

The Law of Love
Gospel According to Luke
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If you will, look with me in your Bibles to Luke chapter 6 as we continue our study here in the Gospel according to Luke. We're going to read from verse 27 down to verse 38 and I've entitled this message "The Law of Love." That sounds perhaps like an oxymoron because if there's love, why do you need law? And yet that's just how it's set forth in Scripture, the law of love. But let's read this in verse 27,

27 "But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies."

And the reason I say it's a law is because that word is an imperative in the original; it's a command, it's not an option.

"Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, 28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. 29 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. 30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. 31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. 32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. 33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. 34 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."

Here's the second time it's stated, verse 35,

35 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. 36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. 37 Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: 38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men

give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

So how are you feeling about yourself right now after reading what Christ describes as true love? I'd like to hear a few testimonies if there's anybody here that would like to say, "I've loved in that manner." I think all of us would have to bow our heads in shame and say before a holy and sovereign God if this is the basis upon which God should judge me, he'd have to split hell wide open and cast me into hell. But this is the reason the Lord did it. I don't believe you find anywhere in Scripture where it is stated that God established his law as a means of salvation or as a means of sanctification. Where we find the Lord Jesus Christ applying the law and bearing down and describing it as it is, is when he is in front of some rebels who think themselves someone and I can't tell you how many messages I've heard preached over the years from courses like this where the preacher is up there acting as if he's the standard. "Do you want to know what love is? Look at me. Look at my family. Look how I do it. And everybody ought to shape up and let's leave here today with a list." Well, I can tell you, you can list as much as you want to but just in what I've read, I will tell you our mouths are stopped. That's why the law was given. It wasn't given to make anybody feel better about themselves but it's like the light that you shine in that dark place is to reveal exactly where the problem is and I will tell you, our problem is that we don't love. I will tell you that our depraved nature is such that it reflects that just in this simple truth that we are unlovable creatures. We're hateful. We're rebels. And what God judges, based even on that, he'd have to condemn us.

But I'll tell you where that love is. When Bob was reading 1 Corinthians 13 a little while ago, I don't know where your mind was but mine was on: this is the love of Christ that's being described. If you want a standard, if you want to see just how God has loved sinners such as we are, I will tell you in this portion of Scripture, this law of love, Christ fulfilled. All the while, these Pharisees were attacking him, his person, his character, why? Because he didn't give credence to their interpretations of the law. They boasted like many do today. They truly believed that they are making a good effort in keeping God's law but that just shows their blindness all the more.

So as this portion opens up here in verse 27 where the Lord says, "But I say unto you." When you see "But" it's in contrast and what is it in contrast to? Verse 26, "Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." These religious leaders of the day had set themselves up as standards and they tried to live and walk in such a way with an eye to men so that men would always speak well of them but the Lord said of them, "You're like whited sepulchers. On the outside it's all white and pretty but inside it's full of dead's bones." And I would have to say that of every one of us sitting here. We look pretty good sitting here. We've just sung; we've prayed; we've got our Bibles in our hands. To the outward it looks pretty good but what of our nature? Our nature is as Paul described it there in Romans 3, the poison of asps is on our lips. This nature that we have is contrary to everything that God's law stands for.

I remember as the Lord began to open my eyes to that, the only reason I didn't see it was because I was blind but I'll tell you, when he begins to open your eyes to it, all of a

sudden reality hits home that, "I'm undone. Woe is me." It's kind of like a person going in to see the doctor and you don't feel any symptoms but he takes x-rays and he does all these tests and he calls you back in the office and sits you down and pulls out the thing and puts it up on the board and says, "See this? This is an invasive cancer and you've got six months to live, 12 months to live, a year and a half to live." Anybody who's been through that, I remember going through it with my dad. I mean, he did not look like he ought to be as sick as what the doctor was saying but as time went on, it became evident that he was. You see, that's the difference between the outward and the inward, what's going on in here.

And when the Lord said, "But I say unto you which hear," I believe this is a twofold admonition. He had in front of him these, in verse 26 where he said, "Woe unto you," the well doers, the ones that always liked that people speak well of them and outwardly very moral. You know, how many people have you been around and it's like, "Oo, I just about said something that I shouldn't have but I don't want to." They are the outwardly moral, they're conscious of what they say because they don't want people to think that they swear but just the fact that they thought it, what stops you? The very thought was already there in your heart and so if you think that just by not doing certain things or just by not saying certain things that somehow you're a cut above the rest, you deceive yourself and that's what the Lord is saying here. "I say unto you that here." He's talking about those that were in his hearing as he spoke. But also I believe he's referring to those of his own. "I say unto you which hear." In other words, the Lord is giving you a hearing and how do we know he's given us a hearing? Because if we at any time think ourselves somewhat before God, then hear what the law has to say. I'll tell you what, I've often said never get your head too far out of the foxhole because the enemy is real and it's the pride of this flesh, the rebellion that is in our hearts. Were God to judge of us based upon that, had we not an advocate, one who has fulfilled this law on our behalf, we'd be no better than the worst of the worst out there. In fact, we aren't; we are no better.

But here's the point: look in verse 27. Normally you expect to read there, "love your neighbor as yourself," as there is a part of that that says love your neighbor in the law but what does this say? "You think you're somebody? You think you've got a handle on love? Love your enemies. Let's see how you do with that." It doesn't say "love your neighbor." Well, a neighbor could be an enemy but whoever they are, here's the standard: "love your enemies, do good to them which hate you." Now, our Lord had just told his disciples there in verse 22, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake." In other words, over the Gospel. Why is it that we're meeting apart even here. Have you ever thought about that? There are a lot of church buildings, a lot of places of worship so called and here we are meeting in small numbers, isolated from the direction of the rest. Well, it's because the Lord has separated us out and, you know, hate doesn't necessarily mean that people are trying to kill you. It could be but hate could be defined as much as indifference. They are indifferent toward you because you're weird, you're different, you're a cult. These are terms that they might not say it to your face but you're going to hear them say behind your back. All of this is different levels of hatred over the Gospel, over the fact that, what? Well, as Christ said over here in

Matthew 5, in this very same context, Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

You know, there are times when the Lord will bring up a complete stranger into our midst and when they come in and sit down even as we had last week, I feel compelled, my desire is always to make the Gospel clear but even more so when it's a person that the Lord has brought this way and it may be the only opportunity they have to hear. I believe it's in that sense that Paul said he did not have the blood of any man on his hands. I don't want to be standing up here talking about tithing and witnessing and all this stuff when there's a lost soul in our midst. But what I've found and I get to see faces, some of you see the back of each other's head but I see faces: I see eyes light up; I see them come down; I seek greeting teeth. I see reaction and it's not that I'm trying to make people upset but this one truth right here is what will cause a person to fly out that door faster than anything else: when you give no credence to their words or to their righteousness and you preach only one righteousness, that which the Lord himself came, earned and established and imputed to that people that he has purposed to save. People get mad. In fact, if a person doesn't get mad, it probably means he hasn't heard anything.

But that's our point of rebellion and this is why we need to hear this. I'm bringing it back home now to us, to me, because as you go along under the message of grace, sometimes you feel, whether you admit it or not, "Hey, I'm progressing. I think I'm making some efforts here and progress." It might even be down to loving my enemy, that one that's opposed me. But I'll tell you that same venom is in any one of us because you get someone to poke you enough, you're going to want to take their head off. That's how you're going to react. We all do. I don't care whether it's in the workplace or whether it has to do in the context of a church, in the home. This is our nature. So I believe the Lord brings this home when he says, "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute and say all manner of evil against you for my name's sake." This is the cross that we bear. It's not Christ's cross but it's identification with his cross and that righteousness is uniquely and exclusively in what Christ worked out and not anything we do.

So come back here to Luke chapter 6 because I believe what the Lord is doing is saying to these that hated him, these enemies of his, that he is indeed the personification of love and I believe in every one of these we see the love of Christ for enemies such as we are. I mentioned this in our early time of worship as we were going through Psalm 102, that when it speaks in Scripture of Christ's enemies or those that have oppressed him, that was me if Christ paid my debt. That was you. My sins nailed him there and yet none of that deterred him from laying down his life. So when you want an example of what it is to love your enemies, I can't think of any better example than that of the Lord Jesus Christ himself and when you consider that, oh, what love, the wonder of love that he should love such as I am.

But here we see in these verses, first of all, the law stated and here stated against the habits of self-righteous sinners that we are by nature. We read it down here in verse 32 to 34, "If you think yourself somewhat, if you love them which love you," just think about right now your own social circles, who you invite over, who you don't, it's all in a small

environment, reciprocate, you know, let's get together. It's people that we get along with but if you do that, you're no different than the worst of the worst out there. He says in verse 32, "Sinners also love those who love them." Birds of a feather flock together. "Do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same." He's condemning any thought that, "Hey, I'm a loving person." Now, let's be honest: we all consider ourselves to be somewhat loving but we're not. We're hateful, that's why there are disputes; that's why there are arguments; that's why there are divisions; that's why there's all kinds of trouble. We try to cover it up, sugar-coat it and say, "Well, I don't really hate you." Yes you do. That's our nature. We're hateful. Not just with one another but God-haters by nature and therein you see where sin did abound, grace did much more abound. What it does is manifest even greater the grace of God. Why should he love a sinner such as I am?

But the Lord is going to meet us at our point of rebellion and this is it. You sum it all up and this is it and if you want to know how strong that word is in verse 27, it is the strongest form of love by which God, it says, "For God so loved the world," God in this manner loved the world, a world of sinners, "that he gave his only begotten Son." That's that word. The word means to be well-pleased with so instead of love just say that, "I say unto you which hear, be well-pleased with your enemies." How does that fit? "Be contented with your enemies." That doesn't even say "tolerate," but "I love them. I'm tolerating." Be contented. Be satisfied with. Now, this is the love of God when you consider how it was that he loved us. Full satisfaction. Your sin, my sin, does not in any way alter how he perceives me, such is his love. We don't even know in human terms how to describe that because we can feel pretty good even when we get up and, "I love you," and everybody is slap-happy until something happens and all of a sudden it's just the opposite, "I love you. I hate you." But not God. So again, Christ is describing here this very love that he has for his own for which he came into this world not to set aside the law but to fulfill it and that's what it was for him to love his enemies.

Now, when I mentioned that this is often the point of contention, look in Luke 18. This is the law stated. God doesn't lower his standard. This is what is required so we all get an F but how is it that he can be just and justified? How then can he receive sinners such as we are? Well, it takes one fulfilling it and that's what Christ did. But you can see an example of how this addresses men in their self-righteousness. In Luke 18:18, "A certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Well, the first thing the Lord said unto him, "Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God." So he was addressing already this man's hypocrisy because he was not approaching Christ as God. It's like people that don't get along with you but when you see them, they try to be friendly and flatter you. That's how he was addressing this man. "What you're saying, do you realize what it means to call me good? Master?" "Good" is the English word for "God." "Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God." So he's not saying that he's not God, he's just saying that, "If you call me good, you're acknowledging who I am. Did you know that?"

But then, you say, "Why did the Lord point him to the commandments?" Well, look at his question, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" If you want to inherit it, if

you want to somehow earn it, "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother." Now, any of us that the Spirit has taught, we know already we're disqualified. There may have been a day when it said "do not commit adultery" if we thought, "Well, I've never touched another man or woman then I haven't committed adultery," and yet the Lord said, "If the you think upon a woman to lust after her in your heart, you've committed adultery." It's not just the letter of the law, it's the spirit of the law. So as the Lord has taught us, I don't know about you but I can see in every way, do not kill because back in Matthew 5, the Lord said, "If you so much as tell somebody, Raca, thou fool, you're as much as a murderer." Do not steal. I remember that there was somebody that was filling out an application and trying to be honest and they asked him if he had ever stolen and he was trying to be honest and he figured at least they probably want an honest person working for them but that disqualified him because he had. He checked it yes. Well, we don't want you then. You see how men reason? Bear false witness. Any one of these, if the Lord has taught us, we raise our hand guilty. How do you plead? Guilty.

Look how he pled. Verse 21, "Not guilty." "He said, All these have I kept from my youth up." That's that blindness. That's that thinking that somehow I've got somewhat to commend me to God. Verse 22, "Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Now, what was the Lord doing? He was pointing out where this man thought that he was righteous based upon certain commandments, he was pointing out the heart of the matter. The reality is that this man was a rebel just like any of us are and in reality, despised the poor for these the poor were their enemies, the self-righteous. When it says rich young ruler, it must have been one of those Pharisees, scribes, religious lawyers, you know, that felt themselves to be righteous but they despised others. They saw them as their enemy standing in their way so the Lord touched the heart of the matter of his rebellion and it says there in verse 23, "When he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich." Now, I don't know but that word "sorrowful" is pretty powerful. Some think that perhaps this may have even been Saul of Tarsus, the young ruler, I don't know. But there is something about that word "sorrowful" that's powerful in that he didn't just go away mad, he didn't just go away upset but the Lord had brought his word home to his heart and may very well have been one of the Lord's all along for whom he would pay the debt and in time draw him but had to bring out his rebellion just like the Lord has graciously done for any one of us. I can't tell you there's no greater mercy than for God to get you to let go of anything that you think is good in yourself, just to open these hands and let it go because that's what he does when he points out what we are by nature.

You can see in verse 24, "When Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful." Who put the sorrow there? It was the Lord. It was his word. But he says this for those of us reading this and those around him, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" What is it that you confide in? It could be material riches but it could be also spiritual. What is the one thing like Paul said, "What I thought was gain, that I found was loss, was done, in exchange for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ." Do you see why I can't stand up here and preach standards as if, "If you just do this, then you'll be

this and this will be your progress and you can get a little gold star," like in school? No, we're nothing but the Lord has to bring us to that same sorrow that we ever confided in such poor rags. In fact, Scripture calls them filthy rags. I don't know about you but when I think back on the years, he let me go for a while and these were things I prided myself in, my upbringing and goody-two shoes and all this stuff but when it pleased God to reveal Christ to me, there is that casting it all aside.

He said, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." It's interesting even how commentators try to say, "Well, you know, he's not really saying that it's easier to go through a needle's eye. That's impossible." Well, obviously that's exactly what he's saying. They're trying to say that you've heard of little illustrations of when the city was shut up at night if a person was late and he had his camel and there was this real small opening that if the camel got down, you took the baggage off, the rider and the camel, everybody could eventually get through. That's not what the Lord is saying. He's not saying it's difficult, he says it's easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye. What is he saying? It's impossible than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. There again, rich how? If you want to look at it just physically, we're all relatively rich compared to the rest of the world sitting here right now but what is it that we're brought to lay aside, to let go? It's any thought of riches of our good works, any thought of goodness in ourselves. As long as a person is clinging to any thought of goodness in themselves, that shows to that point, they are shot out of the kingdom.

The disciples understood it, verse 26, how difficult is salvation? We live in a generation where preachers are just saying, "Come on. All you have to do is believe." "They that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And the Lord said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Now, how has God made salvation possible? It's impossible to man. Do you want to be judged by this law? Well, just start with this very first thing right here: love your enemies. Go and work on that all week and tell me how that goes, give me a call. You know, we fail from the beginning. Have you ever sat down at a test like that, it's a blank paper and you thought it was going to be multiple-choice and they said, "Just write down everything you learned in my class this semester," and it's like, oh boy. Well, the teacher is wanting to know and you're sitting there staring at a blank page doodling. You fail from the beginning. That's the way it is right here: love your enemies.

So that's the law that's stated but, again, it's given. Look over here in Romans 3. I heard this in a message years ago and it stuck with me because it really sums up: why was the law given? Look in Romans 3:19. It's just described here. Paul says in verse 9, "What then? are we better than they?" He's speaking of Jews. Talk about hating your enemies, these Jews looking down their nose at Gentiles and calling them dogs. Well, let's be honest, we're all prejudiced in some way. We look at somebody and we draw our conclusions already based on the outward, never thinking that that might be one of the Lord's. We pass by them all the time and just, "Get out of the way." I get to feeling that way when I go to the grocery store. I feel like I ought to be the only one there and I ought to be able to get my groceries in peace and you get these wild people with carts pushing

around and you're thinking, "What are you doing here?" Then you have to stop and think, "Well, what are you doing here?" But I'm just sharing with you that these are thoughts that come to mind. "Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." I would say, dear friends, it's the same thing. Here we see it under this message of grace, looking to a substitute, if God has given us eyes, but be careful of looking out there and thinking, "How could they ever attend that place? How could they ever sit there and listen to that?" And then you stop and think, for 30 some years that's where I was, but for God showing me mercy, opening my eyes.

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." That's why the Lord started with, "You think you're good? Love your enemies." "Their throat is an open sepulchre." Think of an open sepulcher. I mean, what that represents, it's dead, it's death. Then they say it's going to be cover-up with, "with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." Again, if the Lord has opened your eyes, you can see every one of those and say not simply that's what I was but that's what I am. It's like the teacher said, "Now, let me show you where you missed here," and the whole thing is red and checked, you know, the big F. It makes you mad, at least I put an effort in writing my name on it but it still doesn't matter, it's all wrong.

But we're brought to bow, to agree. You know, that's what confession is, it's agreeing with God as to who we are, that he brings us into agreement with himself and that's why the law was given, verse 19, not to try to measure up but, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith," I don't care whether it's the law of the Ten Commandments or the law here of love, love your enemies, "we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." Why? "That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." I mentioned earlier that someone preached three things about the law: it reveals God's holiness but secondly, it also reveals our sinfulness. The more that light shines, the more our mouth is stopped if we've been given eyes to see. But the third is that it points us to Christ and that's the part of this that I want you to see and it has taken all this time just on this first verse, but laying the foundation. We'll come back to it. How, in every one of these things where the Lord gave the commandment, he also is the fulfillment. There is not one jot or one tittle of the law that he did not fulfill and you know what that does for me? That causes me to rejoice in his great work. When you talk about substitution, there was an obedience not just in the letter of the law but in the spirit of the law where my heart condemns me but in Christ, there is no condemnation. I can't get a hold of that but that's the truth and that's why this is given. You think about what it is to bless those that curse you, that's how Christ fulfilled it and unto him that smiteth thee on one cheek, offer also the other. He went as a lamb to the slaughter and opened not his mouth. Think about how our Lord manifests in every aspect of his life, not just in the outward, but in the very spirit. He didn't react. But don't think

just in terms of those that were around him, again, think in terms of who it was he was representing because when they smote him, if he paid my sin debt, I was smiting him. When they raised their fist in his face, they were my representatives as much as Adam was. When they cried, "Crucify him!" I can't plead innocent just because I wasn't there. In reality I hope I was there, I hope it was for such as I that he paid that debt. That's my only hope, my only plea and that's yours, to be one of those enemies that he loved.

Over in Romans 5 and then we'll come back to this next time. If you want an example of this love, of what it is to love your enemies, Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time," in that appointed time, "Christ died," lay down his life, "for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." We hear examples of that, "Well, this man threw himself in harm's way to save this one and he did a good deed because this person was worth saving." That's the way men reason but there is none of us worth saving as far as goodness goes but what do we read? "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Not "might be saved." If Christ paid the debt, it was for enemies such as we are, sinners such as we are. Verse 10 says that, "For if, when we were enemies," there's the word, enemies, "we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." All of the glory belongs unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Such love. The true law of love, he alone has fulfilled it and I am thankful he did.