things of God, and God, as God and the righteous judge eternal, pronounced judgment on them.

[13 : 03] It's God's prerogative to do that. But the difficulty with the scribes and Pharisees was that they didn't draw that distinction. They took this judicial principle and put it into operation in their ordinary affairs and in their daily lives.

They regarded this principle as a justification for hating their enemies, hating anybody they disliked, or hating anybody who they thought was offensive. They deliberately then destroyed the principle of God's law, which is the great principle of love.

A second excuse the religious leaders used to justify their teaching to hate enemies was likely the imprecatory Psalms. Listen to this excerpt from Psalm chapter 69, verses 22 through 24.

These words are from David, and he said these in Psalm 69, verses 22 through 24. Let their own table before them become a snare, and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.

Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually. Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.

[14 : 16] Such words didn't represent David's personal vendetta, but his concern for God's holiness and God's justice. He wanted God's holiness and God's justice to be executed on those who despised the Lord's glorious name and persecuted the Lord's people.

We know that by looking at some earlier verses in the same Psalm. Psalm 69, verses 6 through 9, has these words from David. David wrote there, Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord God of hosts.

Let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel. For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. Psalm 69, 9 is a verse that should sound familiar.

Jesus exhibited the same type of righteous anger when he cleansed the temple. Listen to John 2, verses 13 through 17. Again, this is John 2, verses 13 through 17.

[15 : 34] And it says, The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons and the money changers sitting there.

And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, Take these things away.

Do not make my father's house a house of trade. His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for your house will consume me. So you can see when Jesus did that, the disciples remembered what David had written in Psalm 69.

There is such a thing as perfect hatred, just as there is such a thing as righteous anger. And we looked at righteous anger a few weeks ago. But righteous hatred is a hatred for God's enemies, not our own enemies.

And righteous hatred is entirely free of all spite, rancor, and vindictiveness. And that righteous hatred is fueled only by love for God's honor and God's glory.

[16:45] All of these various injunctions, including the imprecatory Psalms, are always judicial and never something individual. The scribes and the Pharisees had twisted the Old Testament teaching to justify their self-righteousness and to justify their sinful behavior.

The challenge for us is to avoid being like them. Now that we've considered both the good and the bad from the leader's explanation, let's move on to the next section of the passage.

In verses 44 through 47, Jesus teaches us the Lord's expectation. The Lord's expectation is your next blink.

Look again at verses 44 through 47 of Matthew 5. Jesus continues the Sermon on the Mount. He says, 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?

[17:58] 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? As we get into this passage, we need to know that the Greek word that Jesus chose for love there is agape.

We're familiar with agape love. It's the love that loves without variableness. Agape love loves even when the object of the love is hateful or unlovely.

It is love for no earthly reason at all or love even when there are ample reasons to discourage it. In other words, it's God-like love. Such love is to characterize our lives as God's children.

And this is love that exists entirely apart from the possibility of being loved back. It's the same love that Jesus later demonstrated when He willingly died on the cross to save believers from our sins. verse 44 likely sounded very radical to Jesus' original audience, but Jesus' words summarize Old Testament teaching.

[19:10] Listen to what God said through Moses in Exodus 23, verses 4 and 5. Exodus 23, verses 4 and 5 say, If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him.

If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it. You shall rescue it with him. So if the Israelites found an enemy's animal wandering loose, they were required to return it to their enemy.

And if they saw an enemy with an animal that was broken down from a heavy load, the Israelites were to help that enemy relieve his animal of its burden. Now don't take this so literal that you think we can get off easy because you know we're not likely to see our enemy's donkey or our ox running down the street.

The principle is what we need to pay attention to here. We should help our enemies whenever we have the opportunity. As in all the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is speaking here about personal standards of righteousness, not civil law.

The enemy spoken of in Exodus 23 is not the enemy soldier met on a battlefield, but an individual, whether a fellow countryman or a foreigner. And that person in some way or another is antagonistic to the person who has the opportunity to help him.

[20:38] But yet that person is still expected to help him. Earlier we saw David's zeal against people who wronged God. Listen now to how differently David treated his personal enemies.

These verses are from Psalm 35 verses 12 through 14. Again, Psalm 35, 12 through 14. David wrote, Think about that.

David grieved for his enemies as if he were grieving for his own mother or brother. These words were more than just words to David. He had an opportunity to prove it, and he did prove it.

He lived these words when King Saul was seeking to kill him. Flip over to 1 Samuel chapter 24. We'll spend just a minute here in 1 Samuel chapter 24.

And these verses are 1 through 11. Starting with verse 1 of 1 Samuel chapter 24, it says, When Saul returned from following the Philistines, he was told, Behold, David is in the wilderness of En-Gedi.

[22 : 10] Then Saul took 3,000 chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men in front of the wild goats' rocks. And he came to the sheepfolds by the way, where there was a cave, and Saul went in to relieve himself.

Now David and his men were sitting in the innermost parts of the cave. And the men of David said to him, Here is the day of which the Lord said to you, Behold, I will give your enemy into your hand, and you shall do to him as it shall seem good to you.

Then David arose and stealthily cut off a corner of Saul's robe. And afterward, David's heart struck him because he had cut off a corner of Saul's robe.

He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my Lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed.

So David persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way. Afterward, David also arose and went out of the cave and called after Saul, My Lord, the king.

[23 : 25] And when Saul looked behind him, David bowed with his face to the earth and paid homage. Then David said to Saul, Why do you listen to the words of men who say, Behold, David seeks your harm?

Behold, this day your eyes have seen how the Lord gave you today into my hand in the cave. And some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, I will not put out my hand against my Lord, for he is the Lord's anointed.

See, my father, see the corner of your robe in my hand? For by the fact that I cut off the corner of your robe and did not kill you, you may know and see that there is no wrong or treason in my hands. I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it. If that's not a perfect example of how to love your enemies, even when your enemies are after you, I'm not sure what is, because Saul was there to kill David, and David had the perfect opportunity to kill Saul, yet he didn't do it. That's not the only time David lived out these words. On another occasion, after David had become king, a relative of Saul named Shammai threw rocks at David and cursed him.

[24 : 39] Again, David would not retaliate or allow his men to do so on his behalf. Shammai was not even God's anointed, but David still refused to harm him or even get angry with him.

As king, David had the legal right to kill Shammai on the spot, but his devotion to a higher law prevented him. And we won't look at those verses, but if you want to look at them later, you can read that story in 2 Samuel 16, verses 5-10.

But here's one more Old Testament example of how we should treat our enemies, and it comes from Proverbs 25-21. Proverbs 25-21 says, If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.

These and other examples in the Old Testament show that Jesus' explanation of Old Testament Scripture clearly matches up with that Scripture. We'll look at verse 45 now, but because verse 45 starts in the middle of Jesus' sentence, we'll read verse 44 with 45.

Those verses say, 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.

[26 : 06] To love our enemies and to pray for our persecutors shows that we're sons of our Father who is in heaven. The verb tense here indicates a once and for all established fact.

God himself is love, and the greatest evidence we can give of our divine sonship and daughtership through Jesus Christ is our love. Loving as God loves does not make us sons and daughters of the Father, but gives us evidence that we already are his children.

When a person's life reflects God's nature, it proves that the person now possesses God's nature by the new birth. So think about that again.

When a person's life reflects God's nature, it proves that the person now possesses God's nature by the new birth. Even a person who has never heard of Christ or the teachings of the New Testament would suspect that there's divine power behind a life that loves and cares even to the

point of loving enemies.

Such a life is so uncharacteristic of human nature. William Barclay wrote about a Jewish example that was often given, and this is outside of Scripture, so we don't know whether it's true, but it certainly makes a point.

[27 : 22] And here's what it is. An old rabbinic saying tells of the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. As the story goes, when the Egyptians were destroyed, the angels began to rejoice.

But God lifted up his hand and said, The work of my hands are sunk in the sea, and you would sing? When we have difficulty loving our enemies and praying for our enemies, we need to remember that they are also God's creation, and that they are made in the image of God, no matter how wicked they currently may be.

The last part of verse 45 says, For he, talking about God, makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

This sentence reinforces how we reflect God's character when we love our enemies and pray for them. sun and rain are representative of all the blessings that come to men from the hand of God. When God sends his blessings, they are showered upon the whole earth, whether men are just or unjust. Such is the nature of God's love. Theologians call this God's common grace.

[28 : 40] It's not saving grace, but grace shown to all mankind, believers and unbelievers alike.

This common grace of God is expressed in the gifts of creation without which we could not eat or live.

And this is to be the standard of Christian love. We are to love like God, not men. J. Dwight Pentecost wrote, To love those who are in the family of God is only to display a natural affection. To have concern for those who are outside of the family is to display a supernatural affection. So do you see how such affection shows that we're children of God?

Jesus expanded on this theme in verses 46 and 47. He said, 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? We talked some about the doctrine of total depravity.

[29 : 46] And the doctrine of total depravity does not mean and never has meant that original sin has rendered men incapable of doing anything good at all. But what it means is that every good thing they do is tainted by some degree of evil.

Unredeemed sinners can love. We see that in parental love, family love, and the love of friends. All these types of love are common to men and women whether or not they are in Christ.

To love our enemies means to seek the good and the benefit of our enemies. We Christians specifically are called to love our enemies without self-interest. This is, of course, impossible without the supernatural grace of God.

If we love only those who love us, we are no better than swindlers or tax collectors. If we greet only our brothers or sisters, our fellow Christians, we are no better than the pagans.

They, too, greet one another. The question Jesus asked here is important. He said, what more are you doing than others? The key there is the simple word more, and that's the essence of what he's saying.

[30 : 54] Remember that our righteousness is to exceed that of the Pharisees, and our love is to surpass that of the Gentiles. So we've considered the leader's explanation and the Lord's expectation.

Jesus raises the bar even more in the final section of tonight's passage. Matthew 5.48 documents the Lord's exhortation. So the Lord's exhortation is your final blank.

Here's a quote from John Stott. He says, Jesus has already indicated in the Beatitudes that a hunger and thirst after righteousness is a perpetual characteristic of his disciples.

disciples. But yet, here in verse 48, here's what Jesus says. He says, You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. So John Stott continues his quote by saying, in the next chapter he will teach us to pray constantly, forgive us our debts.

Both the hunger for righteousness and the prayer for forgiveness being continuous are clear indications that Jesus did not expect his followers to be morally perfect in this life.

[32 : 07] The context shows that the perfection Jesus means here relates to love and that the perfect love of God, which is shown even to those who did not return it, should be characteristic of Christians.

Scholars say that the Aramaic word which Jesus may well have used meant all embracing. And the parallel verse in Luke's account of the sermon confirms this. Luke 6:36 says, Be merciful even as your Father is merciful.

So we're called to be perfect in love, that is, to love even our enemies with the merciful or the inclusive love of God. For several weeks we've been studying Jesus' six examples of how our righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

You may have noticed that the last two examples reveal a progression. Last week we saw a negative command that was where we saw do not resist the one who is evil.

This week we see a positive command where it says love your enemies and seek their good. So the first is a call to passive non-retaliation.

[33 : 17] The second is a call to love. Jesus' point in all these illustrations and even in the whole sermon is to lead his audience to an overpowering sense of spiritual bankruptcy or to a beatitude attitude that shows them to be in need of a Savior.

So what should we do if we're thinking that we can never love our enemies the way God calls us to love them? Well the first thing of course is that we should pray that God will continue to make us more and more like Jesus.

That's a prayer that we know God will answer. Romans 8:29 tells us for those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

others. This quote from James Montgomery Boyce also should help us get started. He said loving is not necessarily the same thing as liking.

To like someone is to have a certain emotional feeling toward them. Because we cannot entirely control our feelings it is not always possible to like everybody.

[34 : 31] I'm not even sure that we should. I believe for instance that there is a sense in which we can say that God does not really like the way we are but he does love us and that is an entirely different thing.

Love is not a matter of the feelings it is a matter of the will and because it is of the will and not of the feelings it is something that is always possible and that may always express itself in good actions.

This we can do whether or not we feel like it. And here's a quote from C.S. Lewis. He said the rule for all of us is perfectly simple.

Do not waste your time bothering whether you love your neighbor. Act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you're behaving as if you love someone you will presently come to love him.

If you injure someone you dislike you will find yourself disliking him more. If you do him a good turn you will find yourself disliking him less. The worldly man treats certain people kindly because he likes them.

[35 : 40] The Christian trying to treat everyone kindly finds himself liking more and more people as he goes on including people he could not even have imagined himself liking at the beginning.

My pastor when I was in high school, Ed McFall, was fond of saying, act your way into a feeling instead of feeling your way into an action. He said it often enough that it sounded almost like scripture.

It's kind of interesting that that's the main thing I can remember of what he said. But that concept applies in several places and it certainly fits here. As Christ followers we should act our way into a feeling rather than feeling our way into an action.

Remember the main idea. Jesus commands us to love our enemies like God loves them and to pray for their salvation. You may be thinking, I see that scripture says we are supposed to love our enemies and to pray for them, but where did it say that we are to pray for their salvation?

Well, praying for their salvation is implied. We've seen that we are to love like God is to love. We've talked about how God's love is the highest form of love possible.

[36 : 56] And God loved us so much that he provided a way for our salvation. We cannot truly love our enemies unless we pray that God will save them too. Here's another quote from James Montgomery Boyce.

He said, Years ago, when I first began to study the subject of God's love, I made an interesting discovery. I noticed that there is hardly a verse in the New Testament that speaks of God's love without also speaking in the same context of the cross.

So let's look at a few verses to show how God's love is paired with references to the cross. John 3.16 is one. Jesus said there, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Here is Galatians 2.20. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

What about 1 John 4.10? In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

[38 : 16] And one more, Romans 5.8. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. So notice how in all those cases, those verses talk about God's love, but they either explicitly mention the cross, or they make a direct allusion to the cross.

So here is another quote from James Montgomery Voice. He said, It is not merely the fact of Christ's suffering that makes God's love so wonderful. It is also the fact that he suffered for sinners, and this means for those who were in themselves naturally repugnant to him.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul said about the unbelieving Israelites. Remember that these unbelieving Israelites turned against Paul, and some of them even tried to kill Paul.

But here is what Paul wrote in Romans 9.30 all the way through Romans 10.10.1. Paul said, What shall we say then?

That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it? That is, a righteousness that is by faith? But that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law?

[39 : 32] Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone as it is written, Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

And here is the key verse in Romans 10.1. Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. So once again, even for his enemies, Paul said, Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Let's ask God to help us say and mean the same thing about our enemies that Paul said about the Israelites. And of course, that is that my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for this reminder of the type of behavior that you expect from believers. We know that this behavior is not possible without the Holy Spirit's help.

Continue to help us be yielding to the Holy Spirit so that we can demonstrate the type of behavior you expect us to do more and more. Help us be your light to the world.

[40 : 50] In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. Thank you.