

# Loving the Unlovable

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*Matthew 5:43-43*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. John Robinson said, "The only intrinsic evil is the lack of love."
  - 1. He had a point, for God teaches us to love.
    - a. "This is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 Jn. 3:1).
    - b. "By this we know love, because He laid down his life for us" (1 Jn. 3:16).
    - c. "Love is of God" (1 Jn. 4:7).
  - 2. If we are to be God's children, we must love.
- B. In this pericope, Jesus contrasts human love and divine love--there is love which comes from our human nature and then there is love which comes from God.

## HUMAN LOVE, v. 43

- A. These Jews had heard that they were to love their neighbor and hate their enemy.
  - 1. The command to love one's neighbor comes directly from the Old Testament--"You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18)
    - a. The Jews of Jesus' day interpreted neighbor to mean only the people of their own community, religion, and nation.
      - 1) They believed that they should love everyone who was just like them.
      - 2) Anyone who was not just like these Jews, the Jews did not love.
    - b. Jesus defined neighbor for the Jews.
      - 1) In an attempt to test Jesus, a lawyer stood up and asked Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?" (Lk. 10:29).
      - 2) Jesus then told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:30-37).
        - a) While the pious Jews refused to help the Jewish man who had been wounded, a despised Samaritan helped the Jew.
        - b) Jesus showed that neighbor means someone who needs your help.
    - c. The Jews of Jesus' day inferred from Lev. 19:13 that they were to hate their enemies.
  - 2. The Jews loved those like them and hated everyone else.
- B. This is a human love--this is the way that typical humans behave.

## DIVINE LOVE, vv. 44-47

- A. Jesus told the crowd, "But I say to you," v. 44.
  - 1. Jesus was setting aside the doctrines taught by the religious leaders of his day.
  - 2. Jesus could set aside this human law, for he was God's Son; Jesus had the authority to instruct others on how to live.
    - a. When Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration, God spoke to Peter, James, and John, and said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Mt. 17:5).
    - b. Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus told his disciples, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:18).
    - c. In these last days, God has spoken through his Son (Heb. 1:2).
  - 3. Are you listening to the words of Jesus?

- B. Jesus told the crowd, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” 44.
1. We are to love our enemies.
    - a. The Greek language has 4 different words for love.
      - 1) Storge is characteristic of family love; this describes the love a parent has for a child.
      - 2) Eros describes the love a man feels for a woman; this term has a sexual connotation.
      - 3) Philia is the warmest Gr. term; it describes real affection; this is the love a man feels for his needs.
      - 4) Agape is the love that wishes well.
        - a) This is the love that demonstrates kindness, benevolence, and esteem.
        - b) This is the love of the mind, reason, and choice.
        - c) This is a sacrificial love that cares, gives, and works for another person’s good no matter how the person may respond or treats another.
    - b. Jesus uses the term agape; we are to will good even to our enemies.
    - c. This goes against human nature; the human response is to fight back and retaliate, yet the will of God is that we love rather than retaliate.
    - d. This is not human love; it is divine love—this is the love that God shows.
  2. We are to pray for those who persecute us.
    - a. It is impossible to hate someone while you pray for him.
    - b. Three things for which we can pray:
      - 1) We can pray that God would forgive the persecutor.
        - a) Jesus prayed this prayer--“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Lk. 23:34).
        - b) Stephen prayed this prayer--“Lord, do not charge them with this sin” (Acts 7:60).
      - 2) We can pray for peace between ourselves and the persecutor.
      - 3) We can pray for the persecutors salvation.
- C. This way we will be sons of our Father in heaven, v, 45.
1. Hebrew is not rich in adjectives. For that reason, Jews often used “son of” where we would use an adjective.
    - a. A son of peace would be a peaceful man.
    - b. A son of consolation would be a consoling man.
  2. A son of God would be a godlike man.
  3. The reason a Christian must love his enemies is that God does, love is unmistakable proof that a person knows God.
    - a. “And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 Jn. 3:23).
    - b. “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest; Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother” (1 Jn. 3:10).
  4. Man was created in the image of God, to be like God (Gen. 1:27). If we love our enemies, we are like God.
- D. God makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good; God causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust—God shows his love to all men.
- E. Even tax collectors love those like them, v. 46.
1. There is nothing different about loving those who love you; everyone does that.
  2. Those who love those who love them have no reward.
  3. Tax collectors even loved those who loved them.
    - a. The Jews hated the Roman government, and they especially hated paying taxes to Rome.
    - b. Any Jew who would work for the Roman government and collect taxes from Jews was considered a wicked wretch.
    - c. But, even these wicked wretches loved those like them.

- F. If one only greets only his brethren, what does he do more than others?, v. 47.
1. The oriental custom of salutation or greeting was to lay the right hand on the breast and bow the body low.
  2. As a rule, Jews did not salute Gentiles, only Fellow Jews.
  3. Even Gentiles greet those like themselves.

## **CONCLUSION**

- A. We are to be perfect just as our heavenly Father is perfect, v. 48.
1. Perfect here does not mean moral perfection.
  2. The Greek idea behind “perfect” is “having attained the end or purpose.”
    - a. The term has to do with being mature, complete, having reached the goal.
    - b. If we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us we are mature, we have reached a goal.
  3. God is perfect—the term here does mean moral perfection; God has no blemish on his record.
- B. The point of this verse is that we are to be like God. Are you like God?