

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Content of Kingdom Love

Scripture: Luke 6:31-38

Code: 42-88

Just a couple of weeks ago, Patricia and I had the opportunity to be at a conference down in Arizona. Where I was speaking, at the time there was another speaker by the name of Steve Saint who gave an amazing testimony. My life with the Saint family goes way, way back to a time when I was a little boy. We were living in the city of Philadelphia and my father, at the time, was an evangelist traveling around the east coast preaching. The Saint family was in our church.

There was Old Man Saint, as he was known, who had a beard down to his waist. There was Mrs. Saint, who was sort of a Bohemian type person before, I guess, her time in our history here in America. They grew a lot of their own food outside a big home that looked like a barn, both outside and inside. He was an artist of world renown. He was the foremost stained glass maker in the world. In fact, the stained glass windows in the National Cathedral in Washington D.C., he made, and many others in cathedrals all over Europe.

Eccentric? Yes. Unique? Yes. But he had some remarkable children. He and Mrs. Saint had a son by the name of Sam. He became a pilot, a commercial pilot, who flew the maiden voyage of the 747 from New York to Los Angeles, inaugural voyage of that airplane. He was the number one pilot for American Airlines in those days. Another son, Phil Saint, an artist of some unique renown, went on in serving the Lord in ministry.

And then there was Nate Saint. He was a missionary to the Auca Indians, and I'm told that if you ever meet an Auca, don't call him an Auca. That's a word that means "naked savage." That's not really the name of the tribe, but that's what they're known as. And then there was a girl named Rachel Saint.

You know about Nate Saint if you remember the massacre of the five young missionaries in the jungles of Ecuador. Our family has been in Ecuador, Patricia and I have been in Ecuador, in the places where the Aucas lived and seen some of them. The story is one of the incredible stories of missionary sacrifice, of course, in the history of the church. It was a huge event because *Life* magazine put the massacre on its front cover in the 50s when it happened, and the world knows the story. It's rehearsed in a book called *Through Gates of Splendor* and other things that go back to that event.

What is remarkable about the event and what we were reminded of by Steve Saint as we listened to his testimony was that Steve was three years old when his father was killed, just a little boy. He and

his mother and the other wives were not in the jungle where the killing took place. They were somewhere else in contact with their husbands by radio. And, of course, when they lost radio contact, the story began to unfold.

Then the real story began after the death of those five missionaries, massacred at the hands of the Aucas, because the wives felt that they should take up the cause. Some of them went into the jungle along with Rachel Saint, the sister of Nate. They went into the jungle, began to evangelize, and God used them to win the tribe to Christ. Well that's 50-plus years ago and now that tribe is, for the most part, committed to Jesus Christ and they're busy evangelizing the rest of the tribes, planting churches.

It's a great story. It's a story of Christian love. It's a story of kingdom love. How do you love your husband's murderer? How do you love the murderer of your friends' husbands? How do you go in and put your life on the line? How do you love your brother's murderer, as Rachel did? It's an incredible story.

The latest update on the story is that Steve was saying, "That's many years ago now. I have a family of my own. One of my regrets," he said, "in raising my children was they never met their grandfather, my Dad, Nate. He was such a remarkable guy." He was killed, of course, when Steve was three, so obviously he barely knew him, but has filled up his life with the stories of those who did. He said, "I always felt bad that my children could never know my father." He said, "I have some memories of my father, and, of course, they could never have known him." And, of course, they didn't have a grandfather.

Well, as the Lord would have it, through the years Steve, who speaks the language very well, stayed in touch even though he came back to the United States and entered into business. It was a few years ago, however, that Rachel Saint died. She was still with the Auca, still, in a sense, the spiritual leader although she never preached a sermon because she didn't want them to get used to women preachers.

So from the very beginning, even though she was the only one that knew anything, she prepared all the sermons and taught them to a man who stood up and preached them, so that as they developed, they knew that God wanted men to be the preachers and that's how it is today in their churches. But Rachel went to be with the Lord, and so the tribe contacted Steve and said, "We want you to take her place."

So, he left his business, packed up his wife and children, and they moved to the jungle. No running water, no electricity, no nothing, living in a tribal environment. And he was just giving his testimony saying, "You know, he has wished that his children had a grandfather on his side that they never did have."

Well, as it turned out, they were down there for a year and a half or more, and they were down there just a few months, I guess, when the children adopted a grandfather, an old man in the tribe that everybody called "Grandfather," and they adopted him, I guess, because of his warmth, and his personality, and his charm, and he became their adopted grandfather. And the amazing part of the story is that he was the very man who killed their real grandfather. He has now become their adopted grandfather.

Recently the youngest boy in the Saint family graduated from high school. And Steve said to him, "What would you like as a present for graduation?" To which he replied, "I want you to bring Grandpa from the jungle to my graduation." That's not easy. These tribal people have no documentation. They have no passport. How do you get them out of there? You can't even identify them. But through some amazing circumstances, they brought him, and his grandfather attended his high school graduation - at least his adopted grandfather, who was the murderer of his real grandfather.

That's a story of kingdom love, isn't it? And it's been going on for 50 years in that family and other families who were affected by that massacre. One of the distinguishing marks, if not the singular distinguishing mark, of Christians is their love. It is the distinguishing mark of those in God's kingdom that they love in an unnatural way, they love in a preternatural way, they love in a supernatural way. And what that boils down to in one simple statement is they love their enemies. They love their enemies.

In fact, that is how Jesus separated true disciples from the rest, by kingdom love, the kind of love that loves enemies. Turn in your Bible to the 6th chapter of Luke. We're hearing Jesus speak here in this sermon He gave on the mountain. And He is speaking in verses 27 to 38 about this kingdom love. The sermon is really about discipleship. It's about who is a true disciple, who really is in the kingdom of God and who is not. And the distinguishing mark of the true disciple is the love of enemies. And that's how it begins in verse 27, "I say to you who hear, love your enemies." He repeats that in verse 35, "But love your enemies." This, then, is a section from 27 to 38 about loving your enemies as a distinguishing mark of being a Christian.

In fact, in verse 35 it says, "If you love your enemies, you will be sons of the Most High." In other words, you will manifestly be sons of the Most High. You will demonstrate that you are a son of the Most High if you love your enemies.

Matthew records this same sermon. In Matthew 5:43, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' I say love your enemies." Verse 45, "In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." In other words, it becomes manifest that you are God's when you love the way God loves and God loves His enemies.

Jesus went on to say, “He makes the sun fall on *those that are good* and *those that are evil*. He makes the rain come down on *those that are righteous* and *those that are wicked*.” God is by nature love, 1 John 4:8. “God is love.” And God loves enemies. I mean, that should be clear since all of us at one time were enemies of God. All of us as unregenerate sinners were enemies of God. And God loves a world of enemies.

“God so loved the world,” John 3:16 says. The apostle Paul talked about God’s love for mankind in Titus chapter 3. God loves enemies, and if we love enemies, then we are manifestly the sons of God.

Ephesians 4:32, Paul writes, “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us.” When you love your enemies, you’re like God. When you love your enemies and you give up your life for them, you’re like Christ.

This then, in the teaching of Jesus, becomes the distinguishing characteristic of kingdom people. This is how we manifest the transformation, regeneration, new birth, salvation; by an unnatural, supernatural love.

Now God, we know, loves the world. God loves mankind. It even says in the Mark 10:21 that when Jesus looked at the rich young ruler who rejected Him, it says, “Having looked at him, He loved him.” He loved a rebel. He loved a self-righteous, materialistic, non-repentant, unbelieving rebel. God loves in a general, indiscriminate, unconditional way, and this is a love of compassion that makes God weep, as Jeremiah 13 tells us; that makes Jesus weep, as Luke 19:41 says, “He looked over *Jerusalem* and He wept over the city.” It’s a love of compassion. God sees the sadness and the sorrow of that sinner’s condition and end, and it’s heart-breaking to Him.

It is also the love of warning. It is that love that makes Jesus say, “If you don’t repent, you’ll also perish.” It’s the love of goodness. Romans 2:4 talks about the patience and forbearance, endurance of God, who has every right to judge sinners on the spot, but doesn’t do that. Paul says, “Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness?” Then he goes on to talk about the kindness of God to lead you to repentance.

It’s the love of compassion. It’s the love of warning. It’s the love of kindness. It’s the love of invitation. “Come unto Me all who labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest.” “Go out into the highways and byways of the streets and bring everybody into the feast,” Matthew 22 says. Bring them all in. It’s that love of invitation.

God loves His enemies compassionately. He loves them kindly. He loves them with a warning. He loves them with an invitation. And if we, then, are the sons of God, we should love the way God loves.

If we possess the life of God in our souls, if we are partakers of the divine nature, then our love should transcend the love of humanity. And the definitive element of that is loving enemies. That's the singular way to define that love. It's not complex. Supernatural love transcends natural love because it loves enemies.

And we already saw in verses 27 and 28 the commands, or the actions, of that love. "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." The bottom line is these are all enemies. Your enemies are the ones who hate you, curse you, and mistreat you. Love them. Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them. Love speaks of your attitude towards them. Doing good speaks of your action toward them. Blessing speaks of your speech toward them, speak blessing into their lives. And prayer speaks of your appeal to God on their behalf. And these are actions we take toward our enemies that demonstrate that we belong to God.

We are then, in verse 27, those who hear. In other words, we're the ones who understand, who can take it in, who have the capacity to hear, because our ears have been opened by the transforming power of God. And so, kingdom love has certain actions. It loves. It does good. It blesses and it prays for enemies who hate, curse and mistreat. That's just not the way the world loves.

Not only are there actions of love, but there are reactions, and we saw those in verses 29 and 30, four of them, as well. "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, don't withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you and whoever takes away what is yours, don't demand it back."

First were the actions that love initiates, and now the reactions that love takes when evil is initiated. This, again, is transcendent. This is not how people are in the world. They don't have the capacity to love like this. They see it as weakness. So we've seen the actions of love and the reactions of love.

Let's come, then, this morning to the third point in Jesus little message on kingdom love, the principle of kingdom love. Here is the underlying ethic or principle. Verse 31, we know it as the golden rule, "And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way." Just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.

Frankly, that sums up the whole idea of loving your enemies. Don't treat them the way they're treating you. The world does that. The world of sinners treats people the way they treat them. You treat people the way you would like them to treat you. We assume they're not treating you that way. They are hating you. They are cursing you. They are mistreating you. They are hitting you on the cheek. They are taking things from you, stealing them, borrowing them. They're already your enemies. They're manifesting that in the way they treat you. This is all abuse, mistreatment.

So what do you do? Well, if you're a normal person, you give them back what they gave you: Vengeance, retaliation, hostility, vindictiveness. And Jesus says that's not the way you do it. Treat them the way you would like them to treat you, even though they're not treating you that way. That's the point. Treat them the way you would like them to treat you.

Now this golden rule is singularly Christian. I know you hear that this is a sort of a universal law of religion, but let me sort of sort that out a little bit for you. Every time you find something like the golden rule that appears in some religion or some philosophical system, it appears in a negative form. What I mean by that is it's don't treat people the way you don't want to be treated. It's a negative. It's reversed or lowered.

Let me give you illustrations. The most famous Jewish rabbi Hillel said, "What is hateful to yourself do not to someone else." What you don't like, don't do to someone else. The book of Tobit in the apocrypha says, "What you yourself hate to no man do." The Jewish scholars of Alexandria who translated the Septuagint advise, "As you wish that no evil befall you, but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle toward your subjects and offenders." Don't do them evil so they don't do you evil. Don't hurt them so they don't hurt you. That's the idea.

Even Confucius taught this same principle in a negative way. Confucius taught, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others." The ancient Greek King Nicocles wrote, "Do not do to others the things which make you angry when you experience them at the hands of others." The Greek philosopher Epictetus said, "What you avoid suffering yourself, do not inflict on others." The Stoics said, "What you do not want to be done to you, do not do to anyone else."

And that's the way it goes in all the studies I've done. In every case, the emphasis is negative. Don't do to someone what you don't want them to do to you because there's a universal principle in life. Whatever you do to people, they will do back. You got that? That's how the world works. That's human life. Whatever you do to them, they're going to do back to you. So don't do what you don't want back.

Well, that's a nice thought. I'm not against that. But it sure falls far short of God's standard. Those expressions, however, go as far as sinful man can go, because sinful man is consumed with self protection, self love. I don't want to harm somebody because he might harm me. That's not a golden rule, that's utilitarian, that's self protective. Christian love is the positive rule that says, "You may be harming me, but I'm not going to give you back what you're giving me. I'm going to love you in the way that I would like you to love me." This is something unique.

You see, selfishness acts to prevent its own harm. Selfishness acts to insure its own welfare. But that's not kingdom love. The world's negative version of this principle is the supreme human ethic. And if you hurt me, I will hurt you. And that's the noble virtue of vengeance. But what our Lord is

saying is, “When they mistreat you, when they hate you, when they abuse you, when they hit you, when they take what you have, don’t give them back what they gave you, give them what you wish they’d give you.” And you know what? If you do it consistently enough, eventually they will. And I’ll show you that in the text.

This is the principle underlying the command. You treat them not the way they’re treating you. You treat them not in a negative sense to prevent them from hurting you, but you treat them in a positive way, the way you would like them to treat you. No matter what they’re doing to you, you don’t take vengeance, you don’t take retaliation as your own personal right, because you are demonstrating a transcendent love. This is the way God loves. God loves His enemies. And only as a last resort does He enact His divine and just vengeance. In the meantime, He loves with compassion, with warning, with kindness, and goodness, and invitation.

Now let’s look a little deeper. We’ve seen the actions, reactions, the principle. Let’s look, fourthly, at the essence of this kingdom love. We’re going to get a definition here by contrast. Verses 32 to 34. “If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*.”

Now, there are just a couple of key things here that I want you to notice. First the word “sinner.” Sinner is a technical term for an unbeliever. It’s a technical term for somebody outside the kingdom, *hamartlos*. It’s a word referring to the wicked. It can refer to the wicked in general. When Paul says, “I am the chief of sinners,” he’s using the term to define all sinners. It can also be used to speak of people who are particularly and viciously wicked. But it is used both in the Old Testament and the New Testament to define people outside the kingdom, unsaved, unregenerate people, people who don’t belong to God.

Now, sinners have a certain kind of love, and here it’s laid out. Sinners, verse 32, love those who love them. Sinners, verse 33, do good to those who do good to them. Sinners, verse 34, lend to sinners in order to receive back the same - not the same amount, that’s added, I don’t know why they added that - but they lend in order that they might receive back. Sinners have a certain kind of reciprocal love. They love the people that love them. They do good to the people that do good to them. And they lend to the people who can lend to them. They never get beyond that. They never get beyond giving back exactly what they get.

But the kind of love that we’re talking about is very different than that. In fact, “if you love,” verse 32 says, “those who love you, what credit is that to you?” That’s the way sinners love. And “if you do good only to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? And if you lend to those who from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?” What credit is what *charis*, it’s the word for

grace. What favor does that bestow upon you? What grace do you demonstrate when you love like sinners love? How does that bring any favor on you? How does that convince anybody that you are God's, that you are a kingdom person, that you've been regenerated and transformed, you're a new creation? That isn't going to convince anybody of that. That's the way sinners love.

To love like sinners love is no gospel witness. We're talking here, by the way, about evangelistic loving, about loving people in a way that lays down a foundation to make the gospel testimony believable. You say you're transformed. I see it because I can't ever experience the kind of love you have. I don't see that. That's not normal. No. It's supernatural. "The love of God has been shed abroad in your hearts," Romans 5:5. "And it's by your love that all men will know you're My disciples," John 13:34-35. To love the way sinners love, that's no test of anything and that's no proof of anything.

And He uses three illustrations. If you love those who love you, so what? Matthew 5 says, "What reward do you have? Even tax collectors do that?" And they were the lowest people, obviously, on the ladder of the despicable. They were at the bottom. They were the scum of society. They were the most unethical people in Israel, who bought Roman tax franchises and extorted taxes from the Jews on behalf of a pagan, idolatrous, oppressing, occupying, conquering nation. A tax collector was despicable, a traitor. Even they operate on this ethic. They love those who love them. So what grace is that? So what favor is that? Sinners do that, tax collectors.

And if you do good for those who do good for you - second illustration - that's a self-serving relationship. Everybody does that. Your goodness is limited to another's goodness. And when someone does evil, then you don't have to do good back, you can do evil back, and get your vengeance, and wreak your havoc. What credit is that to you? None, absolutely none. Sinners do that.

And if you lend to those whom you expect to receive, what favor is that? What does that mean? It's not - that's why I said I don't know why they put the word "amount" in there. He's not talking about lending to someone who will never pay you back. He's talking about lending to someone with the expectation that you are obligating that person to loan to you when you need it. In other words, the sinner lends to obligate. "Sure, I'll be glad to give you that. But just remember, I gave you that when you needed it, and there may come a time I'll be back."

So that even his lending, not with the idea that the guy is going to pay you back, that's a given. Everybody should pay back their debts. Even Romans 13 says, "Owe no man anything. Pay your debts." But the idea is you lend to obligate. You love because you're loved. You do good because good is done to you. And you lend because you want to obligate the guy when you have a need to give you the money. It's all self serving, self aggrandizing. It's just not kingdom love. And if you love like that, He says, so what favor does that bring? What testimony is that to the power of God in your life?

And that brings us, fifthly, to the benefits of kingdom love. Now remember, we're talking here about evangelistic loving, and the benefits, then, are evangelistic. And verse 35 repeats again this command, "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend." The very three things He mentions in 32, 33 and 34. He picks them up. Okay, you've just seen, you are to love your enemies, you are to do good and lend, "But you expect nothing in return."

You don't expect love back from your enemy, you don't expect good back from your enemy, and you don't expect your enemy to lend to you, either. You don't expect anything in return. You're simply treating them the way you would like to be treated but you don't expect anything, and you don't have to have anything.

This is not natural. This is not normal. This is not human. But if you do it, verse 35 says, "Your reward will be great." What's that? Is that your eternal reward? No. He mentioned eternal reward back in verse 23. The reward we're going to receive in heaven for suffering persecution - there will be a heavenly reward. But this is in the world of men. You're loving sinners the way sinners are not used to being loved. You're loving those who don't love you. You're loving those who don't do good to you. You're loving those who don't lend to you, and you're asking no love, no goodness, and no loan back. This is unconditional, free, transcendent love. You're just loving them the way they ought to love you, even though they don't. You're showing them a love that they can't experience, doesn't belong to their world, and your reward will be great.

What will be your reward? Follow along in verse 35. "And you will be sons of the Most High." What do you mean? Well, the people are going to conclude you're a son of God. You will manifestly be in their eyes. He's not talking about what God is going to give you. He's talking about what men are going to think. They're going to say, "He's very much like God." Why? "For he himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*."

The kindness of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God, the mercy, tenderness, compassion of God is all through the Old Testament. You live like this, the Jews who know the Old Testament, they're going to know you're manifesting the kind of love that was true of God. God is kind, kind even to ungrateful and evil men. As I said earlier, that's the only kind of people there are. We're all in the category of ungrateful, Romans 1:24. We're all in the category of evil, Romans 3:10 and following. We're all wicked. We're all thankless. We're the only people there are to love, and God loves us and is kind. It's the kindness, again, of compassion. It's the kindness of warning. It's the kindness of invitation. It's the kindness of goodness. And when you do that, people are going to make the connection, like Ephesians 5:1, "Walk in love even as your Father loves, and as Jesus loved and gave His life."

So this is the way we manifest our sonship. No, He's not talking again about divine and eternal blessing, but that will be true, for you to live like this as an act of obedience. For you to live like this, then, will be rewarded in eternity. But that's not the point here. And you'll see that in a moment.

Further, in verse 36 Jesus added, "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." What you're trying to do, in the words of Paul, is to adorn the doctrine of God. What you're trying to do is manifest your sonship, to demonstrate that the life of God is in your soul, that the divine nature is there in you, that the Spirit of God dwells with you, that you are supernatural in your ability to love. And people will say, "He's a son of the Most High."

"Most High," by the way, we've already discussed that title for God. It's a New Testament equivalent to the Hebrew El Elyon, God Most High, used many, many times. First of all, in Genesis 14, it's used four times and then El Elyon goes all through the Old Testament referring to God as the sovereign. "Most High" means "You're the sovereign ruler. You're the ultimate one." Here in the Greek *hupsistos* is "sovereign, the ultimate, supreme ruler." It can refer none other than God Himself. And by the way, Christ is called the "Son of the Most High" in Luke 1:32 and 1:76 and that's where we considered that term in more detail.

So, as Christ manifested that He was God's Son by His loving His enemies, so you can manifest that you, too, are a son of God, a child of God - not God incarnate like Christ, but nonetheless a child of God - who loves the way God loves.

God is kind and God is merciful, kind in verse 35, merciful in verse 36. One is positive. Kind is positive. Merciful is negative. Kind means "I give you what you don't deserve." Merciful means "I withhold what you do." The active love of God is kind. He makes the sun rise on the just and the unjust. He makes the rain fall on them. That's kindness. He's kind toward them with His compassion, His goodness, His patience, forbearance, His invitations. And there's a passive kind of kindness. He's passive in the sense of His mercy. He withholds judgment. He withholds condemnation. He withholds damnation.

As we've been saying, along with this disaster, 6,000 or so people being killed on one day is primarily a demonstration of God's kindness. All sinners deserve to die. Only some do, the rest live. The real question is not why did those people die, but why does anybody live? The real question is not why do bad things happen to good people? The real question is why do good things happen to bad people? Because there are no good people.

The reason good things keep happening to bad people is because God is positively kind and merciful. He gives and He withholds. He gives kindness and blessing, and withholds judgment out of His own compassionate heart. And you see that, even the Old Testament, Exodus 34, God is merciful, showing mercy to thousands. He's compassionate. He's kind. The prophet Joel talks about that. The

prophet Jonah saw the kindness and mercy of God toward Nineveh and it irritated him. God has pity over sinners. He grieves over them. He's kind, merciful to them.

So when you are kind, positive good toward your enemies, and merciful, withholding judgment, you are like God. Therefore you are manifestly sons of the Most High. You manifestly are giving evidence that God is your Father. So until the final day when God's judgment does fall on everybody, God Himself is kind and God Himself is merciful. That's His nature. And if you bear His nature and His name, that is how you need to be, as well.

Now He closes in verses 37 and 38 with 4 final commands that lead to the goal of kingdom love, the goal of kingdom love. Nobody is going to get saved by being loved, but the platform will be created in which a relationship can exist to make the gospel believable. Notice how this unfolds.

Four commands that become the goal. "Do not judge and you will not be judged." Now the objective here is to not be judged. "Do not condemn, you will not be condemned. Pardon, you'll be pardoned. Give, it will be given to you." We'll stop at that point.

Four simple things. Don't judge. Don't condemn. Those are negatives. Positively, pardon and give. To whom? To your enemies, to your enemies, to the enemies of the gospel, to the enemies of the cross, to the enemies of Christ. Do not judge them. You say, "Well, wait a minute. Are you saying we shouldn't evaluate?" No, you should. Even in this same passage, verses 42 to 45, we're going to see that. We can assess their spiritual condition. This doesn't forbid law, government, justice, courts. It doesn't forbid discernment, conviction, rightly assessing someone, and confronting their sin. It doesn't forbid that. What it forbids is some kind of harsh, hard, critical, compassionless hostility to enemies.

We've already had a pretty good hint at this when back in verse 28 it says, "Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." That's the idea. That's the idea. Don't become their judge. Don't pronounce judgment on them. Speak blessing into their lives. Don't pass sentence on them. Love them mercifully. Love them kindly.

And the reward for that? You will not be judged by them, because sinners will give you back what you give them, and if you're not judgmental, and harsh, and cold, and condemning, they'll see that and they'll treat you that way because that's how sinners do. They love who they love because they love them. They're good to those who do good to them. They lend to those who lend to them. That's how it works in the world.

So if you, in the midst of being persecuted, and mistreated, and hated, and cursed, will not be their judges, but will love them with kindness, and mercy, and compassion, and goodness, and invitation the way God loves sinners, then what will happen is they will not judge you. They'll ease up on you. You don't want to do something that's going to shut the door of evangelism.

And then He goes a step further, really a synonym, maybe taking it to the end, "Don't condemn others." This would be the final sentence. You don't have the right to fix their damnation, to establish their condemnation. Don't put yourself in the place of the judge. Don't put yourself in the place of the executioner. This can happen. It certainly can happen in our society where Christians feel that their country is going down the proverbial sewer morally, and all of a sudden we identify the people who are leading this parade as the enemy, and we pronounce and pontificate damnation upon their heads.

These are sinful people who do what they do because that's all they've got to work with. That's why Titus reminds us, and it's a very important reminder, "We were once foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in evil and envy, hateful, hating one another. And the only reason we're not that way is because the kindness of God, our Savior, and His love for mankind appeared and we were saved."

They're just acting like unsaved people. You don't need to be their judge and executioner. You need to be their lover. They need your kindness and your mercy, no matter how hostile they may be. When you don't judge them and you don't condemn them, they won't judge you and condemn you. He says, "This is the reciprocation. This is the way people work. Eventually you'll soften down their hostility."

And then on the positive side, verse 37, He says, "Pardon them, forgive them." That's divine, isn't it? You're never more like God than when you forgive somebody. That's what He does. Forgive them. Hold no grudge. Hold no bitterness. If you're merciful like God, if you're kind like God, and compassionate, tender-hearted, forgiving, you are manifestly Godlike. You're a child of God. You're different. They don't understand this. You don't sit in judgment on them. You don't condemn them. You forgive them.

Like Jesus, "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they do." Like Stephen, "Lay not this sin to their charge." Like Stephen Saint, who has brought his father's murderer into his family to take his father's place as grandfather to his own children. This is kingdom love.

And in verse 38 He says, "Give," and you know what will happen? As you give, and give, and give, and give, it will be given to you. It will be given to you. Because that's how people are. As you give in common grace, as you give in mercy, as you give in kindness to sinners, sure God will bless you, that's not the point. Look at this, good measure. "It will be given to you good measure-pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap."

And that "they" is the interpretive principle for the whole section, "they." It's the people you do this to. They're going to return it back. You don't judge them, they won't judge you. You don't condemn them, they won't condemn you. And if you forgive them, they will tend to forgive you. And if you give to them, they will tend to give to you. That's how the world works. That's the common human way to

love. But for us, it has to start with loving those who hate us before they can be transformed into this.

If you are merciful, and kind, and non-critical, and non-condemning, and non-judgmental, if you are generous, and giving to sinners, holding no grudge, then they'll treat you that way because that's how they work. And the hard thing for them to understand will be, "How can he or she treat me that way when I treated him or her the way I did?" They're going to see your good works and glorify - whom? - your Father who is in heaven, Matthew 5:16.

And it's going to be generous. Look at verse 38. "They're going to give to you good measure-pressed down, shaken together and running over." That's a very vivid picture. Jeremias writing on the history of Jerusalem has a little paragraph that explains this. "The measuring of corn is a process which is carried out according to an established pattern in Israel. The seller crouches on the ground, puts his legs around a huge basket.

"First of all, he fills the measure three-quarters full, and then gives the basket a rotating shake to make the grain settle, and settle, and settle, and settle." You know how important that is. That's like when you bring the cookies home that filled the box and by the time they get home they're all in the bottom and the rest is air. That's to prevent this.

"Once the rotary motion is done with the three-quarter filled basket, it all settles and settles, and all the little grain find all the space and fill it up, fill it up, and it's solid packed, then he fills the rest to the very top. And once it's filled to the very top flat, it's given another shake, and another shake. Then he presses the corn together strongly with both hands, pushing, and pushing, and pushing it down. Finally, he piles it into a cone with a point in the middle," writes Jeremias, "tapping it carefully to press the grains together. From time to time bores a hole in the cone and pours more in, and pours more in, and pours more in, and pours more in, until the cone gets to the very place where it doesn't run down anymore. That's a full measure."

And Jesus said, "If you love people like this, they'll love you back like that." You can actually be loved by sinners. Christians need a good dose of this, don't they? We live in a time when Christians are making enemies out of the mission field. Wouldn't you like sinners to do that? You love them. Love your persecutors. Love sinners and they will love you back the way you love them. That's how sinners love. They love those who love them. They do good to those who do good to them. They lend to those who lend to them. That's the way they work. The problem is, that's all they can do. But you can love your enemies and benefit.

And what is the goal? The goal, then, would be to have sinners not judge you, not condemn you, forgive you for the offense against them, and be generous with you. If that's the case, that would indicate that they have accepted you, and you now have an opportunity to proclaim to them - what? - the gospel.

So take advantage of sinners' limitations. They can't love their enemies, but you can. They do love those who love them, they do give to those who give to them, and they do good to those who do good to them. You do that when they are enemies, and you will lay down a testimony that you are not like them, but you are like God, who loves His enemies compassionately, kindly, mercifully, invitingly, and that becomes the basis of your witness. This is what marks a true disciple.

Our Father, we thank You for the practicality of this Word to us. We thank You for the anticipation that we can love our enemies and validate our citizenship, and then call them to their best and highest, and yet enable them to see the difference that You have wrought in our lives. Give us that fullness of kingdom love, and may people see that love and know it comes alone from You, and gives evidence of the transformation and has been made in our hearts through Christ. These things we ask for His glory. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).