

## Love Your Enemies

Matt. 5: 43-45.

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This word of our Lord demands our earnest heed; for it is as foreign to the feelings of men in Christendom as to Jewish disciples. But here is nothing that goes beyond the word of the beginning of Christ, nothing that supposes the work of redemption accomplished, or the Holy Spirit given to the believer. Yet the presence of the Lord brought in no little change.

"Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in [the] heavens; for he maketh his sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust" (vers. 43-45).

In vain some essay to impress those words of Christ on men in general, on such as are not born of God. Now the language assumes that those addressed did believe in Christ, and had a new life of the Spirit as being born anew. But this is not so in our country or any other, even if as favoured in the possession of an open Bible. Yet the divine speaker takes for granted, what was true then and is still, that the mass of men, the nations (and the Jews are at least as bad), seek after what pertains to this life, eating, drinking, clothing, money, ease, honour : baptism, or the profession of Christ, in no way delivers from or lessens it. Therefore He warns that wide is the gate and broad the way that leads unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it; that narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads unto life, and few are they that find it. It is therefore a total and dangerous misconception thus to overlook man's existing state of ruin.

But others, who seem aware of human inability to obey the law of God, and are accustomed to regard even believers still, as like Israel of old, doomed to failure under law, naturally conclude, that such requirements as the Lord urged on the mount are to man impossible and more condemnatory than the Ten Words of Sinai. They therefore settle down, like the believer in Rom. 7, overwhelmed as he sees himself struggling against the evils of his old nature, and ignorant of emancipating grace in the power of a dead and risen Christ, who can only cry, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? Hence the tendency to tone down our Lord's words in these three chapters, or even to deny that they have a living claim on the saint now. Others again contend that they are Jewish and had only to do with the disciples when the Lord was here in the days of His sojourn. They are really His words to men taught of God, and with a new life which desires and delights to walk according to His revealed will.

To love our enemies, to pray for those that persecute, is wholly above the law or the duty of a people in the flesh. An Edomite or an Egyptian was not to be abhorred, and their children might enter into the congregation of Jehovah in the third generation; an Ammonite or a Moabite only in the tenth generation, like a bastard. But Christ brought in grace and truth. In the light of the Son of man all were lost, even the sheep of Israel. As He was come to seek and to save that which was lost, those that were His were to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors. It was the mind of heaven for His saints on earth, applicable to them and to none but them. They receive life, His life, in receiving Him, and are called to show it thus. It is as incumbent now as when the Lord thus spoke; and His resurrection made it clearer and stronger, as the Holy Spirit when given made it of power. Thus were

the disciples to be sons of their Father in the heavens.

What renegades, if not from Christ, at least from His words and will, if any bearing His name seek to fritter away so plain a call! This they cannot avoid, if they justify the ways of Christendom, where the world rules and the language is of Ashdod, where men fail to show their Father's name, and boast of their comprehending all the mixed multitude. For it is now a question of a far higher than Israel and of a separation deeper and nearer to God. It is a true and present calling of grace, inalienable from the Christian if loyal to the Lord. For we are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3: 26). If we have the relationship and title, we cannot be absolved from the responsibility. Yea, it would be violence done to our new and divine nature (2 Peter 1: 4).

Let us therefore be in earnest to keep up the family character. Does not our Father that is in the heavens make His sun to rise on evil and good? does He not send rain on just and unjust? If His sons, it is not presumption to cherish feelings above human nature; it is our new status, and should be our delight. Grace alone can make it good. But Christ has procured all that is needful and efficacious to this end; and the Holy Spirit is here to see to it and guide us to Christ's glory.

Be not deceived, brethren beloved in the Lord. The enemy is sleeplessly active, and only too successful. This is My beloved Son, says the Father: hear ye Him. What is the chaff to the wheat? It is not enough to have life in Him, and our sins forgiven through His blood. We are called to hear His voice and to follow Him, separate from the world that crucified the Lord of glory.