

## LOVE WITHOUT LIMITS

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. Matthew 5:43-48

**Introduction:** A few examples of phrases attributed to the bible that are not in the Bible

Cleanliness is next to godliness

Hate the sin, love the sinner

Money is the root of all evil

God works in mysterious ways

God will not give you more than you can handle

God helps those who help themselves

### 1. A Common Distortion

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ Mt. 5:43

By the time of Christ, a reference found in Lev 19 had been twisted to the point that it was commonly accepted. Notice a portion of the original, scriptural command had been omitted (as yourself) and just as bad, they had added to the scripture (hate your enemy). Not only had the Holy Word had been distorted, the distortion had been accepted as a virtue. The folks gathered around Jesus that day on the mountain, had put “convenient restrictions” on their love.

### 2. A Command Determined

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Mt. 5:44

#### A. Love your enemies

Agape – divine love. ‘It loves even when the object of the love is hateful or unlovely.’ (JMB p. 141)

Agape love is the kind of love that characterizes our lives as children of God.

The SOTM parallel in Luke give more description about what it means to agape and pray:

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27-28).

#### B. Pray for those who persecute you. see Matthew 5:10-12 on persecution

“The time is coming when the confession of the living God will incur not only the hatred and the fury of the world, for on the whole it has come already, but complete ostracism from ‘human society,’ as they call it. Our adversaries seek to root out the Christian Church and the Christian faith because they cannot live side by side with us, because they see in every word we utter and every deed we do, even when they are not specifically directed against them, a condemnation of their own words and deeds.” -Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (p151)

-we do not reciprocate with hatred and contention. We gather and pray.

Our love is to be expressed in our deeds, our words and our prayers. -JRWS

We must respond by calling down heaven's blessings upon them, declaring in words that we wish them nothing but good.

"This is the supreme command. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God." -Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

### **3. God's Character on Display**

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. Mt. 5:45

general grace/saving grace

*Maybe reference 2 Peter 3:7-13*

### **4. A Charge of Distinction**

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Mt. 5:46-47

"reward"

"greet"

Carefully ignoring and avoiding certain people. A child of God should be a 'greeter' to all. Known for kindness. -not shunning, ignoring, acting better than someone.

promo opps for display: summer of service, Bethalto 150, camps, deacon, greeter/welcoming, etc.

### **5. A Call for Decision**

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Mt. 5:48

note the YOU THEREFORE =personal and corporate application

"perfect" teleioi – whole, complete, mature, fulfilled

"You, therefore, will be perfect [growing into spiritual maturity both in mind and character, actively integrating godly values into your daily life], as your heavenly Father is perfect." Mt. 5:48 Amplified

-Means to imitate God

-Means to 'be merciful' "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

*Own words:*

The mark of perfection in the Christian is just this: his love is not determined by the loveliness or the attractiveness he finds in its object. His love is not conditional upon his being loved first. His love is not directed only towards those whose love he can rely on in return. No, his love is controlled but the knowledge that when he was God's enemy and a sinner, the Father first loved him. ' SF

The love for our enemies takes us along the way of the cross and into fellowship with the Crucified. The more we are driven along this road, the more certain is the victory of love over the enemy's hatred. For then it is not the disciples' own love, but the love of Jesus Christ alone, who for the sake of his enemies went to the cross and prayed for them as he hung there. Q?

**Illustration** of Jesus to his persecutors:

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

"For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8).

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

**Illustration** of Stephen when martyred. R/O Acts 7:60

“And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:60).

What about you shows that you displays the distinction (different)?

Is there something about your love that is supernatural and counter-cultural? (EMP THIS BIG TIME)

What would happen if we loved others like Jesus loves us? What if we obediently obeyed our Lord’s command to love others without limits. Love others in word, deed, and intercession regardless of what they said or did to us? It would change our entire community!

What Jesus demands is impossible without grace.

Impossible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

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\*R/O chapter in Cost of Discipleship.

see p. 87 Redeemed like David. God being the most important. The reason to strive to love others is because I want to please God. My passion for his love, presence, blessing drives me to love my enemies.