

Matthew 5:44

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,

“God even loves the people we hate. – And that can be hard to swallow.”

Let that sink in for a moment.

In the house we live in, right behind us is our neighbor who has two little dogs. And every day they let them out, and when they do, these little dogs start barking when they want to come back in. Well, the other day, for some reason, they seemed to be outside pretty much all day and into the evening, and these dogs just barked and barked and barked. Also, these little dogs have that yappy high-pitched bark that is irritating. So my wife and I had to finally go over to their house that evening and tell them to shut their dogs up. Well come to find out, they have a newborn baby in the house so that’s why the dogs were outside so much. Long story short they have been keeping the dogs in their house and it’s been fairly quiet.

Now reading today’s devotional and the statement that I opened with, you may be wondering if I actually hate my neighbors because of this? The answer is no, I do not hate my neighbors, and they are actually quiet and seem like nice people. But as I was leaving their home after talking to them the other night, the Lord reminded me to pray for them. Pray for their salvation and pray for their little newborn baby. So I do now.

Yet, how many times do we NOT pray for others because they do something that we don’t like? Should my neighbors barking dogs keep me from praying for them and should they not go to heaven because their little barking dogs are annoying?

In our minds, we despise those who irritate us or seem to make our lives miserable, be it a neighbor, coworker, even someone in our family or even in the church. We stand in church, lifting our hands high, singing praises to the God. Then we go out to our lives away from church the rest of the week, having anger and hatred towards so many other people... People Jesus died for.

I wrote a song titled **“This Should Not Be So”** and one of the lines in it goes like this.

*“You walk over the homeless in the street,
to come to church and worship God.
Then you stand in church with hands lifted high,
Not caring what will happen when they die.
This should not be so.”*

Yet we don't seem to see people that way. Sure we know that Jesus died for us, and for all, yet we treat others like Jesus died for everyone but them by the way we treat them and feel about them. Or maybe by the way we ignore them, pushing them aside, or we don't pray for them.

During the holiday season, people, including Christians, seem to be kinder, and more giving because of the spirit of the season to want to give and care for others. But after it's over, and sometimes even before we get into the New Year, we are back to our old selves. And just like the song I wrote goes, "*This Should Not Be So!*"

The very end of the song says, "**No More Excuses**" and that's how we should live and treat others, with no more excuses for not caring about ALL and remembering that Jesus died for ALL, including those we hate or do not like. Because believe it or not, there are those who actually hate us and do not like us as well, yet Jesus was willing to die for us, just like He was willing to die for those we hate or don't like also!

† Acts 10:34-36 (MSG) *Peter fairly exploded with his good news: "It's God's own truth, nothing could be plainer: God plays no favorites! It makes no difference who you are or where you're from—if you want God and are ready to do as he says, the door is open. The Message he sent to the children of Israel—that through Jesus Christ everything is being put together again—well, he's doing it everywhere, among everyone.*

† Romans 5:6-10 *For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.*

† Matthew 5:44 *But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you,*