

20. Jesus Taught that We Are to Love Our Enemies

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly understand the difference between those things which are just for this earth and those things which have eternal value. We saw that those who seek the things that have eternal value will experience eternal blessing. In contrast, we saw that those who seek the things that have earthly value will experience eternal judgment. In this topic, we are going to see that Jesus taught us about the way we should treat our enemies.

Luke 6:27-31 says, “‘But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold *your* tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask *them* back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.’” The law condemns while Jesus came to set us free. John 8:36 says, “‘Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.’” Then, Galatians 5:13 adds, “‘For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.’” In these verses, we see that Jesus tells all who follow Him how to show that love to our enemies.

First, Jesus said that we are to love our enemies. The word that is translated “love” in this verse is not the word for loving a family member. Instead, it is the word that is used in John 3:16 where we read, “‘For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’” Here, we see that we are to love our enemies with the same love with which God loves them. That means that we are to follow the example of Jesus and love others as He loved them. Jesus demonstrated that love when He spoke while on the cross regarding those who had condemned and crucified Him. Luke 23:34 says, “‘Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.’”

Second, Jesus said that we are to do good to those who hate us. The word translated “good” in this verse means *to speak well of or to do good to*. Jesus used this word when He said in Matthew 12:12, “‘Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’” Jesus makes it clear that we are to speak well or do good even to those who hate us. Third, Jesus said that we are to bless those who curse us. The word translated “curse” means to *pronounce a curse on a person*. People may do that to us. However, Romans 12:14 says, “‘Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.’” We are to return such curses with a blessing. 1 Peter 3:9 says, “‘Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.’” We are to pray that God will bring a blessing on such a person.

Fourth, Jesus said that when we are hit on one cheek, we are to turn the other cheek also. Here, we see that we are not to resist an evil person when that person makes a personal attack on us. We are to show the same attitude to the one who takes away our cloak. A cloak was like a shirt and a

tunic was like an undershirt. When someone takes our shirt, we are not to resist the person to try and keep our undershirt. We are to do the same when a person takes our money. When someone steals our goods, we are not to fight the person and try to demand those things back. We cannot change the actions of evil people. However, we can treat evil people in the way that we would like to be treated instead of treating them as they have just treated us.

Luke 6:32-36 says, “But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend *to those* from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” Here, we see that our actions as Christians are to be very different from those who are not Christians.

Even a very evil person loves his friends. A very evil person will do good to those who are his friends and practice evil with him. They also loan money to each other and expect to be repaid. As a result, we have not shown that we are different from those who reject Christ by just loving our friends. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God did not wait to show His love to us until we repented of our sins. Jesus did not wait to show His love until we followed Him. Instead, both the Father and Christ showed their love to us while we were still sinners. That is the same thing Jesus is telling us to do to those who are still following their evil ways. We are to show our love to others even when they are in total rebellion against God and may be persecuting us as a result.

That is why Jesus said that we are to love those who are our enemies. Various religions teach nonresistance. However, Jesus said the way to really fulfill the Word of God is to take the lead by showing love and kindness to those who are evil. Matthew 7:12 says, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Jesus said that we actually fulfill the Old Testament by taking positive action and treating people like we want to be treated. That is why Jesus said in Matthew 22:37-40, “Jesus said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is *the* first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” The parable of the Good Samaritan defines a neighbor as anyone in need and we see that we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We take the leadership in doing that by showing kindness to those who treat us as enemies and even those who do evil to us.

We are to show that kindness to our enemies by doing good to them. We are to give to them when we see that they have a need even though we know that we will probably never be repaid by the enemy. However, the Lord said that when we take the leadership by doing good to those who are evil, our eternal reward will be great. Since God has already shown that kind of love to every person in the world by sending Jesus to pay the penalty for their sins, we will be acting like the sons of the Most High because we are showing that same kindness to them. Many times, our

actions will draw them to Christ.

God is kind to both the unthankful and the evil. We are to be merciful to those who are evil just as the Father is merciful to them. This form of the word translated “merciful” is used only one other place in the New Testament. James 5:11 says, “Indeed we count them blessed who endure. You have heard of the perseverance of Job and seen the end *intended by* the Lord--that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful.” In this verse, we are reminded that the Lord is very compassionate and merciful. We are to have this same mercy even to those who treat us as enemies.

Luke 6:37-38 says, “Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” Here, we see four things that we are to avoid or to do to show the love of God to our enemies.

First, we are to avoid judging our enemies. The word translated “judge” *means to separate, to give a negative opinion or to pronounce judgment*. James 4:11-12 says, “Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?” We are to leave all judgment to the Lord.

Second, we are to avoid condemning another. The word translated “condemn” *means to pronounce a person guilty*. The Lord is the One who is the Righteous Judge.

Third, we are to forgive our enemies. The word translated “forgive and forgiven” in this verse *means to release or to set free*. If we forgive those who sin against us day by day, we will experience the peace of God because we will have a clear conscience. Luke 13:12-13 says, “But when Jesus saw her, He called *her to Him* and said to her, ‘Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity.’ And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.” In these verses, the word is translated “loosed”.

Fourth, we are told to give to our enemies. The word translated “give and given” in this verse *means to bestow a gift or to give someone something that will benefit the other person*. We see that the Lord will greatly bless us when we have a generous spirit even to those who treat us as enemies. The Jews wore long robes. When someone gave a person grain, the person would take off this robe and the grain would be poured onto the robe. Here, Jesus said that when we give to our enemies, He will cause others to give us so much that it will overflow the robe. Jesus said that we will receive in the same way that we have given. Here, we see an important lesson that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example. We want to treat our enemies with the love of Jesus. When we show this kind of love to our enemies, the Lord will give us His peace and will use our actions to draw those enemies to Himself. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show the love of Jesus to all.