



**How We Can Love Our Enemies**  
**July 21, 2019**  
**Matthew 5:38-48**

*“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” (Matthew 5:43-44).*

The ways of this world are full of hate. No wonder Jesus declared that His kingdom was not of this world. The Kingdom of God is full of love and truth, so Jesus commanded His followers to not only love one another but also to love their enemies. The way Christians love their friends and enemies should stand out in sharp contrast to the way of those committed to following the ways of this world. The difference in Christians and the difference Christians make in this world may be one reason Christians around the world suffer persecution, even as Jesus predicted in His Sermon on the Mount. Jesus tried to prepare all who would follow Him to love their enemies even when persecuted—which can only be done as the Spirit of Christ within them enables them to love. To love your enemies does not mean striving to experience feelings of warm affection for them. Rather, Christ’s love inspires Christians to pray for God to do what is best for their enemies, for those around them, and themselves. Christians can pray for their enemies to learn the truth about God and Jesus and their love for them. Christians can pray that the Spirit of Christ will graciously lead their enemies to turn from evil and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Christians can pray that perhaps through their witness that their enemies will seek to enter the Kingdom of God and begin to love God, others, and themselves according to the teachings of Jesus.

**Thinking Further**

1. How can the principle in Matthew 5:38 be a form of just punishment?
2. What reasons might Jesus have for telling Christians to follow His teachings in Matthew 5:39-41?
3. Do you think Jesus meant that Christians should never under any circumstances refuse to give to someone who begs or wants to borrow from you?
4. What petitions might some of your prayers to God include when you are suffering persecution?
5. What might you say to someone who always says, “Well, nobody’s perfect,” every time they are confronted with their sinful choices?