

# **Love Your Enemies; Even Your Boss**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Well today's sermon is called Love Your Enemies, Even your Boss. Some of us have great bosses; some of us have great colleagues. Man, I tell you there's nothing better than working for a really inspiring, life-giving, kind, fair boss. There's nothing better than working in a job with people you love, people you enjoy seeing, working in an organization that's inspiring. But very often many of us, probably most of us have at least one or two people in our jobs or in our work places that are not a joy to be with.

Or we have or have had bosses or people in authority in the government, maybe, local municipalities, maybe you've tried to get a kitchen built and you live in one of the beach cities and you just can't get it done. There are so many things that we face in life where you have people in authority, people we work with, people that obstruct us, for no reason. And we want to talk about how to deal with that spiritually, and how to be loving, life-giving believers, and how to let all this stuff that weighs us down in our discipleship, how to let it go.

This is in the context of a new series we started last week called Avodah. Avodah is this idea that my work is my worship is my service. In Hebrew, it's all the same word. So in Hebrew, the word for worship is the word for work, is the word for service. So for example when Adam and

Eve are called to Avad and Shamar the garden, that word Avad is from Avodah, and it means that the work that Adam does, and the work that Eve does in the garden, it's also their worship to God, and it's also their service to one another. And so if you translate the Bible, and we had to do this often in seminary, you have to kind of choose as a translator how you're going to translate it because in English, we don't have a word like Avodah. We section it off. Our work is this thing that stinks, and it's over here, and our worship is this thing that's music and it happens at church, and our service is the thing that we volunteer to do in our free time, and I would just suggest that all three of those things are damaged when we separate them and think of them differently.

And you can see the evidence of that. Over 60% of American's don't like their jobs, or even hate their jobs. Like 12% or 15% I think actually do hate their jobs, which leaves about 20/25% of people that truly enjoy going to their jobs. That means if you enjoy and love your work, and then love your colleagues and love your boss, you're in the minority. You're lucky.

And I think because of this, many of us, when we think about the nine to five, we think okay Monday is horrible, and my whole life is just going to be hell Monday through Friday in order that I can have heaven on the weekend. Saturday and Sunday's going to be my reward.

Many of us are workaholics, and others of us, we don't work at all anymore. Maybe you're an empty nester so you don't get to be a dad or a

mom. Maybe you're retired. Maybe you had an injury and you can't work. Maybe you got fired! And so you're in this place where you're like I hated my job but I hate being unemployed even more!

And so we want to talk about how we can make our lives joyful when we go to work on Monday morning. How every single day can be full of the kingdom of God, full of life, full of joy, how we can find meaning in our rest, meaning in our work, and meaning in our hobbies, in our service, in our volunteering, in our generosity, and I think that it's found within this one word – Avodah.

And I hate to quote Nietzsche, but Nietzsche said that within every language there was a philosophy. And it seems very clear to me that in Hebrew there is this idea that God loves our work. That when we work with all our heart, when we work as though we're serving God and not just man, when we work as though all of our work has eternal value, somehow and somehow in God's great plan, something changes. Our work becomes better, it becomes worthwhile. Our week becomes more joyful.

But there's a million reasons why it's wisdom: to perceive your work, your daily work as worship, and to perceive your work as service; that it's a gift to others and an act of worship to God, this word Avodah.

So one of the things I want to tackle is I mentioned before is okay fine, last week we talked about kind of how to do that, but what about when we have to work with people that are annoying or difficult or

unfair, when people steal our staplers, and log into our computer, and send us spam emails, or people that bug us or gossip about us. What about bosses? Unfair bosses, bosses that don't promote us or give us raises or hear us or threaten to fire us. Bosses that play favorites or colleagues that take credit; many of these have happened to us.

Some of us aren't working anymore, so what do we do with our.. when you were volunteering or working in a church, or doing the various things that we do in our clubs, in our communities, and we have leaders of those clubs or people that we work with that are just rude or unfair or seem like they're out to get us. And Jesus has an answer to that. The answer is when we do our work, to do it as though we're doing it for the Lord, and to even, yes, love our enemies. To love our enemies. To love our enemies even our bosses.

What do we do in life when we have to work with.. in ministry we call them EGR's – Extra Grace Required. What do we do when we have EGR's that we see every day. How do we work with them? And the answer is we love them. We love them. We love people. That is the central characteristic of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. If I speak in tongues of angels, right? But have not love, I'm a clanging gong.

Look – love is the thing that defines what it means to be a believer. And very often, when we talk about loving our neighbor, or in fact loving our enemies, we often talk about it in the sense of like just try harder. Just do your best to love them. And although that's sure better than

nothing, it's not something that will last forever. What we talk about when we talk about loving our enemies is a total transformation that happens through the Holy Spirit where we become a new creation and we become a loving person.

This is an important part and can't be missed to this. I've preached a whole series on this in our last series called Life Without Lack, but in it I talk about Dallas Willard's I think he calls it a triad of sufficiency, and in it he ties together all these beautiful scriptures where the journey of the disciple into becoming a new creation looks like this. First its faith. Trusting that I don't need to set my enemies straight. Trusting that if I love my enemy, and I say good things about them and I care for them, that it's not my job to fix it – that God will take care of it. And that if I'm obedient to Him and love to my enemies, that God can do something great through that.

The next step is death to self. Not death of self. It's not that I don't matter, it's not that that didn't hurt, it's not that my feelings aren't important or that I don't feel stress. But it's saying I am going to not make it all about my ego. I'm going to stop saying 'how dare you' and 'I'm offended' and 'this isn't right.'

By the way, this is very difficult for me, for me Bobby Schuller. Yesterday a hamburger guy was giving Hannah a hard time because she asked what sort of meat was in it. He was like 'it's all the same meat.' And I wanted to be like... oh, oh man, I started feeling it bubble up and I

will say that I just didn't say anything, which I'm very proud of. This is better than nothing. It's better than nothing. And that was coming from a place.

But there's this idea of death to self that we can let this stuff go. Like what do we have to prove to a hamburger guy? What do we have to prove to the person that cuts in front of us at the bank, or the person that brings 16 items to the 15 items or less part of the grocery store? Like why do we have to set those people straight? And the answer is because we have these inflated egos and it touches on all the other ways that people have violated bigger, more important boundaries. So part of faith and trusting God is saying okay, I can let my ego go, and trust that God has the best for me at its right time.

And then the third thing is that when you begin to do that, that is faith, and death to self, from the inside and through the Holy Spirit comes this thing we call agape love. It's not even that you do your best to love people, you just over time become a loving person. We know those people, don't we. They just are bubbling over with compassion and love, they're quick to mercy, they're kind, they're easy going, and I don't think that's a personality type, I think that's something you can become. It's easier for some of us than others. It's harder for those of us who are Irish, for example. I'm 50% Irish, it's very difficult, but even we can do it.

So we learn to love our enemies by becoming a loving person. There are lots of places where the scriptures teach about this, it's all

throughout the scripture, but it's of course central, it's probably one of the central themes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Now there are a lot of churches that refuse to teach on loving your enemies, and I don't understand why. I heard my favorite preacher, I listen to his sermons every week. I won't say who he is. And what do I know. But I heard him say that the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus doesn't expect us to actually do the Sermon on the Mount. That the Sermon on the Mount is just there to show us what perfection looks like and to show us what we'll never achieve; that we as sinners need forgiveness. I'm like it doesn't say that! You just made that up! When you actually look at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus actually says "anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a man or woman who builds their house on the rock." Hears these words of mine and puts them into practice.

So this is what I want to say is that when Jesus teaches in the Sermon on the Mount, He intends for us to do, including loving our enemies, and furthermore, we don't do it out of piety, or duty, or some huge sense of holiness, but rather its good advice. It's useful. It's practical. It makes your life better to love your enemies. Loving your enemies; listen to me, is one of the best ways you can show God you trust Him with your life. It takes a lot of faith to not set your enemies straight. To trust that the turning of the cheek, the going of the extra mile that Jesus teaches us is an act of faith, it changes lives, and erodes

the kingdom of darkness with light. We're going to talk a little more about that.

Jesus teaches; if you have no idea what I'm talking about, I'm glad. This is what Jesus says: "you've heard that it was said eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth, but I tell you do not resist an evil person. Someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, give him your cloak as well. Someone forces you to go a mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks of you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you."

So first let's talk about turning the other cheek. I'd like to invite my very intelligent, very cool headed, awesome wife Hannah, my best friend. Hannah..

HS: Thank you.

BS: Okay, when Jesus says if someone strikes you on the right cheek, He's talking about an insult. That's a back handed slap. And this is how we know. So in Hebrew culture, Hannah's going to be the slapper; she's going to be the bully, and I'm going to be the one who's being bullied.

HS: The victim.

BS: But I'm six foot three and you're not so we're going to give you a mustache. Here you go.

HS: Are you tougher?

BS: This is going to make it look like a bully rather than my wife who's just angry at me for something.

HS: Am I good?

BS: Terrific. Is that good?

HS: Yes.

BS: Is this helping?

All right Hannah's the tough guy and I'm the one that's being bullied. So in Jewish culture in the first century, you don't use your left hand in public for anything, right? Unless you're holding something with both hands. So don't point with your left hand, for example. You don't write with your left hand and you don't slap with your left hand. Everything you do, you do with the hand of power in that culture is with the right hand.

So if somebody strikes me on the right cheek, try and slap me open handed with your right hand on my right cheek. No open handed. It's just.. it doesn't..

HS: What do you mean?

BS: ..feel like it doesn't. You don't have to actually do it, I mean but just show, you did it!

HS: Yes, it's awkward.

BS: It is awkward. The way you do it is with the back of your hand, so there we go. (BOOSH) Thank you, Hannah. Isn't she great? Thank you, Hannah! That's it. I just needed somebody to see that.

So what happens is in the culture, slapping someone on the right cheek is an insult. It's the back handed slap. And so when Jesus; this is important. This is not as much about violence as it is offense because many of us, we don't really experience violence that often but how many of you have been offended in the last month? How many of you have been offended in the last thirty minutes. Look, it happens all the time.

And there are ways in which people intentionally and publicly insult us, and in a way it is violent, isn't it. So it's almost like to reveal that Jesus says turn to them the other also. Oh, I already had you sit down, but it's too late. But when you turn the left cheek, now the only way to strike the person would be to punch them or to sort of open handed cuff their jaw, which turns an insult into violence. Isn't that crazy? So Jesus is almost saying, it's the first teaching of non violence that when you are being offended or harmed or something un-justice happened, it's like our temptation is fight or flight, right? Flight – run away or tuck tail – yes sir, whatever you want, sir. Or to fight – how dare you – I'm going to get you! But this is the first time of what happens if especially in a face culture, a culture of honor, a military culture, you merely stand your ground and turn the cheek and force the person to strike you in a real way. And in a military first century culture, if the person struck you that would be almost a way of saying we're peers now. It would be like elevating you, as strange as that sounds, and most of all,

it would confuse the person and very often cause everybody else watching to see who's right and who's wrong.

All of this is only possible when you recognize that you're living in the kingdom of God. That no matter how much you're harmed, no matter how much somebody insults you, you are protected by the most high God; that He loves you, He's got your back, He's got the best in front of you, and if you obey Him and serve Him and do what Jesus teaches, that its wisdom. That the best is going to happen.

So one of the questions we ask ourselves, how many of us have been back handed. Probably none of us. Maybe one or two. But most of us, we have been insulted. So we have to ask this question: how do we find a way as believers when we're insulted to neither run away and cower nor strike back and say well you're this and you're that and I blah, blah, blah, or fight or whatever, how do we find a way to sort of non violently stand our ground?

Jesus then says if someone takes your tunic give them your cloak as well. Well this is a guy that's maybe been sued for everything, he's out of money. The tunic, by the way, people didn't really have underwear, I hate to say that, in the way that we think of it today. A typical first century man had a tunic and a cloak. The tunic is like a man Mumu. It's like that's the man undergarment kind of their underwear, and it goes over, just kind of think of like a white sheet that would just kind of be very comfortable and would keep the sweat and everything from making

the outer garment dirty. So then they would put the cloak on over that, it's like a robe type thing.

And so there were cases where in order to humiliate someone who was poor, the plaintiff would ask for the person's underwear, effectively. Ask for their tunic. And Jesus says if they try to do that, just take your tunic, just give them your cloak, just give them everything, hand it over to them and just stand there naked. And this idea is that if you live in the kingdom of God and in the sufficiency of God, you can handle that. And by doing that, this is a prophetic way of showing how unjust and unfair this thing is. Its, again, not fight, not flight, its non violence.

And finally, the third example He uses is if someone forces you to go a mile, go with him two miles. In Jesus' day Roman soldiers, this is probably what's the reference to, would very often be walking down the road with their heavy pack, holding armor, whatever is in it, and they would see some random person walking and say hey you, take this. Oye, yes, boy, take this! I don't know why Roman soldiers always have an English accent, cockney, they always do. Especially the bad guys. Anyway. And they'd force some random Palestinian to sort of carry this pack a mile. And He says if they ask you to carry it a mile, carry it two miles. What if in response to the un-justice of a soldier forcing you to carry it, you decide that this is not going to be injustice, this is going to be hospitality. You just decide that no, I'm going to carry it as much as I

can and I'm going to be loving to this person, even though he's been a total jerk to me.

So in a world, a free world like Rome was for many Roman citizens, not for everyone; we're going to get to slaves in just a minute. But in the Roman world where it's mostly free, as long as you follow.. it was common when somebody was unkind to you or unfair to you, to power up. When one person powers up, well I power up back. I escalate it. And Jesus is teaching us no. What if you find this way to show this hurt person, this hurting person that there's a better way to deal with things.

And so this was revolutionary, awesome, wonderful, it was central to the first century church, second and third century church, and made all the difference in the world. And what we have to ask as disciples is when somebody powers up against us, how do we be.. like nobody's going to ask you to carry a pack a mile, but somebody might cut in front of you in line at Disneyland. How do we both not ignore something and also not fight back. How do we find that way in which I love this person, and I find a prophetic way to show them that they are loved, even though they're trying to convey to me that I don't matter.

How do we respond to comments on Facebook? And Instagram and Twitter and those of you who go on like the OC Register comment section or whatever and you battle back and forth. I mean is that stuff helping us? Is the powering up and proving and all, is it helping us? What happens if you get a bad server, right? Really bad server, never fills up

your water, dirty silverware, took forever to sit you down. Most of us we're not going to leave a tip. No. Some of us are going to leave a tip. The ones of us that are really good, we're going to leave a penny to make sure that they didn't think I just forgot. We just want them to know here's a penny because that's what your service was worth. Nothing.

What would happen if you got really bad service from someone and it was really bad? And maybe you even said something and then there's some awkward tension and instead of leaving no tip, you leave the biggest tip you've ever left, like a gigantic 40% tip, a 50%, a 100% tip. What if you did that? I know those of you who are kind of like me, a little bit Dutch, that's the other half. One half's Irish, the other half is Dutch. It's just like the idea is just like (AHHHH). It's galling, it's horrible.

But what would happen if you did that? What if the Holy Spirit told you to do that? And what if you were able to change that person's life by leaving a giant tip? What would happen if somebody at work said something horrible about you and you forgave them and said something kind to them or about them? What would happen if somebody stole something from you at work and you gave them something else? Is anyone like Jean Valjean, he has this silver taken and the police come back with Jean Valjean and the priest gives him the candlesticks, as well. And he says with this I bought your soul. We forget that love of our enemies, it's not about us. It's about changing their lives. It's about inviting them to a new reality where they are loved, despite what they do,

that they matter. I think it was Rick Warren that said hurting people hurt people. And what happens if we just decide that no matter how hurtful they're going to be, we're going to find a way to show that in the kingdom of God, even people like that are loved. See it's not about us. It's not about proving ourselves, it's not about our ego, it's about inviting people into the kingdom of God.

And this finally gets to where we are in our work. Now this idea totally transformed the Roman Empire. In a world where slaves were property and they were mistreated and you had patricians at the top, senators and the wealthy, and everybody was at different levels, you found in the church a place where senators who had just become Christians were hugging slaves, serving them communion, washing their feet. This was something nobody had ever heard of. In a Roman Empire where orphans were thrown out on the street to be enslaved or abused, in a world where the elderly were oftentimes abandoned, where the sick were oftentimes euthanized, the church emerged as this community that said just give us everyone. They continued to love their enemies, they continued to love one another, and there are many historians, secular and Christian that believe it was this and this alone that truly undid the Roman Empire from the inside out. An empire that was so shallow, so competitive, that a community that decided to love their enemies and care for the outcast undid it all through compassion and kindness. And that is so defining, so defining of what it means to be a believer.

So when Paul is writing in Colossians, this passage that we're about to read, Colossians 3 verse 22, before this, Paul paints this beautiful picture what the life of the disciple is, and actually again, Dallas Willard taught that if we were to memorize any Bible verse, this would be the one we should memorize is Colossians, actually 3:1-17. But what I'm going to read is the one that just comes after that, the very controversial passage that says slaves obey your masters.

Now this is, especially today, a horrifying thing to read out of context. It was actually used, this passage, in the south during the pre civil war America by pastors to sort of teach that slaves were a part of God's this or that. And of course as Satan does, he likes to use some of the best passages to twist them around and turn them into something evil. Slavery is not okay in scriptures. Slavery is evil and horrible, it degenerates the person. In fact in the Jewish tradition, the first commandment is actually I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. And so Jews actually teach that the first commandment is that we have a free will and that we ought to honor the dignity of every single person.

The Roman Empire, by the way, most of their slaves were probably Celtic so the irony of the southern thing.. I'm going off, aren't I. I'm going too much on this thing. But the point is merely that Paul himself is suffering injustice. He's writing from prison as a Roman citizen. He's probably put there because he just ticked off the wrong guy and his

rights are being violated, and as a Roman citizen he would have had rights. He is writing to slaves, most of whom are Christians, and he is giving them this advice. He says, "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything." Now is he saying slavery is okay? Absolutely not. He is saying that despite.. that it's horrible and awful, etc., obey them. "And do it not only when their eye is on you to win favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord."

Next one. I think my translation is off. "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as though working for the Lord and not for earthly masters, and not for men. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward, it is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong.." now hear this.. "anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong and there is no favoritism." In other words, in the kingdom of God, if you do wrong, you're going to be punished. These masters, let God deal with them. Don't try and overthrow them, don't try and prove your point, trust that even though this is unfair and unjust, work at it with all your heart.

And this is a huge gift Paul is giving these people. It reminds me very much of the time when Victor Frankl was writing from the concentration camps. He was a Jew who was unfairly imprisoned. And he said the one thing they can't take away from me is my ability to choose how I will respond. Paul knows that he's not supposed to charge the slaves in the church to create some kind of slave army to overthrow

their masters. He knows that's not realistic. But instead he gives them this gift that if they work at it with all their heart, that if they love their enemies, even their masters, that God will show them favor and miracles will come from that, and they might even change the heart of their masters.

All of this to say what does this have to do with our work? Well if first century slaves can love people who are beating them and harming them and putting them in chains, and they did. And if Paul in prison can love his prison guards, even when they curse him and spit on him and throw stuff on him. And if Jesus Christ can love the people who crucified Him unfairly and mocked Him and beat Him and called Him the king of the Jews and dressed Him up and hung Him on a cross naked, and if He could say in that time forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do.

You can love your boss when he asks you to work on a Saturday last minute. You can love a colleague who takes the credit. You can love the guy who cuts in front of you at the airport. Or takes a seat unfairly. Or tells your wife that it's silly for her to ask what kind of meat is in a hamburger? We can become the kinds of people who decide that it's just not about our ego anymore. Because here's the thing: rude people are rude to everybody. And in almost every case, people are going to power up against them. It is so rare for that rude person to have a true disciple of Christ love them, even though they're being unloving.

What I want to say to you most of all is that when we do this, its practical, its wise and it builds up tremendous amount of favor with God. I just purely believe that when you do good, and when you do what is right, especially when you do it, even when your boss isn't looking, when you do what is good, that God will bless you for that in the long run. That somehow it will always work out in your favor.

Trust it to the Lord. Trust that you don't have to set your enemies right. That God will do it. And that if you are good in your workplace, your neighbor and you love people, it's just so good in the end.

God's proud of you, He sees what you've done. We can all do better. Don't beat yourself up. You're doing better than you think and we'll get there in the end.

Lord, we thank you and we love you. Father, I just pray for anybody under the sound of my voice who has an unfair boss, or a horrible colleague that's really hard to work with, Lord we just pray in Jesus' name that you would teach us to forgive and love them. If there's something evil or unfair or something like that, Lord, I just want to encourage everyone who's listening if there's something to make sure you report bad bosses and stuff. Outside of that, people that are annoying or unfair, Lord, we just pray in Jesus' name you'd help us to love them. Lord, we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

As I was praying, this thought came to me about what I was preaching on, and I just wanted to sort of add an addendum, and that is

if you're in a place where a boss is doing something illegal, or abusive, that it is loving to report that person. Because when you do that, you are helping your colleagues. I was just thinking like I don't want people here to think that if there's sexual abuse or things like that, or discrimination, etc., but I do want to say again, we love our bosses in the more normative, annoying type things. I hope that goes without being said.