

Sermon Series: The Power of Love

3/16/25 “Love Overcomes,” Matthew 5:43-45 NLT?

INTRODUCTION Have you ever had someone you’ve had conflict with, and you just can’t stop thinking about them, feel yourself becoming darker and darker toward them?

World is dark. God’s main weapon vs dark & enemies: love

We live in dark world. In Christ we have light but world/devil try to draw us back into darkness—through our thoughts, feelings, beliefs

MAIN IDEA: Experience victory. How? Here are 4 things to do.

I. First, love our “enemies”

Romans 5:10, NLT: For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son.

- A. we can *perceive* anyone as being in conflict with us
 - 1. devil wants us hating, hard, judging, vengeful
 - 2. dark thoughts lead to hard heart, sinful actions
- B. we choose to have good will toward a person

Love: *agapao* [verb form of *agape*] = love by choice & act of the will; unconquerable benevolence & undefeatable goodwill (*SFLB*)

- C. we turn from darkness toward light in our thoughts
 - 1. affecting our mind...attitude & thoughts
 - 2. affecting our will...what we do
 - 3. affecting our emotions...about the person

ILLUSTRATION: God reminded me of their good, changed me

II. Second, bless those who curse us

Bless (*eulogeo*): to speak well of (*Strong’s*); to ask blessings on (*Thayer*)

Curse: to wish evil on (*Mounce*); opposite of *eulogeo* (*Thayer*)

- A. resist devil’s appeal to our nature to reply in kind to attack
- B. speak well of the person—what is true (no one is all bad)
- C. speak blessings upon the person— “Lord, bless _____”

ILLUSTRATION:

III. Third, do good to those who hate us

Good (with “do” *poieo*): to do well to anyone for their benefit (*Zodhiates*)

- A. do good for them, not necessarily what they want (drugs)
 - 1. meet real needs...such as hunger/food
 - 2. don’t join in “bashing” them
- B. whether they know of it or not (anonymously)
 - 1. clean off snow from windshield, put garbage can back from being in the road
 - 2. try to help others see them compassionately—lost
- C. What *God* would say is good...*forgive, show kindness*
- D. *James*: actions prove our faith...actions keep us moving toward God rather than away from Him (*our will at work*)

ILLUSTRATION:

IV. Finally, pray for those who spitefully use & persecute us

Spitefully use: insult, slander **Persecute:** pursue

Pray: talk to God on behalf for their good

- A. intercede for them...salvation
- B. ask God to give them light
- C. ask God to help them... *their hurts, sinfulness*
- D. ask God how we should love, treat, do good for them

ILLUSTRATION:

CONCLUSION: when we see people as evil, we darken our heart. When we treat them as Jesus, we have light within us

Romans 12:21, MEV: Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

ALTAR: enemy with God? repent of hard heart? come to pray for?

Come for prayer to help you?

833 *The Real Enemy*

Many years ago the Pogo cartoon character made a statement that revealed the real cause of human problems. He said, “We have found the enemy and he is us!”

We are quick to blame the devil or someone else for all of life’s problems. We continue to beat our heads against an imaginary wall fighting an enemy that does not exist while the real enemy is within. We are self-satisfied, self-centered, self-sufficient, and selfish.

Adam blamed Eve for his sin (Gen. 3:12), but his problem was with self. Eve accused the serpent for causing her sin (v. 13) but her enemy was self. Sin originated with self and sin continues today because people refuse to let go of self. The self we so desperately cling to will be lost until we learn to let go of it. We should not be amazed that Jesus once said that in order to find ourselves, we must first lose ourselves (Matt. 10:39). Yet, most people are desperately clinging to self.

This week a little bird reminded me of self-centered people who are destroying themselves while fighting an imagined enemy. You may consider this strange, but the bird is attacking its own reflection that it sees mirrored in our basement window. The bird repeatedly attacks the basement window. I have seen this phenomenon before and have wondered why some birds do such a thing. I recently found out why. A bird who attacks itself in a mirrored reflection is usually a male bird who has certain territory that he claims as his own. If another male bird enters his territory, he attacks it. Occasionally a male bird claims a piece of territory that has a house in it with glass windows. When the light is right he sees a reflection of himself and thinks it is an enemy intruding on his territory. He will consistently attack his reflection until the reflection is somehow eliminated, until he gets disoriented, or until he kills himself.

They beat their heads against their own reflection, thinking they are fighting an enemy, while all of the time the real enemy is inside. Every human problem is caused by each individual attempting to make self the center of life. You can see how problems would arise with everyone wanting his or her own private self as the center. You have probably heard some say, “I never had any problems until I met him,” or “I do not have any problems when I

am by myself.” What they say is true because a person who is around only himself has no rivals.

There is a sound biblical solution to all of our problems caused by self-centeredness. Paul said that we must die to self and live for Christ (Rom. 6:11). He said of himself: “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20 NIV): When we are in Christ and Christ is in us then we become one with Christ and everyone else who is in Christ. Then we are no longer threatened by our own reflection because self is no longer our goal; Christ is. We can all be one in Christ if we are willing to die to self (Gal. 3:26–28). Self is the real enemy and until you give that self up to Christ you will never find life or peace or happiness.

—Riley L. Walker