

Text— Matthew 5:43-48

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Our Scripture selection is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The Lord Jesus Christ, being true God and true man, is certainly the best preacher this world has ever been privileged to see and hear, for He is perfect. Even some of Jesus' enemies remarked, as we read in John 7:46, "Never man spake like this man." Yes, when Jesus preached, Mark 1:22 reports, in regards to the common people, "they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes." Accordingly, when we read Jesus' preaching in the Holy Bible, we will do well to attentively take His words to heart, for Jesus' WORD IS GOD'S WORD, since Jesus is true God in addition to being true man, sinless man, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."— declares Colossians 2:9.

The term "Christian" means "follower of Christ" or "disciple of Christ." Hence, it behooves us Christians to endeavor to follow Jesus' perfect example of God-pleasing behavior; it behooves us to truly take Jesus' words to heart whenever we hear or read them.

Therefore, we need to pay strict attention to our sermon text, in which Jesus our Lord instructs us, concerning:

"CHRISTIAN LOVE"

With that as our theme, may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) What Christian love is
- 2) Why Christian love is to be practiced

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Verse 43, ----- (Matthew 5:43)

Our sermon text opens with Jesus saying: *Ye have*

heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

It was the scribes and Pharisees who taught the Jewish people to love their neighbor and to hate their enemy. The actual command given by God in Leviticus 19:17-18 is: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD." And, despite the scribes and Pharisees teaching to the contrary, the Old Testament Holy Scriptures plainly teach that love is to be practiced toward one's enemy, for Proverbs 25:21-22 instructs: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee."

Furthermore, the Lord God absolutely did NOT command His people to hate their enemy; on the contrary, we read in Exodus 23:4-5, "If thou meet thine enemy's ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." So, loving-kindness was and is God's Law, even toward enemies. Thus, the fact of the matter is that the scribes and Pharisees, in their teachings, contradicted God's Law to suit their own sinful desires, for the Lord would have us do good to all people— such is how we show Christian love.

Verse 44, ----- (Matthew 5:44)

Jesus shows what Christian love is, when He remarks: *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.* Indeed, Jesus, by His words, instructs us to love ALL OUR FELLOW HUMAN BEINGS, even those who hate us and treat us with contempt.

Accordingly, CHRISTIAN LOVE is having and practicing genuine care and concern for ALL of our fellow human beings— men, women and children. CHRISTIAN LOVE means to have good will toward our fellow men, even if they do not have good will toward us. Furthermore, we show we have Christian love when we sincerely pray for those who hate us, despitefully use us, and persecute us.

Realize that Christian love is NOT sexual lust, but rather genuine care and concern for fellow human beings. Additionally, true Christian love does NOT tolerate, excuse, or promote sinful behaviors and lifestyles, such as homosexuality and lesbianism— activities which Romans 1:26-27 reveal as “vile affections”; “against nature”; and, “unseemly.” Real Christians know that Romans 6:23 clearly states, “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Real Christians do NOT desire to see anyone end up in hell, “Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” as Mark 9:44 describes the place. Real Christians desire that those stuck in sinful behaviors and lifestyles sincerely repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and amend their lives accordingly.

Now, there is a hatred which is NOT sinful, but is rather a holy-hatred, for Psalm 139:19-24 relates that David the believer declared, “Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Hence, holy-hatred is based upon having a higher love for the Lord God than for any sinful human being. Realize that a Christian can love his or her enemy and truly desire the person to repent, while at the same time holding a holy-hatred against that enemy of God because of that person’s sinfully and obstinately hating the Lord God and dishonoring Him.

Take it to heart that Christian love is love in a social sense, not a sexual sense. Christian love is genuine care and concern for all other people, all our fellow men, having regard for them and desiring what is truly best for them, in accord with God’s Word.

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As we continue to ponder our sermon text to its conclusion, let us see why Christian love is to be practiced.

Verses 43-45, -----. (Matthew 5:43-45)

The first reason as to why Christian love is to be practiced is: JESUS COMMANDS IT! Fellow Christians, Jesus is our LORD as well as our Savior; therefore, we are to gladly obey Him. Indeed, Jesus Christ is, “the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” — as we read in Ephesians 1:22-23. Accordingly, we are certainly to practice Christian love, since our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, clearly commands it.

Notice that our Lord Jesus further defines Christian love as blessing, doing good, and praying – even for our enemies – as we considered earlier.

Think about what is the greatest need of every sinful human being, be they friend or enemy. EVERYONE needs Jesus Christ and the salvation He supplies. Hence, 1 Timothy 2:1-6 declares, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

My friends, we should pray daily for widespread repentance throughout the world. Additionally, we

need to pray for those people holding various civil governmental offices, that they would make decisions and laws which are in accord with God's Word, rather than in opposition to it. We also need to give thanks to God for keeping matters from getting worse than they already are, for Lamentations 3:22 states, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not." Hence, let us show Christian love by properly praying to the Lord regularly for all our fellow human beings, in accord with the dictates of the Holy Bible.

Jesus Christ, commands us Christians: *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.* Now, it's not easy for us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us. Our sinful flesh urges us to pay-back in kind when we are treated in an unpleasant manner. Nevertheless, we must fight against our sinful flesh and strive to do as our Lord Jesus commands, for Romans 8:9 says to us Christians, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Jesus supplies us with another very good reason as to why Christian love is to be practiced, when He says: *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.*

Note that the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ bids you, me, and all other believers, to practice Christian love, so we may thereby show we are truly children of God, our heavenly Father. Galatians 3:26-28 remarks to all Christians, "ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Therefore, since we are God's children, it is right

and proper that we conduct ourselves as God's children by practicing Christian love toward ALL our fellow human beings.

Think about how our heavenly Father shows love toward ALL human beings, for, *he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* God certainly has the power to withhold the blessings of sunshine and rain if He so desires, as droughts and cloudy days indicate. But, God does NOT withhold His blessings at all times from only the unbelievers, while giving His blessings only to the believers; no, God is loving to ALL people, even pagans. It's as Psalm 145:9 relates, "The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works."

Consider the greatest example of God the Father's love, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

God the Father's love for the entire world is so amazing, so undeserved, by us sinners. God had His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, shed His holy and precious blood in payment for the sins of the whole world while nailed to the cross of Calvary; He died and was buried; and then, after three days in the grave, He bodily and triumphantly rose again and visibly appeared again in this world.

Realize that those folks who are lost and damned to hell are lost by their own fault, because they stubbornly refuse to repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, despite God's pleading with them through His Holy Word, "And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."— as Mark 1:15 declares. Accordingly, we need to pray for widespread repentance.

Oh beloved, 1 John 4:9-11 plainly states, “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Thus, it’s plain to see why Christian love is to be practiced.

Verse 46, ----- (Matthew 5:46)

Loving only those who love us, leaves us with no real reward— no additional gifts of grace from God now in this life or in the hereafter. In other words, if we love only as the publicans love, only as the money-hungry tax collectors of this world love, in order to benefit themselves, rather than showing real kindness and mercy to others; then, we need not expect to be rewarded by God, who, “giveth to all life, and breath, and all things,” as Acts 17:25 reports. Hence, Christian love is to be practiced, since there are no real and lasting rewards to an individual without it.

Verse 47, ----- (Matthew 5:47)

Jesus drives the point home that greeting only one’s brothers in the faith and one’s brothers by blood is not going far enough when it comes to practicing Christian love. Even self-centered, selfish money-grubbers greet their own kind. On the other hand, we who believe in Jesus are to greet other folks, folks with whom we have no close ties, that we may thereby practice Christian love.

For example, be friendly and kind when you see a person on the street, in a store, and so forth. Give aid to a stranger if the person needs it. Yes, we are to strive to do as Jesus directs in Luke 6:27-36, where we read, “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away

thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” Let us therefore strive to practice Christian love.

Verse 48, ----- (Matthew 5:48)

Jesus instructs us Christians: *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Accordingly, perfect behavior is to be our goal as Christians— that is why Christian love is to be practiced by us. God desires that we be truly fruitful in the faith of Jesus Christ, showing that, as 1 John 4:19 states, “We love him, because he first loved us.” For, 1 John 4:20-21 adds, “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.” And, my friends, the term “brother” here refers to ALL our fellow human beings, for Malachi 2:10 reminds us, “Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?” Therefore, let us strive to practice Christian love.

If we are honest we must admit that we have NOT always practiced Christian love, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”— declares Romans 3:23. Hence, we need to sincerely repent of our sins, turning anew to Jesus Christ for forgiveness and for the strengthening of our faith, because without Him we can do nothing that is right in God’s sight.

Accordingly, let us daily and sincerely repent of our

sins; and, let us continue to cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, for Acts 4:12 states, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” So, fellow Christians, may God also grant that we be fruitful in the faith of Jesus Christ—that we go forward knowing and practicing true Christian love. Amen.

m.e.l.