**The Gospel of Luke**

**Witness to the Gentiles - #15**

**The Centrality of Love**

**Luke 6:27-36**

**Luke 6:27-36 – Love Your Enemies**

***27****“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,* ***28****bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.* ***29****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.* ***30****Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.* ***31****And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.*

***32****“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.* ***33****And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.* ***34****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.* ***35****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.* ***36****Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

**Notes and Studies**

1. The teaching on love here is at the center. No one in Judaism put emphasis on Love more than Jesus.
2. Verses 27-36 are not really part of the old Greek Roman life; where there is hardly anything about loving enemies. Both the power of the Roman State and the image of the Good Roman Citizen did not include loving enemies.
3. Here love is the only mark of a disciple. Jesus makes the love a demand and in verse 35 literally he says on the contrary love your emeries. In Mathew the Law was opposed by Love. Here Luke addresses the Gentile life, where the Law was least known. That is why the saying “you have heard” – which is the Halakah, the Oral traditional understanding of the Law – was not in Luke.
4. The Greek word used in the Gospels for love has been always “Agape.. The other three words in Greek are:

a. Eros (***ἔρως*** érōs) means "love, mostly of the sexual passion. It can also apply to dating relationships as well as marriage

b. [Storge](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storge) (***στοργή*** storgē) means "love, affection" and especially of parents and children

c. [Philia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philia) (***φιλία*** philía) means "affectionate regard, friendship," usually "between equals.

1. The other three words for love were not used except the last one in the dialogue between our Lord and Peter, where Christ says to Peter, “Do you love me?” using agape: ***λέγει τῷ Σίμωνι Πέτρῳ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Σίμων [Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με πλέον τούτων; λέγει αὐτῷ· Ναί, κύριε, σὺ οἶδας***
2. Peter answered and used ***ὅτι φιλῶ σε. λέγει αὐτῷ***. *[Phileo is underlined]* Does this means that Peter changed his love from Agape to brotherly love? In fact, if we look at the NT itself, we can see from many references that brotherly love is much expected from all believers.
3. “Brotherly Love” – The Greek word “philadelphia” occurs in the NT in Romans 12:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Hebrews 13:1, 1 Peter 1:22, and 2 Peter 1:7. The common translation is “brotherly love” or “love of the brethren.” A weak translation is “brotherly kindness”.
4. In the NT Matthew 12 we hear from Jesus himself: *“****46*** *While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him.* ***47****Then one said to Him, “Look, Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with you.”****48*** *But He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?”* ***49****And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!* ***50****For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”* (Matt 12:46-50)
5. The Incarnation made Jesus the First Born of many brothers (Rom 8:29). It is through our union that the divine love moved us to this new relationship. Even to the extent that we are the “*body of Christ*”(1 Cor 12, Eph 3:17), “*rooted and grounded in love*” (Eph 3: 17, cf. Col 3:14 “*the bond of perfectness*”); hence the same term, ***Koinonia***, “communion,” is used for our participation in God through Christ (1 Cor 1:9, 2 Cor 6:14, 8:4, Phil 1:5, 3:10, 1 John 1:3, 6-7). The inseparableness of the two also finds expression in the figure of the family or household of God (Gal 6:10, Eph 2:19, 1 John 1:7, 2:9, 5:1)

**‘Love your enemy’**

1. This instruction/sentiment is totally unknown in the OT. We have the history of a nation that had to fight for its existence. The OT commandments are “corporate,” that is, for everyone. In the NT we must read the words of Jesus carefully, for Jesus’ words were not recorded in plural but in the second person singular imperative. The words are given as “principle” and not as “precept.” The whole teaching is about resisting evil.
2. Common sayings from Egypt are:

- “Love your enemy so that you learn his wisdom”

- “If you hate, you will not be able to fight because hatred is a rational blindness”

- “Respect your enemy, for respect is a fruit of love, and when you respect your enemy, you will be able to see his strength and his weakness.

1. Love can’t ever be a commandment because of two things:
   1. First, love has a twin called freedom, so any form of order will bind love to necessity and to a law that will cripple freedom and change love from a free movement to obligation.
   2. Second, love moves when there is generosity and goodness. These two, generosity and goodness, are integral to love and promote sharing and understanding. Our Lord did not command us to “renounce ourself and to carry our cross,” but said: *Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*” (Luke 9:23)

**Love is not an obligation**

Three facts have disappeared from the horizon:

1. First, love is natural to our life. Even evil parents can give good things to their children, and even tax collectors and prostitutes can love those who love them, (Please read again Luke 6:27-36).

2. Second, love which is in our nature has been rescued and given the strength and the power of the Holy Spirit:

***Romans 5******1*** *Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* ***2*** *through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.* ***3*** *And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,* ***4*** *and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,* ***5*** *and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”*

To be justified by grace and to have peace paves the way for the gift of the divine love. This love is unique to the children of God:

***1 John 3******1*** *See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* ***2*** *Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.* ***3*** *And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.”*

3. Third, we receive this love in Baptism and by participation in the Lord’s Supper. Although all churches have developed multiple attitudes to both Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, both are the gifts of the Love of our Triune God.

**Verse 27:**  *“…do good to those who hate you…”*

How can we free ourselves from a hatful and painful action that was deliberately done to us? If we reply or react in the same way by evil action(s), we enslave our being to the enemy.

**A Note from Philemon**

If we do good to an enemy, we free our heart from the hurt and the pain. We can’t deny the hurt or the pain, but when we react we allow the enemy to control our heart. We let the enemy sit inside us eating our life. But how do I do good? Look for his needs and see if you can meet one of them. This may change the enemy’s attitude toward you. Please note that evil reaction to an evil action creates two slaves.

Let the power of the crucified Love of Jesus go into your being. Learn how to surrender to his redeeming love to free yourself from anger and from retaliation.

**Verse 28:** *“…bless those who curse you…”*

Blessing instead of a curse is another way to freedom. Curse whoever curses you and by your action you have dug a source for anger into your heart. Those who have that source will never be at peace. Kill your anger by blessing those who oppose you. (Rom 12:14)

*“…Pray for those who mistreat you…”*

Or as in Matthew 5:44, “*those who persecute you*.” Paul exhorts us *“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.”* (Rom 12:14) Prayer is very often the only possible expression of true agape. When we pray we have to be like the heavenly Father who makes the sun shine on all and the rain fall on all, making no distinction between the good one and the evildoers.

**Turning the Other Cheek**

1. This is not a teaching for the timid or for shy, fearful persons, who take insults because of their “low self-esteem” who lack self-worth being loaded with “guilt.” It is true that guilt is an acute “self-hate.”
2. The timed and shy lack self-love. No one can face violence if self-love is lacking. On the other hand, narcissistic persons can become violent and erupt to violence unexpectedly.

**The Plight of Christians Living Among Violent Moslems**

1. Many Christians considered that Jesus here is giving a commandment that turning the “other cheek” is a necessity. It is for those who now have the courage to love, and not for the timed and the fearful for their life.

1. In the longest civil war of Lebanon in our modem history, Christians from many churches, not only the indigenous Christian Lebanese, had to fight for their survival. Lebanese Moslems denounced the Maronites\*, but there is a difference between national interest and the attack of individuals.

(\* The Eastern Catholic Church is in full communion with Rome. It traces its heritage back to the community founded by [Marun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marun), a 4th-century Syriac monk venerated as a saint. The first Maronite Patriarch, Saint John Maron, was elected in the late 7th century.)

1. The courage to love is that of those who have: Dignity, Honor, Honesty and are not Slaves to their needs.

**The Non Violence Teaching of Jesus:**

1. Its foundation is Jesus, the brother of all humans, because he is the Incarnate God, who is still Incarnate and has his “incarnate presence” in our violent universe.
2. Jesus died for all sinners.
3. Divine love is not only for Christians.

**Verse 29:** *“…Take your cloak from you … give your tunic too”*

The cloak is an outer garment. It could mean someone who is a thief, or someone who is in need (see Deut 24:10-17; Amos 2:8). The “tunic,” the ***chiton***, is the inner garment on the skin.

**Passive Resistance from the History of the Church**

Abba *Macarius* (4th century monk) said this about himself:

When I was young and was living in a cell in Egypt, they took me to make me a cleric in the village. Because I did not wish to receive this dignity, I fled to another place. Then a devout layman joined me; he sold my manual work for me and served me.

Now it happened that a virgin in the village, under the weight of temptation, committed sin. When she became pregnant, they asked her who was to blame. She said, "The anchorite." Then they came to seize me, led me to the village and hung pots black with soot and various other things round my neck and led me through the village in all directions, beating me and saying, "This monk has defiled our virgin, catch him, catch him” and they beat me almost to death.

Then one of the old men came and said: "What are you doing? How long will you go on beating this strange monk?" The man who served me was walking behind me, full of shame, for they covered him with insults too, saying, "Look at this anchorite, for whom you stood surety; what has he done?" The girl's parents said, "Do not let him go till he has given a pledge that he will keep her." I spoke to my servant and he vouched for me. Going to my cell, I gave him all the baskets I had, saying, "Sell them, and give my wife something to eat." Then I said to myself, "*Macarius*, you have found yourself a wife; you must work a little more in order to keep her."

So I worked night and day and sent my work to her. But when the time came for the wretch to give birth, she remained in labor many days without bringing forth, and they said to her, "What is the matter?" She said, "I know what it is, it is because I slandered the anchorite, and accused him unjustly; it is not he who is to blame, but such and such a young man."

Then the man who served me came to me full of joy saying, "The virgin could not give birth until she had said 'The anchorite had nothing to do with it, but I have lied about him.' The whole village wants to come here solemnly and do penance before you." But when I heard this, for fear people would disturb me, I got up and fled here to *Scetis*. That is the original reason why I came here.'

He came to his cell after walking in the desert. He saw two thieves loading his belongings on two camels. They were frightened by seeing him, and kicked the camels, but they refused to budge. Then Macarius went inside his cell and picked up a needle and said to the thieves, “you have forgotten this needle.” So Macarius took the needle and put it on one of the camels. Immediately they budged! The two thieves begged for forgiveness, and asked if they could stay with him to learn his way of life.

**Golden Rule of True Love**

**Verses 31-32:** *“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise …”* This is the application of “Love your neighbor as you love yourself” (Lev 19:18). Expressed in a negative way, Rabbi Hillel taught: What is hateful to you, do not do to another.” The positive words of Jesus express of the centrality of love. This must be read with the next verse, “*But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them*”. Credit is ***charis***, that is favor, or gain. This second part tells us:

1. If we love those who love us, then our love is not free; it is locked into the circle of needs.
2. If we love those who love us, our love is waiting for their love, so it will be conditional love, going up and down according to the successes or failures of the relationship
3. It is not a lasting love and is lacking the anointing of the Spirit who gives stability to love

**Be Like God the Most-high**

**Verses 33-36** *And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 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. 35 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. 36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful”*

1. These verses are unusual to both Jews and Gentiles; for God to be a model for our conduct is very strange. Just read them carefully.

2. To speak to day in any church that our love and behavior should be like God’s love and his treatment to humans is very rare.

**Note from Philemon**

“To be good and merciful like our heavenly Father and to treat our fellow humans as the Father treats them is not easy at all without the grace of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit alone can change our attitude to others, and change our will and convictions. When the divine love visits our heart, we become so free from all grudges and hidden feelings of old hurt will be healed.

***Pope’s Notes***

**Class Contacts**

George & May Bebawi Bob & Pam Walters

403 Shoemaker Dr. 12281 Blue Springs Lane

Carmel, IN 46032 Fishers, IN 46037

317-818-1487 317-694-4141 / 317-727-7917

*Audio at GeorgeBebawi.com* rlwcom@aol.com