

# The Good Samaritan (2)

## **The Story of the Parable (Luke 10.30-35)**

The setting of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10.25-29) reminds us that this 'parable' is concerned with the matter of eternal life (vv.25, 28). This can be known and enjoyed by **loving God** and **loving our neighbours** (v.27). The Lord Jesus addresses these issues as a whole in one single parable (vv.30-35).

***30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.***

This 'certain man' represents the **lawyer** (v.36). Although he couldn't see it, this was his position before God as one who sought to keep the law to obtain eternal life. This man had been travelling down from the presence of God in Jerusalem to the city of the curse (Jericho, Joshua 6.26). *Galatians 3.10: For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The law demanded obedience, but provided no power or strength to perform it.

The 'certain man' is like every sinner. We are by nature on the road to destruction (Jericho). Sin has stripped us of our raiment and we lie naked in all the shame of sin (Genesis 2.25, 3.7, 10-11). We are mortally 'wounded', 'smitten' by and enduring the 'plague' of sin. Our lives are 'moulded' and 'shaped' by it (cf. Psalm 51.5) leaving us under the sentence of death (Romans 5.12, 6.23). Note. It is only in this condition, i.e. helpless, that the despised Samaritan could come to the aid of a Jew, such was the enmity between them. So also with Christ and the sinner. Unless man is brought to an end of himself he will not desire the saving power of Christ. Let us reach out to those who are at an end of themselves!

The 'certain man' is also like many believers. The demand to love God and one another is still placed upon us (1 John 4.20, 5.2). **Believers who seek to live the Christian life in their own strength will find the burden too great.** This is a slippery, downward slope to disaster! See Abram (Genesis 12.10) and Naomi as good examples (Ruth 1.1). It leads to believers who are naked, wounded, helpless and needy. *Revelation 3.17: Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Laodicea was such a church of believers. They were content to live the Christian life in their own strength. In fact, they were 'wretched' (in need of urgent spiritual help, describes patients in a hospital ward), 'miserable', 'poor' (spiritually destitute and totally penniless), 'blind' (spiritually) and 'naked' (garments speak of works that manifest character, i.e. no real evidence of life in Christ). Does this describe us?

***31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.***

***32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.***

What is the answer to our plight? Not the priest or Levite. The priest 'came down' with his back to the temple. By 'chance' or rather 'co-occurrence' (i.e. through no design or intention of his own) the priest comes across the man, sees him and 'passes by' on the 'other side'. Not only the priest but also the Levite 'passed by'. Perhaps he could see the familiar figure of the priest ahead. If the priest had done nothing, why should he?

The priests were a *family of worshippers*. The Levites were a *tribe of workers*. Both priest and Levite represent the **law** although they were blind to the practical implications of the very law they lived by (Exodus 23.5, Deuteronomy 22.4). They should have helped this man, but instead committed a sin of omission, i.e. failing to do something they should (James 4.17). All in all, the priest and the Levite represent the utter inability of law, or the system of organised religion to meet the need of mankind and grant eternal life. *'This legal official had no remedy for the fallen and helpless, and he could only be a witness to the fact, that there was a "wounded, half-dead" traveller there. The man needed life, peace, healing, salvation, which the priest under the law was unable to minister; he therefore "passed by on the other side.'*

**Neither can the principle of law (self-effort and self-sufficiency) help the believer to live the Christian life he so desires!** Do we feel there is something we can do in our own strength to win God's favour? All our strength cannot help us to **worship** God as we might desire (i.e. the priest). All our strength cannot help us to **serve** God as we might desire (i.e. the Levite). All self-effort is futile. It only leads to being Christians who are neither hot nor cold but lukewarm, spiritually indifferent and useless in the service of God (Revelation 3.16). What then is the answer to our plight? He comes in the form of One who is despised and rejected. He is 'a certain Samaritan' (cf. John 8.48)!!

**33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.**

Samaritans were hated by the Jews and vice versa (Luke 9.51, John 4.9). In 722 BC, Assyria conquered Israel and took most of its people into captivity. The invaders then brought in Gentile colonists from Babylon and elsewhere to resettle the land (2 Kings 17.24). The foreigners brought their pagan idols which the remaining Jews began to worship alongside the God of Israel (2 Kings 17.29-41). They also intermarried (Ezra 9.1-10.44, Nehemiah 13.23-28). This was the beginning of the Samaritans, a half-Jewish race with a half-Jewish faith. It is therefore surprising that the Samaritan has 'compassion' and attends to him.

What can the Samaritan do for the helpless lawyer and sinner? **First**, He journeys to meet our need (Luke 1.76, 7.27). *Luke 3.4: Prepare ye the way (journey) of the Lord, make his paths straight.* This was a journey of purpose (not coincidence) and one borne out of true compassion for the lost (Matthew 14.14, 15.32, 20.34, Mark 1.41, 6.34, 8.2, 9.22, Luke 7.13, 15.20). **Second**, He binds up our wounds, i.e. forgives our sins. *Isaiah 61.1: He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted.* **Third**, He pours in the oil, type of the Spirit of God (John 15.26, Titus 3.5) and the wine, type of rejoicing (Philippians 4.4). **Fourth**, He lifts us up and positions us in a place of strength and security ('set him on his own beast') similar to 'his shoulders' (Luke 15.5) and 'my hand' (John 10.28). **Fifth**, He brings us to a place of rest and security where our every need is met. Some consider the 'inn' to be an appropriate picture of the church as a place of care (v.34) and fellowship. It is interesting to note that the 'inn' was a place which catered for **all** travellers, the Greek word coming from two words meaning 'whosoever' and 'warmly received/welcome'.

What can the Samaritan do for the helpless believer? Exactly the same! He is ever **near** to meet our need. *Psalm 34.18-19: The Lord is near the broken-hearted; he is the saviour of those whose spirits are crushed down. Great are the troubles of the upright: but the Lord takes him safely out of them all.* He can **heal** all the hurt and pain our own pride has caused. He applies the ministry of the **Spirit** of God to our lives and causes us to **rejoice** in Him again. He meets our every need. *2 Corinthians 12.10: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. Philippians 4.13: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Revelation 3.18: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

**35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.**

'Two pence' was two denarii. This represented three days' pay for an ordinary soldier and two days' generous wages for an agricultural worker (Matthew 20.2). This sum of money would no doubt have therefore provided almost a month's basic board and lodging. Over and above this the Samaritan offered the 'host' an effective blank cheque, promising to reimburse when he returned. Praise God, the Lord Jesus will return. Until then, He has made provision for the care of His redeemed ones. He rescued us at His own expense and paid in advance the cost of completing our redemption and of perfecting us for unimaginable glory. Now we wait and we long for His return. Christ saves to the uttermost. He not only begins a good work, but He perfects it. He not only cleanses, but brings nigh to God, and by His Spirit unites us to Himself. He met us as beggars on the dunghill, and set us among princes. He quickened us when dead in sins, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. We thus become His for ever. He made provision for the whole time of his absence from him; and the blessed prospect before him was the hope of his coming again.

### **The Challenge of the Parable (Luke 10.36-37)**

**36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?**

**37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.**

The lawyer had initially asked: *And who is my neighbour?* (v.29). Verse 36 suggests that 'him that fell among thieves' is the lawyer, making the Samaritan his neighbour. In a quite beautiful way the Lord Jesus therefore directs the lawyer's attention to Himself. Christ is the One who has 'shown mercy' (Matthew 9.13). The lawyer is therefore exhorted: *Be going on your way, and as for you, you be doing likewise.* The lawyer was to act in the same way, i.e. he was to sense his need, recognise the mercy that God had shown him, submit to His tender care, thereby demonstrating his **love** for **God** which would flow out to his **neighbour**. **This is the secret of eternal life!**

There is an emphasis in the parable on 'doing'. **The LAW says: DO and LIVE.** But I cannot keep the law in my own strength. **GRACE says: LIVE and DO.** The **law** demanded obedience to attain eternal life, but provided no power or strength to perform it. **Grace** grants us eternal life **and** the resources to live it out through love for God and our neighbour. The priest and the Levite did not love God, and therefore had no compassion for their neighbour (1 John 3.17-18, 4.19).