

Reaching Perfection  
Matthew 5:43 – 6:4  
The Laurel Center  
April 15, 2016

**Main Idea:** Maintaining righteousness starts with commitment to God’s high standards in treating enemies with love and giving to the needy.

**Introduction**

Enemies come under attack in our world. Everything from vectoring to outright war happens to those who are against us. This is the way that our human nature works. But Jesus calls us to higher standards when we deal with enemies. He also expects us to give to the needy, another value that is lacking in our world. When other people give to the needy they expect to be noticed, complemented and heralded as philanthropists and he rose. But Jesus calls us to give to the needy secretly so that God is praised instead of us. Let’s take a look at these heavenly values in action.

**Matthew 5:43–48**

**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 be sons of your Father who is 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. **46** For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? **47** And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? **48** You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- I.** Christians make no enemies.
  - A Jesus calls us to love and pray for our enemies.
  - B Jesus calls us to have perfect righteousness.

**Matthew 6:1–4**

**1** “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. **2** “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. **3** But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4** so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

- II.** Christians give to the needy.
  - A Outward righteousness has immediate rewards.

## B Righteousness has eternal rewards.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus teaches us that our enemies are to be loved rather than hate it. This value is so countercultural that Jesus had to teach us to pray for our enemies. To pray blessing over your enemy makes your enemy a friend. It is impossible to pray blessing over someone you hate. They can remain our enemies but we must make them our friend. He also calls us to give to the needy secretly so that our pride is not massaged. When we take credit for giving to the needy publicly we receive our reward from people rather than God. Righteousness must be practiced on the inside and our motives for giving must be godly rather than simple philanthropy. This is about God working through us to take care of the needy rather than us being in the spotlight. When we give secretly God blesses us rather than us blessing ourselves in the public eye. Let us practice these heavenly values that bring God on her rather than giving honor to us.