

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

– JANUARY 18. – LUKE 10:25-37. –

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." – Mark 12:31.

OUR Studies since the first of the year relate to the last six months of our Lord's ministry. He knew that His death was approaching – that He must, as the antitypical Passover Lamb, be put to death the following Spring, on the fourteenth day of the first month. His ministry had only begun to awaken the people.

The seventy, whose ordination or commission we considered a week ago, were sent across Jordan into the district known as Perea. And Jesus Himself went thither shortly afterward. The purpose of His ministry was to thoroughly awaken all the Jews to a knowledge of the fact that the time of their visitation had come. We are informed by the Apostle Paul that at the time of the Lord's death there were about five hundred that could be called brethren. But besides these, the witnesses above mentioned subsequently bore other fruit – after Pentecost.

Later, the seventy returned expressing joy and confidence, and remarking that even the demons were subject to them in the Father's name. The Master took occasion to tell them that they were overlooking their chief cause of joy, saying, "Rejoice, rather, that your names are written in Heaven" – than that demons are subject to your command. So it is with all of us. Salvation is a personal matter with us, and works and preaching are merely incidentals connected with that work of personal salvation. The great time for works will be future. Then, if faithful, we shall be privileged to be associated with the Redeemer in His work of regenerating the world of mankind, breaking the shackles of Sin and Death, granting deliverance to the captives, even as the Prophets foretold.

No matter how praiseworthy are the social uplifts of the present time, they are as nothing compared with the great social and moral uplift which God has planned and which Messiah will institute with His Kingdom. Hence the first work of all of God's consecrated people is a personal one – the preparation of their own hearts and characters for Divine approval, that they may have a share in the sufferings of the present time and in the glorious work of the future.

At this point our Study for today opens. A lawyer thought to entrap the Master by asking the question: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" In those days, when the only law of Israel was God's Law, a lawyer was one well versed in the teaching of the books of Moses. Jesus therefore said to this theological Doctor: How do you understand the matter? You know what is written in the Law. The lawyer replied: We shall love the Lord with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength, with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus approved this, saying that it was true. Do this – keep the Law – and you shall live. You will never die.

The lawyer was caught before he knew it. He knew that the people of Israel had been dying for centuries, notwithstanding the Law; yet himself and others were outwardly claiming that they were keeping the Law. Jesus showed him out of his own testimony that he was not keeping the Law, as he pretended to do and as the Pharisees in general pretended to do. The fact is that no imperfect, fallen human being can keep the perfect Law of God; for it is so comprehensive that only a perfect man could keep it thoroughly.

The lawyer sought to make the best of a bad argument and, instead of acknowledging his defeat, turned the question to Jesus again: "Who is my neighbor" whom I am to love as myself? This was one of the points which Jesus had particularly made against the Pharisees – that outwardly they were pious, religious, they prayed, fasted, etc.; yet in their hearts they were unjust and would take unjust advantage of widows and orphans – not loving them as themselves.

The lawyer sought to imply that God's Law did not include everybody as his neighbor, but only certain special ones.

Jesus, however, again out-generated him, saying, I will give you a parable. A certain man went down to Jericho; and on that lonely mountain road he was beset by thieves, who stripped him, wounded him and left him half dead. There happened that way a priest, one of the highest representatives of the Law; and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Likewise there passed by a Levite, next in relationship to the service of the Law, the service of God. He went a little nearer and looked at the poor man, but did nothing. Then came along a Samaritan, an outsider, not a Jew at all; and he was filled with compassion. He bound up the wounds, put the man on his beast, brought him to an inn and took care of him, sacrificing his own time and strength in the wounded man's interest. He did more than this. He paid for the man's keep until he should return from Jerusalem.

Now, said Jesus to the lawyer, I put the question to you, Which of these men acted the part of the neighbor to this man who fell among the thieves? Which one of these treatments of the case would fulfil the requirements of the Law, according to your judgment? The lawyer answered that the one who showed mercy on the man was the one who had surely done the neighborly act. Jesus replied that this should be an example to the lawyer, that he should do likewise – that he should be kind, thoughtful, generous, toward any human being who was in affliction – in need of help.

LOVE FULFILS THE LAW

We do well to remember God's real object in giving laws, commandments, etc. He is not taking pleasure especially in the number of times that we bow the knee or bow the head, nor in the number of times that we attend Divine worship, nor in anything that we can do along the lines of worship. The Lord especially delights to see us cultivate His own spirit of love and kindness and

generosity. "God is Love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." (1 John 4:16.) As the Apostle says, He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he claim to love God whom he hath not seen? How could he know that he would love God? (1 John 4:20.) Well does the Apostle Paul tell us that love is the fulfilling of the Law. – Romans 13:10.

We are not to understand the Apostle to mean that simply to have love would fulfil God's Law and give us everlasting life. No! It is only for those who have accepted Christ that love fulfils the Law. For all those who become disciples of Jesus, God has made a special arrangement, that the merit of Jesus' sacrifice shall cover their blemishes, so that if they cultivate and possess the heart quality of love (God-likeness) it will be acceptable – because Jesus' sacrifice makes good all deficiency. We are "accepted in the Beloved." "The righteousness of the Law is fulfilled in us who are walking, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

St. Paul remarks that love is the principal thing in our character in the Divine estimation. He tells us that if **[R5370 : page 377]** we should give all of our goods to feed the poor or even if we should give our bodies to be burned in some worthy cause, and yet not have love – not do these things from the spirit or prompting of love – it would all count for nothing in God's sight. (1 Corinthians 13.) Evidently the great lesson for Christian people to learn is to put away all these – anger, malice, envy, hatred, strife, and to put on all these – meekness, gentleness, long-suffering, brotherly kindness, love. St. Peter declares that if we do these things we shall never fall, but that an entrance into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be granted to us. – 2 Peter 1:10,11.

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