

THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Lk. 10:25-37)

The Lord Jesus told this ‘parable’ to a lawyer who stood up and tried to “put Him to the test” (NASB), ²⁵ Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? This professional debater was not interested in the answer but was seeking an opportunity to catch Jesus out in front of the crowd. ... You see him standing in his ‘smugness’, ‘looking down his nose’ and trying to impress his friends! ... However, it was actually a good question but asked with a bad motive.

Jesus though answered with a question of His own, ²⁶ He said unto him, What is written in the law *of Moses?* how readest thou? ... You might have thought Jesus would have used this opportunity for the Gospel. Instead, He broached the conversation from another angle. As He looked at the lawyer, He knew what was in his heart, and He confronted him gently, but forcefully. ... While this lawyer wanted to ‘play’ with Jesus, Jesus was not interested in games for He did not come into this world to be frivolous! Jesus referred the lawyer to the Law, not because the Law saves (Gal. 2:16,21; 3:21), but because the Law defines we *need* to be saved! There can be no conversion without conviction, and the Law is what condemned sinners, **Rom. 3:20** by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for *by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Jesus was explaining to this lawyer how true faith is the consequence of obedience to God’s law. And to Jesus’ question, - What is written in the law? how readest thou? - the lawyer (who knew the Scriptures) quoted Dt. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18 *verbatim*, ²⁷ And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. Correct, said Jesus, ²⁸ Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

However, the lawyer wasn’t willing ‘to let it go’ for he had to justify himself in front of his fellow-professionals, and he *had* to make his point

that Jesus did not have much to say! ... Look at how *Doctor* Luke perceived the man, ²⁹ But he, *willing to justify himself* ... he wasn't going to be made to feel like a wee boy, so he arrogantly pushed the issue, *And who is my neighbour?* ... He was not prepared to let the words of Jesus rest on his soul, but he also didn't realise he was giving the Saviour the opportunity to teach a lesson that he, - the lawyer, - had never intended. In lawyer's language, he pushed Jesus, "Define your terms! What do you mean by 'neighbour'? Who is my 'neighbour'?" Once again, though, Jesus is in control! ... This clever lawyer did not realise Who he was addressing, - he did not grasp the fact he was standing at the bar in front of the Judge of all the earth ... and *Jesus was in control of this conversation!*

It was off-putting of Jesus to include *a Samaritan* in this story, - this would have surprised the lawyer. In the law courts, an Israelite would not be put to death for killing a Samaritan, for he was not considered a 'neighbour' ... and because of their vitriolic history, a Samaritan would not be mourned if an Israelite killed them! Jesus then took this opportunity to show the lawyer how the love and grace of God transcends all human barriers and rests upon those others reject.

By the way, I don't think this would have been a parable in the strictest sense because you could imagine the lawyer 'pulling Jesus up' if this story was mere conjecture. It had to have a good degree of accuracy in it. For Jesus to tell a story which made the Jews look bad and the Samaritans look good would be dangerous and self-defeating, especially in front of a lawyer. "You just made that up!" they would say, "We know nothing like that would ever happen!" So, it had to be realistic, otherwise the lawyer would have wriggled out of it again.

Let's look at it simply ... **The Man was AFFLICTED** There is an ancient road through the wilderness on the edge of a ravine which wends

its way from Jerusalem three thousand feet up down to Jericho, almost 750 feet below sea level. It was not a particularly long journey, - about sixteen miles, but on this journey the man almost lost his life.

It was most probably his own fellow-Jews who attacked him and left him for dead. It was totally indiscriminate, though for it could have been anybody. This poor Jew had business to do in Jericho, and he was out doing an honest day's work. ... It wasn't his fault those cruel and ruthless men set upon him! Even if they had only taken his money and his goods ... they did not need to leave him half-dead! They didn't even need to touch him, - ... take his money and that would have done! It is a picture, though, of how the world can leave a poor soul decimated ... unable to pick himself up and keep going. Indeed, man is man's worst enemy!

... If the evil in man's heart could be somehow eradicated, what a tremendous impact for good it would have upon this planet! It is sin which ruins people and leaves them in a state of hopeless defeat.

This man could do nothing for himself, - all he could do was lie there and wait to die. He could not dress his wounds or pull himself into a shelter from the sun ... Even if he had the strength to cry out, no one would have heard him!

However, the victim probably knew how dangerous this road was for it was renowned for its robberies and murders, - it was 'par for the course' if you decided to travel it. ... Doesn't it remind us of how foolish it is for the Christian to walk on ground he or she should not be on? Doesn't it remind us of the folly of disobeying the Word of God and becoming involved in things, - and going places, - we should avoid, and befriending those we should steer clear off!

Sometimes we ‘walk into trouble’ with our eyes fully open when really we should have been nowhere near it in the first place! How foolish would it be for a recovered alcoholic to spend his time in a public house, convincing himself he won’t take a drink, - it’s better to avoid the temptation ... and so it is also better for the believer to avoid places and activities they know they should not frequent. It’s courting danger, and this man’s predicament proves it!

Although we might be slow to admit it, there are times when we introduce ourselves to situations that has ‘*danger*’ written all over them! Why disobey God’s Word and think you can benefit? Why decide on some path through life that obviously is forbidden to believers and fool yourself into thinking you will be okay? God’s Word is our daily instruction to help us avoid the perils of life ... not walk into them, as this man did. ...

The man was AFFLICTED ...

The Man was AVOIDED Jesus mentioned two other men who came along that road, - He possibly could have mentioned more. The first man was one of his own, a fellow-Jew ... and the second man was also another Jew ... but both walked past as if he wasn’t there! They did not want to get involved! They didn’t want to fall into the same dilemma as the injured man. But you would have thought the calibre of these two men, - if they had a heart at all ..., - they would have stopped ... but no, they didn’t!

Both these men were well-used to helping others less fortunate ... but maybe they only did it when they had an audience, to receive the praise of men! This situation though, was too dangerous and besides, what could one person do on their own? They could hardly have carried the man ... Aye, but two of them could have! If one had waited for the other, they both could have carried him! But neither of them was prepared to ‘put themselves out’!

It wasn't chance, or luck, or coincidence brought these two men, it was the Lord. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without Him knowing about it, so this would not have happened without Him knowing about it. ... Both these men should have gone to the afflicted ... but they didn't. ... If the same emergency had happened in the centre of Jerusalem, they would have been the first on the scene, doing all they could for the man ... that they may be seen of men (Mt. 6:5).

But they weren't going to win any prizes on their own out in the wilderness, so why put yourself into unnecessary danger! If it has nothing to do with you, leave well alone! ... And the lawyer, - the one who questioned Jesus, - is now standing there quiet, constrained to listen ... what would *he* have done if it had been *him* travelling along that road and saw the man, ... what would *he* have done?

Sometimes as Christians we 'close our eyes' ... maybe when someone needs a listening ear ... maybe someone might be crying out in desperation, with no knowledge God loves them and He sent His Son to die for them. ... Lawyer, before you put yourself on a pedestal, search your own heart, for what would you have done for this man in such desperate need?!

Both the priest and the Levite worked in and around the temple. Both men had been near to God, but they weren't like Him. In fact, these two men were bound by their professions to help others, - it was part of their remit, - and they were *trained* better, but on this occasion their training was wasted.

What would have happened if someone had neglected our calls for help? What would have happened if Christ had not listened to us calling to Him for salvation? ... It doesn't bear thinking! Yes, these two men had

probably been working hard ... but there is no excuse to leave a bleeding man suffering. They had to get home before darkness fell ... but there is no excuse to leave a bleeding man dying. ... As far as the Law was concerned, this man was unclean, and it could have interfered with their duties in the temple ... Or, if the man had died and they were seen to be the last ones with him, they could have been accused of his murder ... There is no shortage of excuses when we look for them!

What must it have been like for the wounded man lying there? He would have heard the priest and the Levite coming and he would have hoped they would stop, kneel beside him, speak tenderly to him, and bring him solace ... but they didn't ... they just walked on!

Then, along came another man the lawyer who first asked Jesus the question would not have expected to have given the afflicted man a second glance. Yet, when the Samaritan came, we see ... **The Man was ATTENDED**

Even though it doesn't say so, it implies the afflicted man was a Jew, for he had *come from* Jerusalem ... he was different and foreign to the Samaritan. Yes, but he was a man, ... a wounded, bleeding, dying man. What difference does a label make, or a different language, or the colour of the skin? ... It probably would not have entered the Samaritan's mind, "If this was the other way round and it was me lying here, this Jew would help me". But the Samaritan, when he saw him had compassion on him, - a complete stranger in every sense of the word, - ... and he did for this poor man who had been afflicted something no one else was willing to do, and he climbed down from his beast ³⁴ And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, He went to him ... he came down to the man's level ... he used his own cloth, tore it and bandaged him. He used his own oil and wine, - which he would have bought in Jerusalem at his own expense, - and he brought comfort to the man the other two ignored.

Then he lifted him up, - imagine how difficult it would have been to lift this helpless man up onto the animal for the man had no strength of his own, - what a struggle it would have been! Imagine the dirt and the dust being transferred onto the Samaritan's stainless and unsoiled clothes ... the blood from the man's wounds covering the garments of the good Samaritan. He wasn't waiting for men's praise, or he wasn't helping the man for selfish reasons. ... The thieves could have come back and attacked him too, but he helped that man, and he brought him to an inn, stayed overnight with him, and left a sum of money to be increased on his return. ... That could have been me those wicked bandits attacked ... It could have been me, there go I but for the grace of God.

What did the Samaritan do for this man? He saved his life from certain death. We might never be called to confront such dire circumstances, but nevertheless we have responsibilities before God to others into whose path the Lord leads us. Do you notice how the Samaritan took care of him (v.34), and so he had the right to tell the innkeeper to take care of him too (v.35), - he didn't ask someone to do something he wasn't prepared to do himself.

I'm sure you see how this parable relates to the Lord Jesus and the sinner. ... How did the Lord Jesus find you and me? Spiritually, we were in a far worse condition than the victim those bandits assaulted. On an ordinary level, they were like vultures ... but that is how sin is ... picking away at us, and leaving us with no hope ... And then, 'out along the path in the wilderness', the Lord Jesus travelled from Heaven to find us, and He did all that was necessary for us to be saved. Tenderly and with compassion, He picked us up, and He attended to the wounds inflicted upon us by this evil sinful world. He poured upon us His 'oil and wine', - with His own precious blood He cleansed us. Like the Samaritan who lifted the man up unto his animal, the Lord Jesus came and lifted us up out of the 'horrible

pit, out of the miry clay' (Ps. 40:2) ... and He paid the price to purchase us, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine (Is. 43:1).

Unlike the Samaritan who had business travelling along that road, Jesus had no business coming into this world ... but He *made* it His business. Unlike the Samaritan who was not confronted by the thieves, Jesus faced the harrowing enmity of those who arrested Him, beat Him, imprisoned Him, nailed Him to the cross, *and killed Him*.

This lawyer to whom Jesus spoke thought he was clever, but he never again would have a case to deal with as he had on that day when he appeared at the judgment bar before Jesus. ... Tempting the Saviour, he had asked the question, ²⁹ who is my neighbour? ... But Jesus altered the question, ³⁶ Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? ... For the believer, it is not simply a nice little story about doing good to the less fortunate, but it is about how I as a Christian respond to those who are victims to sin and lie hopelessly maimed and facing an eternity without God. ... Am I, - are you, - concerned enough to get down on our knees, as this good Samaritan got down on his knees ... how concerned are we about lost souls who are dangling precariously over an eternity in Hell ... Both the priest and the Levite *knew* what they should do, but didn't do it. But the Samaritan did for he had compassion (v.33), he attended to him (v.34), he remained with him, and he paid the price (v.35). ... Being a Christian is being concerned for the lost souls of men and women. Mary Brown wrote the hymn back in 1891,

Perhaps today there are loving words
Which Jesus would have me speak;
There may be now in the paths of sin,
Some wanderer whom I should seek;

O Saviour, if Thou wilt be my guide,
Though dark and rugged the way,
My voice shall echo Thy message sweet,
I'll say what You want me to say.