

THE HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS

Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

Some reminders about this series:

1. Be open to your traditions, preconceptions, and prejudices being challenged.
 2. Ask the Holy Spirit for understanding.
 3. Relentlessly dig and search for Kingdom Truth and the Knowledge of God.
 4. Learn about differences linguistically and culturally that affect your understanding.
 5. Humble yourself and allow Jesus' words supremacy in your life.
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Quick quiz!

Check all the commands below *that you consistently fail at*:

- "Be angry and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger..." (NASB - Eph 4:26)
- "Do not be anxious about anything..." (NASB - Phil 4:6)
- "... be patient with everyone." (NASB - 1 Thessalonians 5:14b)
- "Do all things without complaining or arguments;" (NASB – Philippians 2:14)
- "Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, **honor the king.**" (NASB – 1 Peter 2:17)

Are there any other biblical commands like this that you can think of?

Now in Matthew 5:48, we read:

- "Therefore you shall be **perfect**, as your Heavenly Father is **perfect.**" (NASB – Matt. 5:48)

This is a tall order, to be true, but what exactly does Jesus mean in context? Well, if you look at the preceding verses, you read the following:

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may prove yourselves to be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same?"

What are the two specific commands is Jesus talking about in this context?

1. _____
2. _____

How do you think this works, being perfect at these two commands?

Well, let's look at two examples of these in Jesus' life. In Acts 26:12-18, Paul recounts his conversion experience:

¹² "While so engaged, as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, ¹³ at midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who were journeying with me. ¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you as a servant and a witness not only to the things in which you have seen Me, but also to the things in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷ rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the ^[e]power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

What is Jesus doing to his persecutor Saul in these scriptures?

What does this tell you about how Jesus wants us to respond to our enemies?

In Luke 23:34a, even when Jesus was on the Cross, Jesus prayed to his Father about his persecutors:

³⁴ But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

So, according to these scriptures, we're supposed to love those who persecute us, and who lie about us for their own gain, whether that's in the workplace, or in a court of law, or anywhere! Plus, we're supposed to pray for those who choose to come against us because of our political opinions, our beliefs, or our backgrounds!

How can we possibly do that?

But wait – There are two things that we know for sure:

- *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (NASB – Romans 8:31)*
- *Therefore there is now no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. (NASB - Romans 8:1)*

Given these two things, God must have a plan for us to attain “perfection.”

- *Behold, God is my helper; The Lord is the sustainer of my soul. (NASB - Psalm 54:4)*
- *Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will also help you, I will also uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ (NASB - Isaiah 41:10)*
- *So that we confidently say, “THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?” (NASB - Hebrews 13:6)*
- *The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart triumphs, And with my song I shall thank Him. (NASB - Psalm 28:7)*
- *“For nothing will be impossible with God.” (NASB - Luke 1:37)*
- *And looking at them, Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (NASB - Matthew 19:26)*

Consider that last verse – Matthew says this just a few chapters earlier than this verse. In that chapter, Jesus asks the rich person to sell all he has and give to the poor. The rich man’s response and Jesus’ comment on the situation makes the disciples ask, “...Then who can be saved?” (NASB - Matt 19:25)

Jesus responds: “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” (NASB - Matthew 19:26)

So maybe, just maybe, we’re not supposed to do this in our own strength ...

- *“No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. (NASB - 1 Corinthians 10:13)*

God will certainly provide a way that we can love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

How will you apply this to your life, your family, your job, your neighborhood, even your church?