

Inspired to Love

Key Verse: *“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.”*
—**Luke 6:35**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 6:27-36

UNDER THE TYPICAL LAW

Covenant arrangement, it was God's purpose to deal with only one nation, Israel, using them as examples of blessings as well as of cursings. In so doing, God instructed his chosen people to destroy the enemies which they encountered as they laid claim to the land he had promised them through father Abraham. Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, recalled this former arrangement of God, saying, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” (Matt. 5:43) This phase of God's plan was now coming to an end, and Jesus was about to introduce a much higher law than that which Israel had been under for so many centuries.

In our lesson, we immediately see the much higher standard which should now govern the behavior of God's people, as we read, “I say unto you which hear, 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 cloak forbid not to take thy coat also. (Luke 6:27-29) Rather than hating or even destroying our enemies,

Jesus says that we are to love them. He points out that this love should be to the extent that we are willing to suffer ridicule and persecution from our enemies without retaliation on our part. Jesus continues in verses 30 and 31 of our lesson by saying our love for others should be such that when we give to them, we hope for nothing in return. He emphasizes also what we commonly call the 'Golden Rule,' that we only do unto others as we would want them to do unto us.

Jesus points out the reasons for instituting this higher standard of God's law in this way, "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. (Luke 6:32-34) Love, for the Christian, must be shown not just to those who love us, or who agree with us, or who do good to us. It must be evidenced to all people with whom we have to do; otherwise we are no better than sinners who love other sinners.

The Key Verse shows us that loving our enemies is not to be done in mere words, but by actually doing good to them, without any desire for reciprocation or recognition. Those who do this are the ones whose 'reward shall be great,' and who will be associated with Jesus in his coming kingdom which will bless all the families of the earth. It is this godlike love—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16)—which the true Christian is to develop. God gave his Son to die for all, yes even the 'unthankful' and 'evil' of our Key Verse. Our lesson concludes with these admonishing words from Jesus, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:36) As God has been merciful and loving to us, and as Jesus has exemplified this same character, may we also be motivated to love all mankind and to do good to all with whom we have to do. ■