



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study: **CHRIST'S COMMAND TO LOVE LIKE GOD**
Matthew 5:43-48

Now our Lord comes to the important teaching on love for our neighbours. No one among the religious leaders of that day could deny the express command of God to love. It was clearly stated and exemplified in the Old Testament. "***Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD***" (Leviticus 19:18). "***And thou shalt love him (the stranger) as thyself ... I am the LORD your God***" (Leviticus 19:34). A certain lawyer who came to Jesus revealed that the religious leaders of his time knew this timeless command of God. He asked the Lord, "***Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?***" The Lord asked him, "***What is written in the law? how readest thou?***" His answer reveals his knowledge. "***Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; AND THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF***" (Luke 10:25-27).

The multitudes who gathered before Jesus to learn from Him were ignorant of God's standard and divine requirement of love. They knew the word, love, just as they had always heard the word, righteousness. Their understanding of righteousness and love was far below or far removed from God's expectation and demand. Self-centredness, self-love and self-righteousness had corrupted their interpretation of God's Holy Word.

PERVERSION OF LOVE BY CLERICS

Matthew 5:43; Leviticus 19:17,18; Deuteronomy 22:1-4; Exodus 23:4,5; Proverbs 24:17,18; 25:21,22; 1 Samuel 24:16-19; Psalms 35:12-19; 139:21-24; Amos 5:14,15.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." As always, the false teachers had perverted and corrupted God's message to His people. It was a twofold perversion - perversion by omission and perversion by addition. They omitted the phrase, "***as thyself***" and they added "***and hate thine enemy***." Their message was lifted from God's Word and it contained something from God's revealed truth, yet there was a great departure from true, divine revelation. Satan's perversion of God's revelation often contains a little truth which makes his deception believable and so damns the souls of multitudes who are ignorant of the truth.

Where could they have got the idea of being commanded to hate their enemies? They confused God's enemies, enemies of the nation, enemies of mankind and enemies of God's Kingdom with personal enemies (2 Chronicles 19:1,2; 1 Kings 21:20; 2 Samuel 12:14; Psalms 37:20; 139:20-22; 2 Chronicles 20:29; Esther 3:8-10; Acts 13:8-10; Philippians 3:18,19; James 4:4). They did not want to live up to God's standard of loving their enemies as themselves, so they gave in to confusion, perversion and false interpretation. It is always like that. All who are full of self-love and self-centredness will always get themselves into self-deception through false interpretation.

PERCEPTION OF LOVE BY CHRIST

Matthew 5:44-47; Luke 6:27,28,32-36;10:25-37; Romans 12:14,17-21;Galatians 6:9,10; 1 Peter 2:21-23; 3:9; Acts 7:54-60;14:17; Ephesians 5:1,2; Romans 5:8-10; 2:4-11.

"But I say unto you ..." What an authority! The emphasis is not only on what is said but on Who said it. It was not just that His teaching was the standard of truth; He Himself was the standard of truth. God's love sent Him to save the world; His love brought Him to redeem humanity. He was not just the Word personified, He was Love in person. He came, full of pure, divine, infinite love. His love overleaped all the boundaries of race, nationality, age, culture and tribe. He had all authority to say, faithfully and forcefully, "***love your enemies***."

What He commanded seems impossible for the natural man. It is contrary to human nature to love our enemies. The carnal nature in man does not normally wish or seek the best for those who do the worst to him. Christ's command requires a great transformation of our heart and nature. Genuine love for our enemies is one of sure evidences of true conversion and salvation. Lack of love for our enemies is a great warning sign that our profession lacks heaven's approval. "***But I say unto you, Love your enemies***." This is the kind of love that seeks and works to meet another's highest welfare. This love involves both our **attitude** and our **action** towards our enemies, all our enemies.

PERFECTION OF LOVE IN CHRISTIANS

Matthew 5:48; 1 John 2:5,6; 4:12,17,18; Genesis 17:1; James 3:2; 1:2-4; Colossians 1:28; 3:12-14; 4:12; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Luke 6:40; Hebrews 13:20,21.

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” The word, therefore, connects this verse to the preceding verses on love. This is a call to perfection in love, not perfection in knowledge, wisdom or power. ‘Be ye therefore perfect in love, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect in love’. Impossible? How can a loving Lord and Saviour demand and command what He knows to be impossible and unattainable? Yet, we must be quick to say that this perfection and the full scope of Christian perfection commanded in the Scriptures is utterly impossible in man’s own power. Christ, who has commanded this perfection, also assured us, ***“with men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”*** (Matthew 19:26). That which God demands, He provides the power to accomplish. The impossible becomes possible for those who trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Sanctifier, because He gives them enabling, abundant, sufficient grace. ***“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”***

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