

“Becoming Like Your Father”

Matthew 5:48

Matthew 5:43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.

44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!

45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.

46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.

47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.

48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Big Idea – Our Father God wants His children to grow up into maturity and love like He loves.

love is one of the most prominent attributes of our Father God.

1 John 4:8 8 Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Matthew 22:36 “Teacher, which command in the law is the most important?”

37 Jesus answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’

38 This is the first and most important command.

39 And the second command is like the first: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’

40 All the law and the writings of the prophets depend on these two commands.”

So if we’re going to be like our Father, God, we have to love others like He loves us

People talk about love but it is not God's love. Much of what we see today described as love does not fit the biblical model for love.

Let's examine the truths Jesus describes as we consider Becoming Like Your Father, the God of Love

1. The Custom in Jesus' day - vs. 43 – 43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.

The Tradition –Jesus hits what they heard said of others. He was dealing with the oral traditions many held with the same regard as the Scriptures.

The Jews held a strict adherence to the law of God, but they also had developed a second code based on tradition that was followed as closely as God's law. Much of that tradition was more of man's preference and opinion than God's will for humanity. Scribes & Pharisees added thousands of trivial rules as mandates in their oral traditions!

Jesus emphasized their tradition many times in His sermon and we need to be mindful of tradition as well. We are not opposed to tradition; it can be okay if it is not in conflict with the Bible. Don't try to make your preferences law!

The Truth – Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor. Jesus emphasized one of the greatest truths in all of Scripture. We dealt with that in the introduction. This is not a suggestion of the Lord; He fully expects us to love our neighbor.

The Tragedy – You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.

A Double tragedy – Why?

1. It speaks of a limited love.

2. Teaches a doctrine that was not based on fact. Nowhere does the Bible say we are to hate our enemies. Apparently, the religious leaders, down through the generations, sought a means to justify their hatred.

We still face this tragedy today - Many say, "The Bible says..." when in fact the Bible does not say that. Like "cleanliness is next to godliness"

Christians are responsible to know what the Bible says.

Much error is promoted based on what we've heard all our lives. Search the Scriptures to see and know!

2. The Contrast Jesus made – But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Once again Jesus corrected the error that had been handed down. He spoke of love as God would have us love. It is:

Unconditional Love – But I say unto you, Love your enemies.

Instead of hating our enemies, we are to love them. If we are to love as God loves, we must be willing to love unconditionally, even showing love to those whom we think are undeserving.

Nothing bears witness of Christ better than unconditional love. People can't refute love, especially when it is perceived as undeserved or unmerited. (Isn't that how God has shown His love? We certainly did not deserve it and yet He loved us!)

Unhindered Love – But I say unto you...bless them that curse you.

Jesus knew the emotions we feel, and living in a body of flesh, He experienced the same emotions. He knew the flesh has no desire to offer blessing to those who have cursed or wronged us.

If we are to love as Christ loves, we must be willing to love at all times. We cannot allow our love to be hindered by the words or actions of others! The love of Christ will allow us to speak kindly of those who have wronged us, rather than lashing out in anger.

Undeniable Love – But I say unto you...do good to them that hate you.

Love in action. Not “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Jesus declared that we are to do good to all people, even those who hate us. This world doesn’t know how to respond to such kindness. Our human nature wants to get even, but we are to be kind and good to all.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 Be sure that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to do what is good for each other and for all people.

Romans 12:20 Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.”

21 Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Unlimited Love – But I say unto you...pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Probably the most difficult type of love. Sometimes we can find the courage to offer an act of kindness outwardly to those who have offended us, but often it is hard to humble ourselves enough to actually pray for them. I

If we are to follow the example Jesus left, we must possess an unlimited love.

Take a moment to consider the prayer Jesus prayed upon the cross. It was not a prayer for judgment or retribution, but a prayer for mercy and forgiveness.

3. The Character of Jesus Christ modeled (45-47) – Jesus offered words of wisdom substantiating His love. When we possess and reveal the love of Christ, we bear witness of Him.

The Relationship vs. 45 That ye may be the children of your Father in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

We are never more like our Father than when we show forth His great love unconditionally. His love is shown without bounds or limits.

Even those who have no personal relationship with Him benefit from His love. He pours out His blessing on the good and the evil. Our world is filled with sin and evil, and yet the sun rises each day. God sends the rain on the entire earth. He gives strength and ability to all. This is not because any have earned or deserve it, but because He chooses to reveal His love.

We must seek to show our love as the Father has loved us so that others may see Him in us. Our love does not secure our salvation, but it bears witness to that salvation. This testifies of our relationship with the Father and our conformity to His image.

The Reflection – vss.46, 47 If you love only the people who love you, you will get no reward. Even the tax collectors do that.

47 And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than other people. Even those who don't know God are nice to their friends.

Jesus was well acquainted with the selfish, superficial love of the Pharisees. They were known for favoring those who supported their traditions and mandates, and rejecting or condemning those who were deemed unworthy. There was little compassion shown to those who were viewed outside their circle of influence.

not love at all; it was simply a response to those who benefited their agenda.

World full of those who possess a selective love or favor, but very few love unconditionally.

If we are to reflect the change that has been made in our lives and the Lord we serve, we must be willing to love all men, regardless of color, creed, denomination, or affiliation.

That doesn't mean we must love their ways or ideals, but we must love them!

4. The Command to be like your Father God – vs 48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Jesus closed His thoughts regarding the many contrasts with a command.
Notice:

The Expectation – Be ye therefore perfect.”

Speaks of “spiritual maturity, virtue, purity and uprightness in character.” I am well aware that we will never achieve the perfection God possesses while living in a body of flesh, but we must not discount God's command to grow in Him and possess a godly character.

Many use the argument of man's inability to achieve perfection to justify their imperfections.

We must continually strive to be more like our Lord every day. We ought to be closer to God, and more like Him, today than we were yesterday.

The Example – Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Our God is perfect and holy in every way. He has never sinned and He never will. He is the utmost example of holy perfection. He is to be the example we follow, seeking to be more like Him.

Many were following the traditions and opinions of man, while forsaking the righteous standard of God. God is truth and truth never changes. He set the standard that we are to strive to achieve. I pray all we do will be in accordance to His will as revealed in His infallible, inerrant Word.

It all comes down to love, God's love, agape' love. We will never be what God desires us to be without loving as He would have us to. How would you rate the love you possess? Does the description Jesus gave reflect the love within your heart? I am sure that we all could love more than we do. Why not seek the Lord to place a greater love within your heart?

If you are here and you've never been saved, you really don't know love. One cannot truly love apart from a relationship with Christ. If you desire to experience His love, and develop the ability to genuinely love others, why not come to Him in salvation?