

## LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Luke 6:27-49

Key Verse: 6:27

“But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you....”

In the last passage we studied Jesus’ choosing the twelve apostles. From a human point of view, they did not look like promising spiritual leaders for the whole world; they might have looked more like the “dirty dozen.” But Jesus chose each of them with a great hope and called them by name to be his apostles. He bore with each of them with much prayer and patience until they were changed into the twelve apostles who spread the gospel to the whole world. Sometimes we want to see spectacular work of God right away, but one-to-one Bible teaching seems slow and unproductive. We learn from Jesus that we must raise disciples with much prayer and patience.

After choosing his disciples and designating them apostles, Jesus began to teach them the “A,B,C’s” of discipleship. “A” is “Love your enemies.” Wow! To our human understanding, Jesus teaching his new disciples, “Love your enemies,” seems like telling a five-year old child to write a doctoral thesis. Nevertheless, this is where Jesus began. Jesus set a heavenly standard from the beginning. May God help us accept Jesus’ teaching, “Love your enemies.”

First, God loves his enemies (27).

Look at verse 27. “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you....” What is love? In human history, countless words have been written defining and describing what love is. But we must confine our understanding to what the Bible says about love. Simply speaking, there are three different words in Greek that are translated “love” in the New Testament. They are: “eros,” “phileo,” and “agape.” These three words are very different in meaning. But they are all translated into the word “love” in English.

“Eros” refers to passionate love that heats up quickly and cools off quickly. Soap operas are devoted to describing this heating up and cooling off process in various couples every afternoon. So much pop music is simply the description of eros between persons. Once eros ignites, human history happens, for good or for bad. So the Bible strongly cautions us to practice eros within the law of God. Those who enjoy eros outside the bounds of God’s law fall into tragedy and sorrow. For example, Amnon “fell in love” with his half-sister Tamar. Then Amnon became frustrated to the point of illness on account of her (2Sa 13:2). Obviously, Amnon was a slave of eros. He only wanted to gratify his sinful passion at any cost. He did so by means of conspiracy and deceit, abusing Tamar in the worst way. Afterward, his so-called “love” transmuted into hatred in less than one minute and he threw Tamar out. Tamar’s life was ruined. She lived the rest of her days as a desolate woman. Amnon paid for his godless passion with his own life when his brother Absalom murdered him in revenge.

On the other hand, there is the beautiful example of Mary and Joseph. They were happily engaged according to God’s providence and Jewish law. We can imagine how much Mary dreamed of her wedding ceremony and her life with Joseph. But one day the angel Gabriel visited Mary with good news: God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus before marriage. Mary simply obeyed God’s will. In a moment, she gave eros to God. She became the most blessed woman who is recognized down through the generations and around the world. We learn here that we must submit eros to the will of God.

“Phileo” refers to love between brothers or friends. This kind of love requires commitment and sacrifice. Among us, there is a young man who has practiced this kind of love. When he was quite young, his father died. His mother remarried and had a boy and twin girls. Then her second husband also died. She had to work day and night to support her children. Her first son was very sorry that he had no father. But he did not wallow in self-pity. He decided to do his best to be a father to his younger siblings. After school, while his classmates played baseball or went swimming together, he went straight home and took care of his brother and sisters. He changed their diapers and fed them and did everything for them. Later, when they went to school, he helped them with their homework. He literally laid down his own life to raise them. As a result, they grew strong and became stable and are now promising young people. Brotherly love, however, has a great limitation. During the Civil War, brothers fought against brothers; best friends fought each other. In one famous instance, two opposing generals, who had been best friends before the war, had to meet on the field of battle at Gettysburg. Both were men of honor; both were faithful to their duty; there was no escape from the confrontation. The night before the battle, they arranged a secret meeting

to say farewell to one another. After shedding tears together, they rejoined their respective armies and fought against each other the next day. We must know that phileo has a great limitation.

Then there is “agape.” This is God’s love. God’s love transcends human love as much as heaven transcends earth. God’s love is not limited, like human love is. God’s love is eternal. For example, Jesus chose one man, Simon Peter, to be his top disciple. Simon made many mistakes. But Jesus’ love toward Simon never changed. Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forever.”

God’s love is unconditional. God chose the people of Israel to make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. So he blessed them with great privileges, especially his own divine training that changed them from a slave people to a mighty army of God. God established them in the promised land with all the spiritual and material blessings it is possible to give. But they did not live up to God’s purpose for them. Instead of revealing God’s love and holiness to Gentile nations around them, they began to participate in their idolatry and sensual indulgence. To God’s eyes, they had become like an unfaithful wife who abandoned her decent husband to run after degenerate animal men. But God loved them still. God loved them unconditionally. With this love, he told the prophet Hosea to take to an adulterous wife. So Hosea married a virtual prostitute, the infamous Gomer. It was amazing grace for Gomer to marry the holy prophet Hosea. But right after marriage, she returned to her adulterous lifestyle. Then God said to Hosea, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites...” (Hos 3:1).

God’s love is life-giving. John 3:16 says, “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.” When God sent his Son to the world, he gave everything to us. Parents love their children the most. They are willing to sacrifice themselves for their children. But they cannot sacrifice their children for others. However, God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son Jesus. Jesus came into this world, putting aside all the glory and power and honor of the kingdom of God. Jesus lived a poor and pure life and became the servant of all men. Jesus healed men with leprosy. Jesus drove out evil spirits. Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand at the cost of his life. Finally, Jesus went to the cross as the Lamb of God and shed his blood for the sin of the world. Mark 10:45 says, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

God loves his enemies. When our Lord Jesus hung on the cross, put there by sinful men, he prayed for them, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Lk 23:34a). This love of God in Jesus was for his enemies. At one time, we were all God’s enemies. Romans 5:10 says, “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son....” While we were his enemies, God loved us and sacrificed Jesus to save us from our sins. Praise God! Praise Jesus! When we know that God sacrificed Jesus for our sins, we begin to know what love is. Then we can practice this love. 1 John 4:19 says, “We love because he first loved us.” We must know the love of God in order to love our enemies.

How can we know the love of God? We can know the love of God when we accept God’s love by faith. There is a woman who was very much loved by her husband. But she did not believe that her husband loved her because she was filled with the devil’s doubt. One day, she decided to believe her husband loved her simply because he said so. Then she tasted his love in her heart. Likewise, God loves us. But sometimes our hearts are too sick with doubt to taste God’s love. We must believe that God loves us because the Bible says so. Then we can overcome doubt and taste God’s love for us. God really loves us. God demonstrated his love for us. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” We must believe God’s love, overcoming doubt. We must know that God loved each of us while we were still his enemies.

Second, we must love our enemies (27-36).

Look at verse 27 again. “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you....” We must love our enemies. In this passage, the meaning of “enemy” is very clear. An enemy is one who curses us (28). An enemy is one who mistreats us (28). An enemy is one who strikes our cheek (29). In short, enemies are those who explode at us out of hatred. Enemies are also those who demand many things unreasonably (29b). But our Lord commands us to love our enemies by satisfying their demands in the hope of winning them over to God. Abraham’s son Isaac was a champion in loving his enemies. Whenever he was successful in digging a well of water—which was more precious than gold in the hot Middle East—enemies came to take it. Isaac did not fight with them. He gave them

the well and moved on to dig another well. This happened again and again. Finally the enemies recognized the God of Isaac and gave glory to God.

Let's read verses 29-31. "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you." This is the basic attitude of children of God and it is the way of loving one's enemy.

The command of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be too hard to put into practice. But there have been many in history who wanted to obey his command. When Shepherd Joseph Horvath's father passed away, he and his brother should have shared the inheritance equally. But his brother suddenly demanded all the inheritance for himself. Shepherd Joe could have fought for justice in court. But he thought of Jesus' word, "If anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back." He gave everything to his brother even though he and his wife really needed the money. Since then, God has blessed him abundantly. John and Mary Paton went as pioneer missionaries to the New Hebrides, islands off the coast of Australia. When one old missionary warned him that he might be eaten by cannibals, John replied, "You are pretty old. Soon you will die and be eaten by worms. I would rather serve the Lord and be eaten by cannibals." A few months later, Mary died of malaria, and their baby died soon after. John was heartbroken, but said, "I will not run away." Then God blessed his language study and Bible teaching and many cannibals became children of God.

There are two kinds of people. One kind are animal men. The other kind are children of the Most High. If we want to be children of the Most High, we must have a love relationship with God—a vine and branch romance with God. When something happens, we must think of God before thinking of others. Especially we must think of God before thinking of enemies. Then we can grow. If we only love those who love us (32), if we only do good to those who are good to us (33), if we only lend money to those who are sure to pay us back (34), then we are not children of the Most High, but animal men. So Jesus commands us in verses 35-36, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Third, do not judge—repent (37-42).

Look at verse 37. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." Sinners are usually very lazy. But when they judge others, they suddenly become diligent. Jesus says, "Do not judge." Here, "judge" has the meaning of "condemn." Those who judge seem to condemn others. But in fact they condemn themselves. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (Jn 3:17). Jesus' people must know his grace and be forgiving.

Look at verses 41-42, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." These verses warn us against hypocrisy. Instead of looking at others' small faults and weaknesses, we must repent of our own sins. We must know that our own sins are huge and that others' faults are small. But natural men think others are much worse than they. They are like the Pharisees, who collaborated with the Roman governor Pilate and nailed Jesus to the cross. They were as evil as the devil. They were enemies of God. But they only looked at others' small faults and weaknesses, ignoring their own wickedness. Sometimes we think we are pretty good people, a little better than others. At that moment, we must ask God's mercy to heal our spiritual blindness so we can repent of our own sins. Then we can grow in Jesus continually, like St. Paul did (1Ti 1:15).

Look at verses 39-40. "He also told them this parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.'" Jesus' disciples' present condition was not so great. They were spiritually blind; they might fall into a pit, bringing others with them. They were not ready to be leaders. They needed to humbly learn from Jesus. Through much divine discipline, they would become like him. When we follow Jesus to the end, not giving up, receiving all of his training, we will become like Jesus. We will love our enemies, like Jesus did.

Fourth, good fruit comes from a good heart (43-45).

Look at verses 43-45. "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks." Jesus did not focus his effort on improving his disciples' appearances or their table manners. Jesus wanted to transform their inner men. Jesus wanted to transform their hearts into good hearts. It is because good fruit comes from a good heart. There is no substitute for a good heart. Love does not come out of a hateful heart. Joy does not come out of a bitter heart. Peace does not come out of a vengeful heart. What Jesus' disciples, then and now, need most is a good heart.

Jesus helped them with his word. After three years together, Jesus told them, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (Jn 15:3). He also prayed for them, "Sanctify them by the truth, your word is truth" (Jn 17:17). When we study the word of God with sincere repentance, the word of God purifies our hearts and creates in us a clean heart. This is most important for Jesus' disciples.

Fifth, build a solid life foundation on Jesus' words (46-49).

There were a lot of people hanging around Jesus who called him, "Lord, Lord," but did not do what he said. To Jesus it was nonsense. He really wanted them to obey his words as of first importance. Look at verses 47-48. "I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built." The disciples heard Jesus' words, "Love your enemies," "Do not judge," and "Good fruit comes from a good heart." But hearing was not enough. They needed to practice these teachings in their daily lives. This requires a great effort, like that of a man digging down deep to lay a house foundation on rock. This teaches how much we must struggle to put Jesus' words into practice. In doing so, we build a solid life foundation on the Rock, Jesus Christ. When we have even one word of Jesus in our deep hearts, we can overcome the torrents of the world and render glory to God.

But those who hear Jesus' words and do not put them into practice are like those who build a house with no foundation. The moment the torrent strikes that house, it collapses and its destruction is complete (49). We must not only hear Jesus' words, but practice them.

Today we learned to love our enemies. May God help us put this word into practice and build our lives on the everlasting foundation, Jesus Christ. Then God will bless us abundantly and eternally.