

The Love Of God Is...What?

Understanding the Unconditional Love of God - Matthew 5:43-48 (Video Conference)

South Bay Christian Church

10-10-2020
Bob Holloway

Earlier this year I came upon several YouTube videos whose topics were God's love. That's a favorite topic of mine, so I clicked on the video links, but what I saw and heard was somewhat surprising. I was very sure I understood the love of our God, but what I heard was not jiving with what I believed. But I also know that this is how I learn – to experience something that gets me out of my comfort zone and challenges my convictions. So I began to study what I had taken for granted for so long – that the love of God was unconditional.

After listening to several debates and a presentation on what some very well-known Christian Theologians believed and taught, I went back to the Bible and studied verses that speak of God's love, then I meditated with God and asked for His wisdom and understanding on this. After all, how we understand the love of God is how we can proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ!

So, today I'm going to show you the video presentation I watched, since we don't have time to view an hour's worth of debate, then take you through the Bible to see what God says.

But first, let's begin with prayer.

Today's video: "*The Error of Teaching God's Unconditional Love*", by R. C. Sproul and John MacArthur

<https://youtu.be/fcOzTZUOBn0>

So, God's Love is NOT Unconditional?

Of all the fundamental truths of the salvation I have from Jesus Christ, the foremost one is that the sovereign grace that comes from **God's love for His people is unconditional, period!**

But, after initially watching the video of of Dr's Sproul and MacArthur's presentation on what they believe is God's love, I started to have some doubts about my original convictions. However, I immediately remembered how I first learned of God's love, and it's found in Matthew 5 and begins in verse 43:

Let's remember how this looked – as Matthew 5:1 states, "Jesus went up into a mountain and sat down, then His disciples came unto Him". They're gathered around him and were also sitting or laying on the ground. Prior to verse 43, Jesus had been teaching about what we call the Beatitudes, He also taught about Believers relation to the Law, about divorce and remarriage, and about complete forgiveness and reconciliation. And now we get to the part about the love of God:

43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

What's Jesus stating? Lev 19:18 (love neighbor), and Deut 23:3-6 (hate your enemy) – all Jesus's disciples agree, that's what they were brought up to believe – "no arguments here".

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44 But I say unto you,

- a) Love your enemies, (*huh?*)
- b) bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, (*wait a minute!*)
- c) and pray for them which spitefully use you, and persecute you; (*say what?!*)

45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:

...and here's the point – that these qualities belong to our Heavenly Father, and if we belong to Jesus, then we belong to our Father in heaven, and His is the truest love, unconditional, that we may be able to show the very essence of God to others – His love. Jesus continues...

for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 And if ye greet your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the tax collectors do so?

So here's a teaching moment – the disciples were blown away by what Jesus said earlier, so here He helps them understand what the difference is in the way God's people loved then, and what was going to be ushered in at his sacrifice. And to cap it all off, Jesus tells them about how God's unconditional love is perfect:

48 Be ye therefore *perfect*, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

The word “perfect” that the Apostle Matthew chooses to use is the Greek word (*teleios – τέλειος*) which is synonymous with completeness and growth in moral character. When Jesus stated this, He was not saying that human beings will be completely sinless or flawless while we are still in these fleshly bodies. Rather, that when we love people who are as unloving to us as possible, when we bless those who curse a blue streak at us, and when we pray for those who persecute us, we have the spiritual maturity which enables us to be imitators of God – showing love to everyone without partiality.

For additional proof, we need only to go to Jesus' teachings of what he did to reconcile humanity to Himself. Grace – the gift of God to mankind, not of works, but a free gift.

Romans 5:18 – But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 John 4:16 – And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

1 Peter 4:8 – Above all, love each other deeply (*ektenace - ἐκτενής*), because love covers a multitude of sins.

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John 3:16 – For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So we can see that God is love, and that His love extends to all. God's love is unconditional, and that's in the way Christians are called to love everyone we meet. This is the very essence of unconditional love – and it is the same kind of love that God shows to us!

The Apostle Paul states the same thing in the letter he wrote to the Church in Ephesus: In Ephesians 5, verses 1 and 2, he wrote: **Be followers of God, dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.**

Paul also states in the same letter to the Ephesians, in chapter 4 and verse 24, that as Christians, we are to: **put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteous and holiness.**

What we need to understand:

- 1) God loved us long before we were born – His love is not based on how we perform.
- 2) As converted Christians, God's love encompasses us, comes into us, and flows through us towards others.
- 3) The 1st Covenant's focus was: Love your neighbor, hate your enemy.
- 4) The 2nd Covenant's focus is: to Love, Bless, and Pray for everyone, no matter how they treat us... *in other words, UNCONDITIONALLY.*

Conditional love states: "I love you if..."

Unconditional love states: "I love you regardless..."

One point to make before we close...

Addressing the focus of the video – God's nature and expectation for Christians:

Even if by now you understand that God's love is never-ending and unconditional, that does not translate into saying that God is tolerant to sin. When people come into a relationship with Jesus, we are the ones who change due to the awesome love that we are exposed to. This life-long relationship changes us to be more God-like every day, at least it should.

The Apostle Paul wrote many warnings about backsliding and taking God's love lightly to the Church in many locations, but the one verse I will leave with you today comes from his letter to the Galatians.

In Chapter 6 and verse 7, Paul warns Christians that God is not to be ridiculed by their actions: **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.**

So let's address some of the points of the video in regard to what the Church teaches:

- 1) **Does the Church teach that each one of us needs to repent of our sins? Yes, it does.**

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2) Does the Church teach that we need to make a commitment to God to leave our previous sinful lives? Yes, it does.

3) Does the Church teach that everyone must come to Jesus and make Him our Lord and Master? Yes, it does.

Is there anyone listening to me that doesn't know that Jesus is our model for righteous, holy character, and we should be striving daily to be just like Him?

Is there anyone here who thinks the Church is a "really nice social group", where we don't have to change and just stay as we are?

Yesterday when I was going through my sermon material, a question suddenly came to mind. The question was, **"Why am I giving a sermon on the topic of God's love now?"** I watched the videos a little over five months ago and I've been thinking about this subject since then. So why would God have me present it today?

Meditating on that last night provided me with the answer – because in a matter of just a few weeks this country will probably be thrown into a chaotic state that it hasn't seen for well over a century and a half. Factions will rise up in twenty to thirty major cities and declare that their presidential candidate should have won the election – there will be tons of mass-media narratives that will mislead the citizens of the United States into believing that fraud has occurred and that, as the organizer of BLM stated, the only way to change the present corruption is to "burn it down".

We need to understand that God needs us NOW, more than ever – to combat the upcoming hatred and violence with the only thing that can turn it around – and that's uncompromising, unconditional godly love!

God's love never fails, it's always there and it calls to those who live in the spiritual darkness. Unconditional love states that I'll always love you, even if you don't love me – it always gives second chances and never stops – we see this expressed in the story of the Prodigal Son.

God's way of life is in loving obedience to His way, as illustrated by Jesus. That's our model, and that should be our destiny.

Closing prayer.