

Message #25

Luke 6:27-36

What answer do you think we would get if we went out and asked people this question: When you get to heaven would you like to have great rewards waiting for you? Who here would not want to receive as **verse 35** says, “great reward in heaven”? Do you know anyone who would not want that?

What if there was a recipe that you could follow that would guarantee that you would have great rewards in heaven. Would you be willing to follow the recipe?

When Jesus Christ was on earth, He was being dogged by religious leaders comprised of Scribes and Pharisees, who wanted Him dead (Luke 6:7, 11). These Pharisees and Scribes presented a very strict, legal code of righteousness to the people and they told them that by following their system of religion they would end up with great honor in the Kingdom of God. These Pharisees and Scribes had convinced themselves that they were right with God, until Jesus came along and upset their little religious appletart.

If we want to have great reward in heaven, we will have to change the way we relate to people who are not following our little legal religious system. What Jesus says here is this:

THOSE WHO WANT GREAT REWARDS IN HEAVEN AND MANY BLESSINGS ON EARTH WILL REFLECT THE FACT THAT THEY ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN BY THE MERCIFUL WAY THEY RELATE TO THOSE WHO EVEN ARE ENEMIES.

Now you need to understand this in its context. According to the Judaism of the Pharisees and Scribes, they taught that people who agreed with them and believed like they did and had similar religious commitments to the law and men’s traditions were to be accepted. However, when Jesus came along and presented God’s truth contrary to them, they hated Him and wanted to kill Him.

The teaching that Christ presents here is radical. It went against all social, cultural and religious norms. Rome, which was the political power that dominated the world, taught that you destroy your enemies and make a public example of them. The Jewish religion taught you hate your enemies and do what you can to get rid of them and get even with them. Christ, on the other hand, comes along and says demonstrate God’s love, grace and mercy to them and do your best to minister to them. So this was radical stuff.

Furthermore, as we work our way through this context, if you are honest, you will admit I have not done this and I am not like this. So the only way I can ever expect to be greatly honored in heaven is if I have a relationship with one who did do this.

Now before we launch into this, I want to point out that any demonstration of God's grace is always in the context of truth. This instruction on grace comes in the context of Him pronouncing "woe" judgments on people (Luke 6:24-26). So grace does not eliminate truth. Furthermore, the difficulties are coming to one who is experiencing trouble "for the sake of the Son of Man" (**Luke 6:22**).

In Greek there is an article "the" before the noun enemies (**v. 27**), the ones who hate (**v. 27**), the ones who curse you (**v. 28**) and mistreat you (**v. 28**). What this grammatically says is these are specific enemies that we encounter because of our commitment to and defense of Jesus Christ. In other words, when we take a stand for Jesus Christ and the grace of God, we will face some enemies, especially those of the legal religious world.

This is not a command to some life of pacifism that does not defend your country or family. God is not saying if someone breaks into your home and is going to kill your family that you love them and make them coffee, have a word of prayer with them and pronounce blessings on them. In fact, later in this book Jesus will tell His own Apostles to buy a sword for self-defense (Luke 22:36).

What Jesus is teaching is that when you defend Me and My grace, you will come across people who oppose you and your message. When that happens, here is how you are to relate. You are to relate in a non-normal way. Now the ones who will take this in are the ones who "hear" (**v. 27**). There were many people around Christ, but few were truly right with Him. There are two main communication points that Christ presents here:

COMMUNICATION POINT #1 – Jesus Christ commands His disciples to demonstrate God's Grace to people. **6:27-31**

There are seven present tense imperative verbs in these verses that present seven commands which are to be continually applied to the lives of people wanting great reward in heaven:

Command #1 - The command to love. **6:27b**

The first thing we want to grammatically observe is that the verb "love" is an imperative in Greek, which means it is a command. What that means is that since it is a command, it has little to do with how you feel. Commands are to be obeyed regardless of feelings.

The particular word used for love is agape, that is the highest kind of love that is willing to go against emotional feelings in order to do the best possible good for someone.

This level of love is difficult to demonstrate even to those for whom we care deeply. Now the object of the love that brings great reward and blessing is "your enemies." The command is to specifically love "the enemies of you."

Now the noun “enemy” (εχθρος) refers to one who is hostile and hateful; one who is at enmity against you because of your commitment to Jesus Christ and defense of Jesus Christ (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 192).

Would this mean we are to love Satan, who is our enemy? Would God love Satan and demons? No. What this means is that I am to do my best to demonstrate the fact that I care about those who are at enmity with Jesus Christ and the grace gospel. We must attempt to present God’s grace and demonstrate God’s grace and communicate God’s grace to those who are in opposition to us. Specifically this would have to do with presenting the grace gospel in a world of religious works.

A couple of Biblical illustrations show how this might work. If we found an enemy’s ox or donkey wandering around, we are responsible to return it to the enemy (Ex. 23:4-5). If our enemy needed something to eat or drink, we should give it to them (Prov. 25:21).

That is our responsibility. We are to do our best to love our enemies whether personal, ecclesiastical or political.

Command #2 - The command to do good. **6:27c**

If we want great reward, we must seek to do good even to those who hate you. In the Dead Sea Scroll discovery in the Qumran caves, there were teachings on Judaism that were discovered. One of the teachings said you had the right to hate foes who opposed Judaism.

That verb “hate” (μισεω) refers to one who totally disregards us and is indifferent to us and our needs (*Ibid.*, p. 293). The specific contextual reason for the hatred is the defense of grace and Jesus Christ. We are to do our best to do good for those who hate us and our Savior.

We are to take concrete steps to actually do good for those who not only don’t like us, but even hate us. The idea that “if you don’t like me, I don’t like you” philosophy will not earn great rewards in heaven and it will not earn great blessings on earth.

Josh McDowell, who is an outstanding Christian apologist, once said that one of the reasons he came to Christ was because the more he made fun of and mocked Christians, he knew the better they treated him.

Command #3 - The command to bless. **6:28a**

The idea of blessing definitely carries with it the idea of offering prayer and praise unto God. The antithetic phrase “who curse you” seems to suggest that while a person is demeaning us and cursing us, we should pray and say favorable things both to the person and to God. The idea here is that we ask God to grant His favor and spiritual well-being on them.

For example, let's say someone speaks against you because you told them they needed to get a job and go to work. We may continue to pray that God will give them a good job.

We are to do with our speech the exact opposite of what others are doing with their speech - they curse us; we bless them. By the way, this does not mean we don't give harsh warnings. Jesus did that right in this text (Luke 6:24-26). Paul actually pronounced a curse on those who reject Christ (I Corinthians 16:22). But Paul also had a heart that presented grace.

Two remarkable illustrations of this occurred during two executions:

- 1) Jesus Christ, while hanging on a cross, prayed that His father would forgive them (Luke 23:3);
- 2) Steven, while being stoned, prayed the same thing for those stoning him (Acts 7:60).

In both cases, these men are being killed and yet they pray that God will forgive those who don't get it.

Command #4 - The command to pray. 6:28b

One of the greatest things we can do for someone is to pray for them. Jesus says that great rewarded disciples will pray for those who "mistreat" them. This means to pray for those who actually are abusive to us and spiteful against us.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest Biblical illustrations of a man who did this was Moses. Moses was constantly praying for people who wanted him dead and removed from leadership.

Every now and then some disgruntled person lashes out against me in some fashion. I know it is hard to believe because I am such a likeable guy. But it does happen. I have made it a habit when that happens to specifically go into the sanctuary and get down on my knees and pray for that person.

Now most times I pray that God will open their hardened heart and mind to the truth and bless them. Sometimes I pray their whole world will fall apart.

Paul did that. He prayed for people who had done him wrong. In fact, he wrote about them in Scripture. Sometimes he prayed some negative things and said some negative things (I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 4:10, 14-15). But there is no doubt that Paul spent time praying about enemies.

Command #5 - The command for non-retaliation. 6:29

What is described here is if someone hits you on the cheek, let him hit the other one. If one takes your outer coat or inner shirt, let him have it. Now what is discussed here is not some violent punch to the jaw, but an insulting slap to the face that was typically done in a synagogue as a sign of rejection and disgust. It typically was done with the back of the hand.

What is described here is not some teaching of total pacifistic response or non-resistance; rather it is a principle of not taking revenge on those who wrong us because of our stand for Jesus Christ.

There are times when we should defend ourselves and others. Jesus did not passively allow Himself to be thrown off a cliff (Luke 4:29-30), nor did He say nothing when He was struck on the face by the officers in the Temple (John 18:22-23). Paul also gave a verbal defense of himself in Philippi (Acts 16:37-40) and in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-23:5).

One of the things that speaks volumes is to say and do nothing. Someone lashes out against you or writes you or says something against you and you don't respond. It drives the enemies crazy.

Command #6 - The command for benevolence. **6:30**

The greatly rewarded disciple of Jesus Christ will have an open heart and open hand for those who have need. There will be, in the mind of a winning disciple, the attitude that says, "I do not help you because of what you can do for me or because of what I can get back from you." Many people operate by a "quid pro quo" (one thing in return for another) philosophy. We have come up with a new slogan "pay it forward." We do something nice for someone with the idea that they will do something nice for someone else in the future.

This misses the point of this. Jesus says you do something nice for someone with no expectation or consideration of anything in return.

Command #7 - The command for reciprocal treatment. **6:31**

It has been well observed that most people read this verse and view it as "negative reciprocity." "You don't do to others what you would not want done to you."

However, the command to the disciple is to do to and for others what we would want them to do to and for us. We are to treat others the way we would want to be treated. This has both positive and negative reciprocity implications.

This has often been called the "golden rule." The name "golden rule" is not found in the Bible. It is not known specifically when this principle was given the name "golden rule." Darrell Bock says it may be traced to the 18th century and even to the 16th century (*Luke 1:1-9:50*, p. 595). But no one knows for sure who it was that gave this command this title.

But the principle, regardless of what you call it, is one God honors. You treat others the same way you want them to treat you. In any context of life, this is a great Christological reciprocity principle.

COMMUNICATION POINT #2 – Jesus Christ gives reasons for His commands to demonstrate God’s grace to people. **6:32-36**

Now we will notice that the noun “sinners” is repeated four times in these verses 32, 33, 34, 34. In verses 32 and 33 an article “the” appears before the noun sinners. Jesus specifically has in His mind those religious, legalistic sinners who have not believed in Him. Their classification is that of a condemned sinner. Christ lays out at least four reasons why we should seek to relate to people with this “radical” demonstration of love:

Reason #1 - Because if we don’t we are no better than the sinners. **6:32-34**

The lost, unregenerate, godless world loves those who love them. The unbelieving religious world loves people who love them. They help those who help them. They say good things about those who say good things about them. No one needs a relationship with God to function like that. This is how most people operate.

Reason #2 - Because if we do we will receive great rewards. **6:35a**

One of the most important things to do is do things on earth that lay up treasures in heaven. Do good and lend to people and expect nothing back in return is a tremendous display of God’s grace.

One of the most amazing things I ever witnessed was a man who handed a man \$90,000 on a handshake. The man said do you want me to sign something and the man said no. Do you want any interest and the man said no. He said how long before you want this paid back. The man said pay me when you can, even if it takes 5-7-10 years. Well, the man paid him back in four years. I was flabbergasted to watch this and I tell you this, that man who was a believer has great rewards in heaven. He lent on a handshake without expecting anything.

Reason #3 - Because when we do we demonstrate our heavenly sonship. **6:35b**

When we purpose to operate like this, we truly show we are not of this world. Jesus says when we operate like this we actually show people we are sons of the Most High God. God grants amazing grace to us and when we demonstrate grace to others, we show we are His children.

Reason #4 - Because when we do we demonstrate God’s mercy. **6:36**

I just recently saw something about someone that made me angry. Then it dawned on me, I am so thankful that God was merciful to me when I was doing something similar.

The main flare of this word is to show passion and pity on those who don’t deserve it and cannot in and of themselves get it (*Ibid.*, p. 314).

Would we not all agree that God has been gracious and merciful and forgiving to us? Should we not demonstrate that grace and mercy to others?