

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## The Good Samaritan - Luke 10

This parable was spoken by the Lord Jesus in answer to a question from a lawyer, who stood up and tempted the Lord Jesus saying, "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" We read this in Luke 10:25. The man's motive in asking the question was not a right one as he hoped the Lord would say something that was not according to the Law of Moses, in which he was an expert. If the man had known who the Lord Jesus was, he would never have dared to approach Him in this way, because the Lord Jesus knew what was in his heart. So in answering him the Lord exposes him and turns the question back on himself. The Lord Jesus says in verse 26, "What is written in the law? How readest thou?"

Because the lawyer thought that there was something he could do to inherit eternal life, the Lord Jesus takes him up on that ground and asks him what the law has to say on this vital matter. We must remember that when we go to the Lord with questions and problems, He not only hears what we ask but also knows why we ask. If this lawyer had been genuine and truly felt his need before God, he might have asked, like the Philippian jailor, "What must I do to be saved?" but sadly he was more concerned with his own self righteousness than with his need before a holy God.

The lawyer was quite able to answer the Lord and to quote what the law said. Verse 27 says, "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." But the Lord Jesus had not only asked him what the law said, but how he read it. The Lord Jesus could say that he had answered in a right way, he was an expert at quoting the law, but Jesus was more concerned as to how much he had applied the law to himself. It was one thing to be able to quote the law, but how far had the lawyer answered to it, "how readest thou?" This part of the question lays bare the man's heart.

How true often it is with us. Some of us may be very able to quote portions of Scripture and to do it exactly. But the real question is, Is it just in our minds, or is it in our hearts? Is the Bible just a mental exercise for me, or does it rule my life? The fact that the lawyer knew very well what the law said about obtaining life, and yet comes to the Lord Jesus asking what he must do to obtain it, shows that he realised that he had not been able to do what the law required. Instead he was looking for excuses. Such an attitude towards the Lord Jesus will never bring blessing. We may know what the Ten Commandments say but have we realised how hopeless it is to seek the Lord's blessing on the basis of trying to keep them?

The law shows us our lost and hopeless condition before a righteous God. The apostle Paul says in Romans 7:10, "And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death." Paul was honest for he says in verse 18, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." He concludes the matter in verse 24, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul could not find within himself a remedy to his hopeless condition but then he looks away to Christ, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." So it is not a matter of "what shall I do?" but rather what has Christ done?

Sadly the lawyer persists in his attempt to avoid the real issue. He does not speak of the first part of the law that he quoted that has to do with God. No doubt he realised that he fell short of this, but he takes up the second part that has to do with his neighbour. Our relationship with God is an inward thing that only God can know. But our relationship with those around us can be seen by others and this was what was paramount in the man's thoughts. How searching these things are! We need to ask ourselves whether we are more concerned about what others think of us than what we are before God.

Verse 29 says, "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" Probably he was quite willing to consider men like himself to be his neighbour, but the Lord Jesus in the parable teaches how that we can be a neighbour to anyone. Verse 30 says, "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." We need to understand what the Lord is teaching us by this story. This man was going the wrong way. He had turned his back on God's things. The temple and the service of God were at Jerusalem and it was the place where Jehovah had set His name. But he was going away down to the city that was under a curse. After the children of Israel had destroyed Jericho in Joshua 6, Joshua puts a curse on the rebuilding of that place. Verse 26 says, "And Joshua

adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho." So we see that this man was certainly not seeking after God but rather was going his own way. How many are doing the same thing, and sadly, suffering the same consequences!

There was safety and security in God's city, but this man had put himself beyond it. So he falls a victim to thieves, who rob him of everything that he had, wounding him to the extent that he was at the point of death. This is a picture of what sin has done to every one of us. Romans 1 paints a terrible picture of our hopeless condition due to our going our own way and falling into the ravages of sin. Our bodies are affected, our hearts desire things that are sinful in the sight of God; our minds become so distorted that we cannot discern between right and wrong. And sadly, we are powerless to remedy the situation. This man had been stripped and left naked, a condition that exposed his sin for all to see. And also his life was slipping away. Only death was before him. My dear hearer, have you considered that without Christ you are in this awful state before God? If you, like this man have left God out of your life and are going your own way, then Satan will lead you into sin and the end of that road is ruin and death, without hope of salvation.

The Lord Jesus continues His story in verses 31 and 32, "And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side." I believe the Lord includes these two men in His story with their sad attitude to the poor man, so that the lawyer might recognise something about himself in these men. The priest and the Levite had the highest positions in the law of Moses. Very simply, the priest had the privilege of taking from the people their offerings, and presenting them, in the ordered way to God. It was the job of the Levites to teach the people what the law required of them in their daily lives. The lawyer would have been well acquainted with all this. That these two men in the Lord's story could do nothing for the poor man should have spoken loudly to the lawyer.

But there is more in it than this. What had the poor man that he could give to the priest to offer to God? He had lost everything! He had turned his back on God's centre and his course had resulted in his ruin, he was destitute. Likewise, what could the Levite teach to a man that was half dead? He was unable to do anything that the law required of him. We are not told whether these two men felt sorry for the man, but in any case they could not in their capacity of priest and Levite do anything to help him. They both passed by on the other side. We might well try to think how the man may have felt, if he was conscious, when he saw these two pass on, leaving him in his hopeless condition. But we all have to come to this sad realisation that, without Christ, there is nothing in my life that I can bring to God. And without Christ there is no ability to do anything for the pleasure of God. I need someone to come alongside and to do everything for me!

When we come to verse 33 we come to one of the many 'buts' of Scripture. Here we read of one who was so different to the priest and the Levite. "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him." It says of this Samaritan that he was on a journey. There was a definite purpose in his going that way; this was not said of the priest and the Levite. Also that he 'came where he was' and finally that 'he had compassion on him.' This is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the One who left heaven's highest glory and came down into this world in order to take that journey which ended in His going to the cross of Calvary. He came down to right where we were in all our sin and misery, though He Himself was sinless, and this because of His compassion to such as we. It was no mere chance that He happened to be going that way. He saw us in all our hopeless condition and His love led Him to come down in order to bring the love and kindness of God into a scene that had been ruined by sin. Then by His death He would supply everything to remedy our condition.

The fact that he was a Samaritan should have spoken to the lawyer's conscience. The Jews despised the Samaritans. Remember the words of the Jews to the Lord Jesus in John 8:48, "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" This was insulting language but the Lord Jesus accepted the rejection and hatred of the Jews. It was all part of that journey that He took to bring the grace of God to us.

Luke uses the word 'compassion' three times in his Gospel. It is a very strong word. It tells us how deeply moved was the Samaritan by the hopeless condition of the poor man. It reminds us of the wonderful love of the Lord Jesus. Think of that occasion in chapter 7 when He saw the sorrow of the widow of Nain about to bury her only son, "And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not." Not only did His heart enter fully into her deep sorrow, but His hand was able to remedy her sorrow. Again Luke uses this word to describe the father's feelings when he saw his returning wayward son in the parable of the prodigal son. Luke 15:20 says, "But when he was a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Despite all that the son had done, the father's heart was moved by the filthy condition that his son had got into. The father could not wait for the son to get to the house but ran to meet him. Before the son had time to say any words of repentance, the father was embracing him!

When I think of the poor man laying half dead by the roadside, I am reminded of those beautiful words of the apostle Paul in Romans 5:6, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." It was not

because of any righteousness or goodness in us that the Lord Jesus gave Himself for us, as verse 8 goes on to say, "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Verse 34 continues the parable of the Good Samaritan, "And He 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." The Samaritan had with him everything that the poor man needed. Having experienced the painful treatment of the thieves, how that man must have appreciated the tender care of the Samaritan and the healing and soothing power of the oil and the wine for the wounds that he had received. When we realise the sorrow, and often the pain that sin has caused in our lives, how sweet it is to know of God's love that gave Jesus to die. He had to take the punishment that rightly should have been ours. The Apostle Peter writes of this in 1 Peter 2:24, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." Like the poor man, we need someone to take care of us. We had gone our own way and had been ruined by it. Just as we read in Proverbs 16:25, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The Samaritan picked up the poor man and put him on his own beast. The Samaritan was quite prepared to walk on the road so that the man could be cared for. We are not told how far they had to go but we do know that the Samaritan brought him all the way to safety. Once we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Saviour we are then forever in the hands of One who knows our every need and can supply that need. He takes the man to an inn and takes care of him.

When the Lord Jesus was born into this world we read in Luke 2:7, "there was no room for them in the inn." There was no place in this world for Jesus to be cared for when He was born. It is true today; the world does not care for our souls. We are very thankful for all that has been provided by the mercy of God to care for our bodily needs, but only Christ can care for our souls. Only He can deal with what sin has done. Only He can break the power of death and this He has done by His work on the cross. There is a place where He can take us to be cared for. I think the inn is a picture of the House of God, of which every believer forms part. It is in the company of other believers that we can find the help we need to walk the Christian pathway until the Lord Jesus comes again.

There are those to whom the Lord Jesus has committed the care of souls. We read in Hebrews 13:17, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account." The Samaritan had to leave but he gave instructions for the man's care until he came again. In Luke 10:35 we read, "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."

The Lord Jesus has gone back to heaven but He has assured us that He will come again, as we read in John 14:3, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." In the meantime, He is caring for us every day of our lives. Those who take up the work of looking after precious souls for Christ will receive a reward. How the poor man would think constantly of those words, "When I come again." He would be ever watching and waiting for that moment. So should we likewise be watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus.

So the Lord Jesus turns to the self-righteous lawyer with the question in verse 36, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?" It was a simple question and the lawyer had no difficulty in answering correctly, "He that shewed mercy on him." So the lawyer's question, "and who is my neighbour?" is answered by himself. But the Lord Jesus did not leave it there. "Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise." The parable is not only a picture of how the Lord Jesus came down from heaven's glory to where we were in all our sin and misery in order to lift us out of that condition. It also shows us how that anyone that needs mercy and care we should treat as our neighbour. May we pay attention to the Lord's words, 'Go, and do thou likewise.'

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