

40-05-04.wpd --God's Unconditional Love  
 Providence, divine love, grace, sovereignty, impartiality  
 Mat 5:43-48  
 When we love the way God loves, we bring Heaven down to Earth.

### INTRODUCTION:

--Does God give us commands that we can't obey? How about, **v.48** of the **text**? "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" It sounds impossible, but it **is** possible, if we see what kind of *perfection* Jesus is talking about in these verses from the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is talking about **unconditional love**, the kind of love that God the Father has. The world needs this kind of love, and **HOM.idea**.

--**Unconditional love** is something we understand because we want to receive it ourselves. [Christians in the 70s were wearing T-shirts and putting bumper stickers on their cars with a string of letters that stood for the phrase, "*Please, be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet.*" What it's asking for from others is *unconditional love* or acceptance.] What God wants us to apply is another phrase in which He says to us, "**Please, be patient with others, I am not finished with them yet.**" When we start doing that, we begin to exemplify Him *perfectly*. How can we do that? **FIRST....**

### **I. We Must First Change Our Way of Thinking, v.43-44**

- A. Our cultural environment can teach us things that are not true
  1. Nowhere does the Bible say, '*Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.*' (Jesus told them, "*You have heard that it was said...*" because that's what they had been taught in the Jewish society of those days.)
  2. Today's society teaches much the same thing:
    - a. "*Be assertive... tell unpleasant people where to get off! Don't let people walk all over you, take 'em to court! SUE 'EM!*"
    - b. A popular Hollywood theme is *vengeance*. Sometimes the plot of a movie is built entirely around *getting back at the bad guys*.
- B. Jesus' words sounded strange then, and they still do-- v.44, But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
  1. God loves the bad guys! We should *rejoice!* We're part of the *bad guys* that God loves-- Rom 5:8,10, God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.... ..when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son.
  2. When people hurt us, culture says, "*Get even!*" But Jesus says,

"*pray for those who persecute you.*" (Praying for enemies takes time and mental energy; loving them is investing your very self, just as Jesus did in laying down his life for the whole world.)

**TRANS:** The older I get the less I trust the cultural values of society. Culture changes, God doesn't. No one is *perfect*, but we are always searching for the perfect economy, the perfect government, the perfect technology, the perfect home, the perfect outfit, the perfect marriage! What people really need is **perfect love, God's unconditional love**. We need to receive it and we need to learn to give it.

### **II. We Must See Heavenly Life as a Present Behavior, v.45**

- A. The reason Jesus gives for *loving our enemies* is so that we will be "*sons of*" our "*Father in heaven.*"
  1. We look at Heaven as a place we want to go to, but God's desire is to get Heaven inside our thinking and into our lifestyles.
  2. Heaven more a pattern of behavior than it is a *location*.
    - a. The Bible has only two words that explain God: "God is **light**," and "God is **love**." What makes Heaven Heaven is the presence of Love, because our "*Father in Heaven*" is Love.
    - b. When we love as God does, we bring Heaven to Earth.
- B. How does God love?
  1. This passage says that the behavior pattern that makes us look and act like God is unconditional love-- "*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*"
  2. It shows that God's goal in us becoming His *sons*, or *children*, is not to get us into a heavenly place, but into a heavenly practice.

**TRANS:** Salvation is not for our pleasure, but for God's purpose. He wants spiritual children who will spread His *heavenly love* throughout this present world, and by our future resurrection, to spread it to the farthest reaches of the universe. "*Heaven came down and glory filled my soul.*" Why? So we could *sing*, and *dance*, and *shout*, "Hallelujah!" That may be our personal response to it, but the main reason is so that we will be "*sons of our Father in heaven*" and spread His love everywhere. **Heaven comes down to Earth, when we love the way God loves...** with *unconditional love*. And finally,

### III. We Must Treat Others as God Treats Them (re-read v.46-48)

- A. We can never put ourselves completely in God's shoes, but we can follow His footprints....
1. It says in 1 John 4:19 (NKJV), We love Him because He first loved us. It can **never** be the reverse: *He loves us because we first loved Him.*) God loves us even if we never loved Him back.
  2. There's a reward for us in loving as He does. Someday we can hear from His lips, "*Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord,*" if we have treated others the way He has treated us, loving them even if they don't love us back.
- B. If we greet people with honor, respect, and hospitality, people we don't even know, who may never return our greeting, then, even if we can't fill God's shoes, we're walking in His footsteps **perfectly**.
- C. God wants to put heavenly love to work for earthly good--
1. [What do we think of a lamp that lights up a house during the early evening hours, but stops shining when it gets really dark? OR what about a physician who only treats the mildly sick but avoids those with dire illnesses?]
  2. Earlier in this chapter (Mat 5:14-16), Jesus had said, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to **everyone in the house**. In the same way, let your light shine **before men**, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (When we love as God does, people get a taste of Heaven.)

### CONCLUSION:

--Everyone in the world needs love, and those who seem the most unlovable need love the most. That's **why our heavenly Father gives His love unconditionally**, and that's **how the heavenly Father's light is reflected on earth through His children**, when we love both friends and enemies alike, unconditionally, as God does.

Mat 5:43-48 (NIV) "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' {44} But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, {45} that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. {46} If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? {47} And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? {48} Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.