

The Good Samaritan

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[0 : 0 0] let us turn then to Luke chapter 10 Luke chapter 10 and the passage from verse 25 on to verse 37 one of the best known passages in all scripture and behold a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him saying Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life he said unto him what is written in the law how readest thou and he answering said thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbor as thyself and he said unto him thou hast answered right do this and thou shalt live but he willing to justify himself said unto Jesus and who is my neighbor 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 and so on we all of us love a story the young child loves to be told a story at every stage in life we like to hear stories to listen to stories to read stories to view them on television

Jesus was a superb storyteller and there is surely no story he ever told as famous as this one the story of the good Samaritan I suppose that the two most famous stories ever told are the parable of the prodigal son and the parable of the good Samaritan if a person has any acquaintance at all with a Christian religion he knows those two stories the story then of the good Samaritan we must see this story in its setting we don't want to divorce it from its setting when we look at it in its context it speaks to us first of all of our failure our failure the story was told by Jesus in response to a question asked him by this lawyer the lawyer of course was not a lawyer in the secular sense but in the Jewish sense he was an expert in the Jewish law that is the Old Testament the law of the Old Testament and particularly the first five books of the Old Testament which we call the Pentateuch the law books of the Old Testament the fact that he stood up and asked this question suggests that

Jesus had been teaching the people they had been sitting there listening to him teach when this man rose and asked Jesus his question we're told that he asked the question in order to tempt him in order to test Jesus to put him to the test he had hoped to find some kind of flaw in Jesus' teaching his motive in asking the question was not a worthy one at all nevertheless the question that he asked is the most important question that any man or woman can ever ask what must I do to inherit eternal life Jesus does not give to the man a direct answer he asked him a question you're an expert in the law he says to him in effect very well then what does your law say about this whole matter and the man answered by quoting from the Old Testament law he combined two passages which Jesus himself had combined in his teaching and had offered on a number of occasions referred to he quoted Deuteronomy chapter 6 verse 5 thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart mind soul and strength and he quoted Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18 thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself you are perfectly correct

Jesus said that is the answer to your question do this and you shall live love the Lord your God love your neighbor as yourself do this keep this law and you will have eternal life does this surprise you do I hear somebody say but haven't you been laboring again and again and again to tell us that we cannot by our own efforts of law keeping gain eternal life yes indeed that is certainly true and as long as I have breath to do so I will declare that message nevertheless Jesus' word stands keep the law and you will have eternal life keep God's law to perfection and you will have the eternal life keep it perfectly in thought in word and in action and you will have the eternal life the person who keeps it in that way cannot be denied eternal life eternal life cannot be denied to the perfect law keeper for there is no sin in that person for which to condemn him but this man's conscience seems to be troubling him we read that he wants to justify himself wanting to justify himself he asks Jesus another question why is the man wanting to justify himself nobody has been accusing him of anything but his own conscience is accusing him he knows perfectly well that he hasn't kept that law and so he asks who is my neighbor thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself is the old testament law the Jews generally interpreted that law as meaning you can love your neighbor you should love your neighbor you must love your neighbor but you can hate your enemy the Pharisees indeed most of them confined the command to love their neighbor to other Pharisees it referred they thought only to other Pharisees to people they regarded as upright moral people the Jews in general referred the command only to their fellow Jews it meant that they had to love their Jewish their Israelite neighbors their fellow Israelites but they certainly wouldn't have thought of applying it to the Samaritans a mixed race far less to the Gentiles the heathen pagan people and Jesus says love your neighbor as yourself who is my neighbor again

Jesus does not give to this man a direct answer he goes on and he tells this incomparable story the story of the good Samaritan but then this story itself is not a direct answer to Jesus' question to the lawyer's question Jesus turns the question round he says in effect the significant question for you to ask is not who is my neighbor the really significant question to ask is am I acting in a neighborly way toward those who are in need who cross my path here then my friends is the law of God do what you can to help those who are in need who come in contact with you and whom you are in a position to help have you done so are you doing so have you kept

[8 : 59] God's law are you keeping it you know perfectly well that you haven't always kept God's law in this respect and I know perfectly well that I haven't always kept God's law in this respect many many many times you and I have failed to give the help to those in need that we ought to have given to them we all of us come short of a standard God sets the standard of God's law we have broken God's law we have sinned against God and if we haven't kept the second part of the law you shall love your neighbour as yourself we most certainly haven't kept the first part as we shoot you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength we have all of us sinned Jesus said keep this law to perfection and you will have eternal life but we haven't kept it and the Bible says the book of

James tells us that if we keep the whole law and yet offend in one point we are guilty of all as far as gaining eternal life by this means by law keeping is concerned that is out for us we have already broken God's law and all our attempts now to atone for that by our present law keeping are futile we cannot by our own efforts to keep God's law now atone for those times when we have broken God's holy law the truth is that we are sinners that we are failures we have come short all have sinned and come short of the glory of God there is no eternal life available for us by this means by law keeping by the works of the law the apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the

Galatians that there we cannot be justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ through faith in Jesus Christ for by the works of the law there shall no flesh be justified the story then speaks to us first of all of our failure but secondly it speaks to us of our salvation our salvation now there is no direct teaching in the story of the good Samaritan concerning the gospel way of salvation but since this story does expose to us our need of salvation it is right that we go on to ask how that need can be met and when we put the story in the context of the New Testament itself we find that there is abundant teaching given to us concerning how that need can be met we have seen that Jesus teaches keep the law of God keep it to perfection and you will have eternal life and we have seen that we haven't done that and so we cannot gain we cannot acquire eternal life that way there must be some other way another has come he has come into this world the Lord

Jesus Christ has come into this world God's own son he has become man he as man here in this world loved his neighbor to perfection and not only that he loved God to perfection too he loved his neighbor as himself and he loved his God with all his heart and mind and soul and strength with his whole human soul which he took to himself he loved his God he never sinned he never came short once in the least degree of the standard of absolute perfection he loved perfectly he rendered perfect obedience to God's law and not only that he paid the penalty of our law breaking he took our sins upon himself the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all and he made a complete atonement for them the demands of God's holy law have been fully satisfied if therefore you are trusting in this Christ if you are united to him by faith then you have eternal life you are saved when if you are united to this

Christ God looks upon you in him he sees you as one who has kept his law he sees you as a righteous person righteous with the righteousness of Christ Christ's righteousness is imputed to you it is put to your account and God sees you he declares you to be a person perfectly righteous in your standing before him perfectly righteous in his sight the sinner then is saved the sinner has eternal life for Christ's sake for the sake of him who rendered perfect obedience to God's law and who atoned for the sins of his people upon a life I did not live upon a death

[15 : 17] I did not die another's life another's death I stake my whole eternity my friend are you in Christ it is not not by your own law keeping at all that you will ever have eternal life there is no salvation that way salvation is through simple childlike trust in Jesus the sinner saviour rely upon him rest only upon him believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved the story then speaks to us first of all of our failure it speaks to us secondly of our salvation and it speaks to us thirdly of our way of life our way of life it teaches us what is to be as Christian believers our way of life we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and soul and strength and we are to love our neighbour as ourselves the latter flows from the former if we truly love the

Lord our God then we will also love our neighbour we will be neighbourly to those who are in need who cross our paths we will have compassion for them and that compassion will express itself in our doing what we can to help them in their need that is what the Samaritan did in the story and Jesus said go and do thou likewise your good deeds done for others in need will never save you but the Lord requires them of you as a saved person as a Christian believer nonetheless if Christ is your saviour then the Holy Spirit of God dwells in you and he's in you to enable you increasingly to love your neighbour as yourself and to love the Lord your God with heart and mind and soul and strength what the

Lord demands the gospel provides as we look then at the story of the good Samaritan let us focus our attention first of all upon the needy person the needy person here is this poor man he's been travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho that was a road of only seventeen miles yet it was an exceedingly dangerous road rock there that provided a covering for the bandits and the highwaymen who frequently attacked travellers on the Jerusalem Jericho road it was notorious for the highwaymen who attacked the travellers on that road and this poor man was attacked by one of those highwaymen or by a number of them he was robbed of his money he was robbed of his clothing he was robbed of his beast if he had one he was wounded they struck him blow after blow after blow and they left him there wounded and bleeding by the roadside would anyone come to his assistance would he be left there to die bleeding to death the needy person and there are needy people all around us are there not there are those all around us travelling on the

Jerusalem Jericho road the way of affliction there are many marauders who are attacking them and leaving them beaten and wounded and suffering if you or I are in contact with them and if we are in a position to help them then clearly it is our duty and also our privilege to do so there are those who are in material and physical need there are those who are ill ill people do we just ignore them and act as though we didn't want to become involved is it that we don't want to become involved or do we do what we can to visit them and help them and to support them in their time of need there are handicapped people who would be greatly helped into whose lives greater happiness and fulfillment would come if others would give of their skill and of their time there are those who are under great strain perhaps as they look after some elderly relative and who would welcome help sensitively offered even in our comparatively affluent society there are still those who are in material want and whose want could be discreetly relieved you see the Christian faith is so exceedingly practical doing those good deeds for others

I say will not save you salvation is through faith alone but unless that faith issues him those deeds of kindness and of love to others unless that faith is accompanied by such deeds then it is not genuine there are those around us in emotional need people who have been hurt deeply hurt by experiences that they have had in life they have suffered bitter disappointments life has dealt them many hard knocks perhaps it is because of their own folly that they have suffered so or perhaps through no fault of their own at all do we have compassion for them do our hearts go out to them in compassion and do we show a loving caring concern for them there are bereaved people who could be helped and comforted if we supported them there are lonely housebound people to be visited and supported also there are disturbed people who could be greatly helped by loving concern and care is there anyone you know whose need is an emotional need with whom you are in contact and whom you are in a position to help then of course there are those around us who are in great spiritual need they feel themselves to be in the grip of sin they know that sin has mastered them and they long to get free but they don't know how they don't know the way of release you and I who are

[22 : 55] Christian believers know what is the way of release are we telling it to them are we making it known to them are we telling them the gospel are we telling them of one who can smash the gates of brass who can cut the bars of iron asunder who can set the prisoner free he breaks the power of cancelled sin he sets the prisoner free there may be those around us who are under conviction of sin they know that they're guilty they know that they're lost and they long to find peace with God if only someone would explain to them God's way of salvation are we seeking to do that and there are countless people around us needy people unaware of their desperate plight and danger they're on that broad road that leads to destruction and are we doing what we can to warn them and to tell them the saving message perhaps they're in your home perhaps they're in your place of work perhaps they're in the place where you find your recreation perhaps they're living next door to you we should seek opportunities to engage in personal evangelism to tell to others the good news of salvation the needy person he was there on the

Jerusalem Jericho road you and I meet him daily in life don't we the needy person then we focus secondly on those who passed by those who passed by there was first of all the priest he had been on duty there in the temple in Jerusalem and he was making his way home he had been attending to his duties there in the sanctuary he saw the poor man lying there by the roadside he just glanced at him and hurriedly passed by on the other side the Levite who also worked in the temple in Jerusalem he behaved in the same way they both passed by on the other side those two men had been led there verse 31 in our authorized version is perhaps the translation is perhaps slightly misleading and by chance there came down a certain priest that way the original

Greek really is by coincidence there came down a certain priest that way it was not just by chance it was not just by accident that the priest and the Levite came down that way God had ordained it heaven had ordained it that that day that priest should meet with that poor suffering man lying there half dead by the roadside it was by divine providence that he happened to pass by at that particular hour he had been given a heaven sent opportunity to help that needy man lying there by the roadside that was true of the Levite as well he too had been given that heaven sent opportunity and both refused the opportunity but God did give in them when they cross your path and mine those who are in need and those whom you and I are in a position to help that is by divine ordering that is

God giving to us the opportunity to help those needy ones he is bringing us together in order that that need might be relieved he gives to you the resources to relieve that person and he brings you to him or him to you it can never be the case that we can be justified in refusing to give help when we're able to do so it is surely always wrong to pass by on the other side it is to rebel against divine ordering against divine providence the God's ordering of our ways and notice that those two men who passed by were religious men deeply religious men one of them was a priest he was on his way home from the temple in

Jerusalem he'd been working there in the temple in Jerusalem attending to the offering of the sacrifices and to the religious ritual there in the temple those priests worked for a month at a time and then went home for a certain period of time it was the same with the Levite he had duties there helping the priest in the sanctuary those two men were so very well acquainted with God's revelation and with the worship of God they of all men should have known what God required of them how true religion is discredited when those who profess to be Christians behave in this way we are all of us priests to God we believe in the equal priesthood of all believers we of all people who are so well acquainted with the scriptures and with the worship of

[29 : 01] God ought to know what God requires of us and he requires of us mercy and not sacrifice pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this to visit the widows and orphans and their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world we read in the epistle of James if our religion does not make us sympathetic and compassionate and merciful to those in need then it is not genuine religion however active we may be in the work of the church however orthodox we may be in our belief if we are not merciful and compassionate to those in need then our religion is a false religion notice also that those men had good excuses they could say we're just too involved to become to go and help too involved in other things important things to go to the help of this needy man lying there by the roadside we're we are busily involved in other things there are others at home needing our attention there are so many other duties that demand attention from us perhaps we'll be able to help but some other time but not now we're just too involved to go to the aid to the help of this needy man at any rate he's lying there half dead no doubt only by touching him could you determine whether he was really dead or alive and of course if we are to touch a corpse if he should be dead then we touch a corpse then that will render us ceremonially unclean better not risk that it would debar us for a time from working in a sanctuary there in

Jerusalem after all we've been away from home for some time working for a month at a time there in the temple in Jerusalem there are others at home who need us it wouldn't be fair to wife and family to delay and spend time here with that needy person charity begins at home does it not and the poor man is almost dead anyway we wouldn't be able to render much help to him no doubt very shortly he will breathe his last and of course there are always the robbers themselves they may appear on the scene again at any time perhaps they're hiding behind one of those rocks they're waiting for somebody to stop that they can attack him also the Jerusalem Jericho Road is no place for dilly dallying maybe other highwaymen will come upon the scene and rob us for our safety sake we must move on we must pass by our families are at home dependent upon us we mustn't stop to help this poor needy man good excuses all of them excuses satisfying to themselves and of course it is always possible to find an excuse for not becoming involved in this kind of thing those who are unwilling to become involved are usually very forward in explaining why my time is fully occupied and the pressure of events the pressure of all the demands that are made upon me is such that I just cannot give time to help those needy people

I couldn't do much to help them anyway I've no experience in that kind of thing I would turn sick of the sight of blood they would likely faint good excuses all of them but are they excuses that God accepts are they valid excuses as far as God is concerned my friends let us examine ourselves and see if we are like those two men passing by on the other side but then let us focus our attention thirdly on the good Samaritan himself he helped his enemy the Jew lying there half dead by the roadside wouldn't be a personal enemy of the Samaritan that particular Jew wouldn't be his personal enemy probably he had never set eyes on him before but the

Jews and the Samaritans were bitterly hostile to one another the Jews despised the Samaritans they regarded them as an impure race a mixed race as far as their worship of God was concerned it was irregular and it was defective and not only that but the Samaritans despised the Jews the feeling was mutual we notice there in chapter 9 that verse 53 that when Jesus went through a Samaritan village the people did not receive him and why not because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem he wasn't welcome because he was going on to Jerusalem the great Jewish city but this particular Samaritan made no distinction the fact that this man was a sufferer was enough to call forth his compassion it didn't matter whether he were a

Samaritan or a Jew he was a needy person he needed this help that the Samaritan could give and that help was certainly not to have held any needy person who crosses our path and whom we are in a position to help should be helped by us even though he be our greatest enemy love your enemies is the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ the golden rule is not that we are to treat others in the way that they treat us it is that we are to treat others in the way that we would want them to treat us do to others as you would that others should do to you the apostle Paul says if thine enemy hunger feed him if he thirst give him drink for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon his head if the other person is in need and we are in a position to help him we should seek to meet that need and note the spirit in which the Samaritan gave the needed help there was nothing grudging about the way in which he helped the poor wounded man he had compassion upon him he didn't help him because it was simply a sense of duty that made him help him he was filled with compassion for him he bound up his wounds we can be sure that he did so very tenderly he poured oil and wine into the wounds of that poor man oil olive oil to soothe wine to disinfect he set him upon his own beast that meant the man himself had to walk he took him to the inn he spent the night with him there he personally attended to his needs throughout the night and he paid for his keep there when he had to leave the next day he even told the innkeeper when he gave him a considerable sum of money he said to him that if the man needed any more help than he had already paid for then the patient himself was not to be charged he himself the Samaritan would settle the bill when he returned soon again he did everything he could for that needy man is that how we help those in need not grudgingly not in a complaining manner not seeking to extricate ourselves as speedily as we can but freely wholeheartedly going the second mile willing to put ourselves to some inconvenience for the sake of the needy person the good

[38 : 18] Samaritan is set before us by Jesus as an example for us to follow go say Jesus and do thou likewise that is the Lord's command to us let us see then that we obey our Lord's command let us pray we ask oh God that thou wilt give to us compassion for those in need that we will take to heart what thy word says to go and do as that Samaritan did teach us we pray that we cannot buy those good deeds gain salvation for ourselves may we cast ourselves upon thy mercy in Christ and may the genuineness of our faith be seen in that we show compassion and do what we can to help those in need and may we truly seek to love our neighbor as ourselves and to love thee the Lord our God with heart and mind and soul and strength hear us we pray for Jesus sake amen