

## Love Beyond Limits # 11

Matthew 5: 43-48

Tonight as we close out the fifth chapter of Matthew, we are getting close to the midway point of the great sermon that Jesus preached. For the past several weeks we have considered various contrasts that Jesus made regarding time honored traditions and the reality of what God genuinely desires. The focus of this final contrast is love.

You don't have to be a Bible scholar to know that love is one of the most prominent attributes of the Lord. [1 Jn.4:8 – He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.](#) [Mat.22:37-40 – Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. \[38\] This is the first and great commandment. \[39\] And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. \[40\] On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.](#) If we are to be like God and follow His desire for our lives, we must love as God would have us to.

Just as it was in Jesus' day, many have a perception of love, but it is not love as God commands. Much of what we see today described as love does not fit the biblical model for love. In this final contrast Jesus reveals how we are to love. I want to examine the [truths](#) our Lord describes as we consider: [Love Beyond Limits](#).

**I. The Custom Mentioned** [\(43\) – Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.](#) Notice:

**A. The Tradition** – [Ye have heard that it hath been said.](#) Jesus once again addresses what they had heard said of others. He is dealing with the oral traditions that 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.

- Jesus emphasized their tradition many times in His sermon and we need to be mindful of tradition as well. I am not opposed to tradition; in many cases it is fine. However, we must ensure all we do is in accordance with the Word and not simply the desires of men.

**B. The Truth** – [Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor.](#) Jesus emphasizes 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.

**C. The Tragedy** – *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.* This tragedy is actually two-fold. First of all, it speaks of a limited love. It seems as if the Pharisees were promoting a selfish love that was offered to those who were viewed in a favorable light. They taught they were to love those who were close to them, but there was no encouragement to extend that same love to those outside their realm of influence. We know that is not what the Lord desires. We are to love all men. Jesus illustrates what constitutes our “neighbor” with the parable of the Good Samaritan. (Illustrate)

- Secondly, and most tragic, they were teaching a doctrine that was not based on fact. There is nothing in the Scripture that teaches 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. I have heard many say, “The Bible says...,” when in fact the Bible does not say that. Christians are responsible to know what the Bible says. Much error is promoted based on what we’ve heard all our lives. Just because a preacher said something was in the Bible is no guarantee that it actually is. Search the Scriptures to see and know!

### **I. The Custom Mentioned** (43)

**II. The Correction Made** (44) – *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 corrects the error that had been handed down. He speaks of love as God would have us love. It is:

**A. Unconditional Love** – *But I say unto you, Love your enemies.* Rather than 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 will bear 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!)

**B. Unhindered Love** – *But I say unto you...bless them that curse you.* Jesus knew the emotions that we feel; living in a body of flesh, He experienced the same emotions. He knew that the flesh had no desire to offer blessing to those who had cursed us 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.

**C. Undeniable Love** – **But I say unto you...do good to them that hate you.** This is love in action. We have already dealt with the tradition of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Jesus declares 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 repay that which has been given, but we are to be kind and good to all. [1 Thes.5:15 – See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.](#) [Rom.12:20-21 – Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. \[21\] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.](#)

**D. Unlimited Love** – **But I say unto you...pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;** This is likely the most difficult means of love. Sometimes we can find the courage to offer an act of kindness outwardly to those who have offended us, but many times it is hard to humble ourselves enough to actually pray for them. If we are to follow the example that Jesus left, we must possess an unlimited love. Take a moment to consider the prayer that Jesus prayed as He hung upon the cross. It was not a prayer for judgment or retribution, but a prayer for mercy and forgiveness.

### **I. The Custom Mentioned** (43)

### **II. The Correction Made** (44)

**III. The Character Modeled** (45-47) – Jesus offers words of wisdom substantiating His love. When we possess and reveal the love of Christ, we bear witness of Him. The display of love by the believer offers a two-fold witness. It speaks of:

**A. The Relationship** (45) – **That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth 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 upon 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.

**B. The Reflection** (46-47) – For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? [47] And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 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.

- This was not love at all; it was simply a response to those who benefited their goals. Our world is filled with 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 does not mean we must love their ways or ideals, but we must love them!

**I. The Custom Mentioned** (43)

**II. The Correction Made** (44)

**III. The Character Modeled** (45-47)

**IV. The Command Manifested** (48) – Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Jesus closes His thoughts regarding the many contrasts with a command. Let's take a moment to consider this command. Notice:

**A. The Expectation** – Be ye therefore perfect. This speaks of “*spiritual maturity, virtue, purity and uprightness in character.*” I am well aware that we will never achieve the perfection that 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. If there was ever a time in your life that you were closer to God than you currently are, you are backslidden on Him and need to draw nigh, striving for perfection!

**B. 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.

- This concludes the opening portion of Jesus' message in a powerful way, leaving us a tremendous challenge. Many were following the traditions and opinions of man, while forsaking the righteous standard of God. God is truth and truth never changes. He has set the standard that we are to strive to achieve. I pray that all we do will be in accordance to His will as revealed in His infallible, inerrant Word.

Jesus dealt with much in the passage that we have just considered, but the central theme is 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 that you possess? Does the description that 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 tonight 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?