

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

– FEB. 17, LUKE 10:25-37. –

**Golden Text – "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."
– Lev. 19:18.**

THE question introduced in this lesson is the great question which should enlist the most serious attention of every man – "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

The one who here propounded it was an Israelite, to whom pertained the promises of God for eternal life, on condition of perfect obedience to the divine law. He was one also who, with the rest of his nation, was vainly trusting in the law for salvation, and opposing the new and only way of life through Christ. Consequently, the Lord, to whom the query was addressed, referred the inquirer to the law for the answer. "He said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou?" As a recognized [R1767 : page 35] theologian and public teacher he must have some understanding of so important a matter. The answer was politely deferential to the office of the inquirer, and at the same time very adroitly put; for the lawyer was not a sincere inquirer, but one anxious only to lead the Lord into an entangling argument and to make him appear before the people as an opposer of the divine law.

The answer quoted from the law was a correct one, including the two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:36-40); viz., "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." True, according to the law, those were the conditions of eternal life; but neither the lawyer nor any other man, except the perfect man Christ Jesus, was able to fulfil the conditions, though not until convinced of his inability to do so would the man be ready to accept God's way of salvation through Christ, who, by his great sacrifice, once for all, was about to blot out for believers the

handwriting of ordinances which was against all Israel; viz., the condemnation of the law – nailing it to his cross. – Col. 2:14.

Seeing that the man's heart was not in the right attitude, the Lord did not proceed to preach to him the gospel of salvation, but, seizing the opportunity which his second inquiry offered, – "And who is my neighbor?" – he sought to lead him and those who stood by to the realization that every man is neighbor to every other man; that the whole human family is linked together by the ties of brotherhood, and therefore, every man should have a brother's sympathy, love and benevolence.

This simple truth, the Lord showed by a forcible illustration, was not one of those things hard to be understood, unless the heart had grown selfish instead of benevolent and kind. The simple, unpretentious Samaritan had comprehended it and had acted the neighborly part, while the ostentatious priest and Levite, with all their loud professions of piety, ignored it, though their effort to evade the responsibility by passing by on the other side of the roadway proved that they understood the neighborly obligation, of human brotherhood, which, in their selfishness, they vainly sought to shirk.

Commending thus the neighborly spirit of love, pity and benevolent generosity manifested to so large a degree in the Samaritan, the Lord's final answer was, "Go, and do thou likewise." Go, thou, and seek a change of heart – from hard, unpitying selfishness disguised under the flimsy robes of showy profession, to simple brotherly kindness and charity, which, operating toward a brother-man, a creature of God, whom thou hast seen, will thus the better enable thee to love supremely the righteous God whom thou hast not seen. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" – 1 John 4:20.

There are several important lessons to be drawn from this incident – (1) We note how, *in meekness*, the Lord instructed those that opposed

themselves. (2 Tim. 2:24-26.) He did not bluntly say to his insincere inquirer, Your heart is not right, you have an evil mind and are full of pride, hypocrisy and conceit, and have no ear for the truth on this subject; but rather he sought carefully and wisely to [R1768 : page 35] lead his opposer to this realization and to consequent repentance.

(2) We observe how the Lord endeavored to make known and recognized truths stepping stones from which to advance to higher truths – to lead gradually and logically from the known to the unknown, and to gently push aside prejudices and overcome them, rather than to rudely jostle them and harden the heart to increased opposition.

(3) We see that he did not make the truth obtrusive, but that his words were always words in season.

(4) Finally, we note the special teaching of the lesson – that love, which operates benevolently and kindly, *i.e.*, Neighborly, toward all men, recognizing the obligations of human brotherhood, and the golden rule to do unto others as we would have them do to us, and which regards God, the fountain of all goodness, with supreme reverence, is the only condition of heart that can ever inherit eternal life. But the further lesson, which the unbelieving lawyer did not get, because he was not ready to receive it, was that, though he could not, in his fallen condition, meet the full requirements of God's law, there was provision made for his weaknesses and shortcomings through Christ if he would accept such provision.

Let us mark these valuable lessons, heeding our Lord's instructions and carefully noting and copying his methods in all our dealings with each other and with fellow-men.
