

# Love Your Enemies

Jesus Christ's command to "love your enemies" [Matthew 5:44] follows immediately after a reference to **Leviticus 19:18** "love your neighbour as yourself."

**With this commandment was a companion statement to love the Eternal God, [Deuteronomy 6:5].**

Jesus Christ refers these to be the commands on which all the law and the prophets depend, [Matthew 22:36-40]. But these commandments do **not** go on to say, "you shall hate your enemies."

The Pharisees interpreted **Leviticus 19:18** as teaching that they should love **only** those who love in return.

Quoting **Psalms 139:19-22** and **Psalms 140:9-11** as meaning that we should hate our enemies. **Jesus Christ shows how wrong such an interpretation was.**

**However, if it is only our neighbours that we are to love, the word "neighbours" may be defined fairly narrowly, then it might be argued that we are free to hate those who are not our neighbours.**

**But Jesus Christ tells us to love our enemies as well as our neighbours, [Matthew 5:43-44].**

**Jesus Christ then gives us a very good reason why we should love our enemies.**

**Matthew 5:45-48** [New King James] "*that you may be sons of your Father 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 have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*"

**For such an action of love for our enemies is helping us become more like the Holy Eternal God we worship.**

[Please download the article 'Be You Perfect' listed under the main heading 'Bible Study' on this website.]

One difficulty lies in the sentimental associations that the word "love" has for many of us.

The love of which the law and gospel message alike speak of is a very practical attitude of mind.

**1 John 3:18** [New King James] "*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.*"

**Love to our neighbour is expressed in lending them a helping hand when that is what they need.**

Jesus Christ is telling us to lend your enemy a helping hand when that is what they need. Our feelings towards them are **not** the most important thing.

**What additional spiritual help do we add to the practical physical help?**

**Luke 6:28** [New King James] "*bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.*"

**We are to pray for someone we do not like, however much it goes “*against the grain*” to begin with, for such prayers will bring with them the beginning of a remarkable change in attitude in everyone involved.**

**The best way to destroy an enemy is to turn them into a friend!**

**Romans 12:21** [New King James] *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”*

Paul reinforces this by quoting from **Proverbs 25:21-22**.

**“Heap coals of fire on his head”** refers to a furnace melting hard iron into a pliable form that can be moulded into something useful and any un-useful dross taken away.

In this context our helpful actions may mean that a sense of shame will be produced in our enemy, leading to a change of heart.

**First do your enemy a good turn, the feelings can be left to their own time to mature.**