

Good Samaritan (Who Is My Neighbor) (Salvation) (Jesus)

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ‘Teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’

26 ‘What is written in the Law?’ he replied. ‘How do you read it?’

27 He answered, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”[c]; and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

28 ‘You have answered correctly,’ Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’

30 In reply Jesus said: ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half-dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33 But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.

35 The next day he took out two denarii[e] and gave them to the innkeeper. “Look after him,” he said, “and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.”

36 ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’

37 The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’

Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’ Luke 10:25-37

The Basic Bible Truth

This parable is an astonishing example of the greatest teacher the world has ever known, answering the most important question anyone can ever ask: “How do I get to Heaven?” Jesus, the author of salvation, is asked how to be saved. His answer is incredible.

The Object

None

The Lesson

Our Lord, as He walked this earth and taught us about God, utilized parables frequently. The people who heard Him firsthand were in awe of His message. They were impressed by the confidence demonstrated as He imparted an astonishing comprehension of Scripture—He knew His subject well. Few methods of communication are as effective at conveying and explaining complex thoughts and issues as is the parable. Jesus used them regularly in His public discourses. We will take an in- depth look at arguably the most recognizable of all of Jesus’ parables. “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”, as it is commonly entitled, is a unique story with significance and background in the third chapter of Genesis.

Ordinarily, most will immediately think of the query posed by a man and recorded in Luke 10. He had asked Jesus a simple, but thoughtful question. Who is my neighbor? Familiarity with the story recorded there renders a memory of three people who came across a gentleman who was in dire need of

assistance. Only one genuinely cared and came to his aid, and thus the answer to his curiosity became obvious. The Samaritan was the true neighbor. Countless sermons have been preached and lessons taught with this story and text as their foundation. There is, however, a commonly overlooked aspect to the entire episode recorded in Luke. It is worthwhile to expend reasonable effort to explore the most important truth to be discovered in the parable itself.

We will turn the clock back approximately two minutes in the narrative, and look a bit more at the context in which Jesus is speaking. Verse twenty-five discloses the man's initial contact with Jesus. We learn that he actually proffered two questions, the second of which was the one concerning relationships with neighbors. His initial inquiry was of far greater significance. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" What an excellent example of the most important question anyone can ask! In our vernacular of today, the request might be worded slightly differently. How do I get to go to Heaven? What must I do to be saved? How do I become a Christian? All of our present day evangelistic efforts focus upon bringing an individual to the point in their life where they ask those questions. They can then address the recognized need for God in one's life. Not only has this man asked the most crucial question of his lifetime, he has posed it to God Almighty, the Author of Life, the Savior of the world!

A prudent student would agree that the answer to that question, given by Jesus, the Son of God, would be worthy of note. As Christ did on some other occasions, He requested of this man to recount his understanding of the Law. His response was correct as he quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Jesus commended him for his proper comprehension of the Scripture, but the man immediately challenged Jesus with the second question regarding the definition of a neighbor. And the parable was shared with the crowd. But what became of the initial question?

I have participated in classes on evangelism, and never have I heard the answer taught that Jesus accepted from this man. The passage the man quoted says that we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart and our soul and our strength and our mind, and our neighbor as our self. Jesus replied that was good enough. Where is the idea of a spiritual rebirth, or our sinful nature, or an understanding that God has offered a free gift and all we must do is accept and believe? It is indeed unfortunate that the second question distracted Jesus from the complete answer, as I would have liked to hear it—or was He genuinely sidetracked? Luke records for us an example of the genius of Jesus, The Great Teacher. The most incredible instructor and educator the world has ever known answered both questions with one story! A careful study is in order now, beginning in verse thirty.

A certain man: Our relationship with God is based upon ourselves and Him—no one else.

Went down from Jerusalem to Jericho: Physically, the trip from Jerusalem to Jericho is a downhill trek. From mountain city to valley city is a drop in elevation of nearly two thousand feet. Jerusalem is where the temple was located, where God had stated that His presence would be seen. Jericho was a cursed city, a city of sin that Israel had destroyed many years earlier. The spiritual picture positions man travelling away from God toward sin, and it is a descent downward, a steep decline.

And fell among thieves: Satan, the ever present enemy of man, is described on several occasions in the Bible as a thief and a robber who has come to steal, kill, and destroy. Our memory of what happened in the Garden of Eden confirms that concept.

Which stripped him of his raiment: Recall that the first reaction of Adam and Eve was an attempt to procure for themselves clothing to cover their nakedness.

And left him half dead: A very interesting choice of words. Physically, it is impossible to be half dead—one is either dead or alive, not half one way or the other. When seen from a spiritual perspective though, it is entirely possible and accurate. Before Adam sinned, God had warned him that on the day he

disobeyed, he would surely die. But the Bible says that Adam died at the old age of 930 years. Did God lie? Absolutely not, for though Adam did not die physically, he did die spiritually that day, and subsequently, everyone since has been born spiritually dead, in need of a Savior. In fact, he was personally in need of a Savior as well. He was left half dead, with no method of remedying his situation without help.

A certain priest: The most religious person in Israel journeyed by and refused to help. We will, likewise, not solve our circumstance with the church or other pious activity. They have no impact upon our dead spiritual condition. Religion cannot and will not save us.

A Levite: Known by all as a worker, it was the Levites who cut wood, carried water, cleaned, and successfully kept the temple in good repair. As he approached, he too avoided the man in need. Our accomplishments and our work are nothing compared to God and His majesty. Heaven will never be earned by our feeble attempts at good works.

A certain Samaritan: A most unlikely candidate for a solution. A despised half-breed, disdained by Jewish society, became the hero in the story. Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The religious establishment of the day refused to recognize who He was, and treated Him with blatant contempt. The story pointed to a “certain” Samaritan, a precise, special one. Jesus was the only one who could fulfill all of the Scripture prophecies concerning Him. He was very specific, chosen and planned before the foundation of the world, to fulfill the task before Him—our salvation.

Came where he was: It is most humbling and remarkable that Jesus left the glory of Heaven, laid aside all of His heavenly prerogatives, and came to where we are. The great I AM set his foot upon the same dirt we do.

Had compassion on him: God loves us while we are still in our sinful state. That is beyond comprehension.

Bound up his wounds: By his wounds we are healed spiritually. The implication of the parable is that the victim had no possible method of taking care of himself and his deadly problem. Without help, he would surely die. Notice that the Samaritan did all the work. Likewise, our salvation is a product of “the strong arm of the Lord”, a solution we could never provide for ourselves.

Pouring on oil: Often in the Bible, oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit, and this is no exception. We understand from the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is poured into the life of everyone who becomes a Christian—we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

When I come again: The glorious hope and confidence of every saved individual is the eventual return of Jesus Christ someday.

Jesus, the Great Teacher, gave an incredibly precise and accurate answer to the most important question anyone on this earth can ever ask God. So it is asked again of you, what have you done to inherit eternal life?