

## "WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"

**"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." – Matthew 22:39.**

THESE words were quoted by our Lord in His summarizing of the Ten Commandments. Dividing the Ten Commandments into two parts, He showed that one part related to the duty and obligation toward God, and the other to the duty and obligation toward fellowmen, toward the neighbor. The first part calls for all the love of our heart, our being, our mind, our strength, for the Lord and His service; and the second part, which relates to humanity, calls for us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

In a special sense the Jews recognized themselves as being God's people. Therefore under the Law they recognized each other as neighbors; for they were all the people of the Lord. But they thought that while they should cordially love their neighbors, they should hate their enemies – all the outside nations that God did not recognize. However, the fact that God had in the past commanded them to slay or drive out the surrounding nations did not mean that the Jews should *hate* them and wish to do them real injury. Our Lord seems to indicate that the Jews had taken a wrong view of matters. He taught them that to love their enemies, and to do good to those who persecuted them, was the better way. He showed them that they should have a broad view, a benevolence that would take in all the world.

To this effect He on one occasion gave them a parable – that of the Good Samaritan. In that parable He pictured a man who was not a Jew ministering to a Jew who had been injured. A Jewish priest had seen the wounded man and had passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, not so close in relationship to God as the priest, is represented as looking at the man and then also passing on the other side. Then came this stranger, a Samaritan, one not in

relationship to God at all. The Samaritan promptly served the injured man – anointed him and bound up his wounds. The man had been assaulted, robbed and maltreated. The Samaritan "set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn and took care of him." He remained over night with the injured man, and when he left in the morning he gave some money to the inn-keeper and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." (Luke 10:29-35.) Jesus declared that in this Samaritan of the parable they had an example of one who was a real neighbor.

This parable is also for our instruction today. If we appreciate the conception of a true neighbor which our Lord gave, and say that we have the same conception, then let us observe this Golden Rule: Whatsoever I would have you do unto me, let me do even so unto you. And if you feel that if you were on the roadside, plundered and injured by highwaymen, you would wish that some one would help you, then do the same to others, if you have opportunity. And so in all things. From this viewpoint the whole world are neighbors, no matter how far apart they are – whether they live on our side of the earth or on the opposite side. This the broad, general view shows our relationship and obligation to all the world, to one the same as another. All are our neighbors. All should be treated in a neighborly way as we have opportunity. There is no exception.

It will not do to say that one should be kind merely to those who have been kind to him, that to such only are we to act the part of a neighbor. In that event, the Samaritan would not have been the neighbor. He might have thought that as nobody had found him by the wayside **[R5700 : page 168]** and done anything for him, he consequently would not do anything either. The Lord, in this parable, and in His statement of the spirit of the Law as related to our fellow-men, was laying down a principle that all should be neighbors and treat each other in a kind, neighborly manner, which

is the only proper rule amongst mankind. We are to express our love for our neighbor by being thoughtful and considerate of his welfare and interests, and helpful to him as far as is in our power, other obligations being considered.

When we come to the Church, there is a special relationship and bond between its members. We are to love one another as Jesus loved us. This is a new commandment. The Golden Rule is not a new commandment; for [R5700 : page 169] it properly belonged to man when God created him, and is designed to be the rule of life. The Jewish Law, as it related to the attitude of the people of Israel toward one another, had for its essence the Golden Rule. But Jesus said to His disciples, "A *new* commandment I give unto *you*." He meant *this*: Those who have become New Creatures have a new relationship; they belong to a new family – the family of God.

Our brethren on the spirit plane are nearest to us of any. Whoever is a New Creature, and thus a brother to all those who are New Creatures, is not merely to observe the Golden Rule, but is to be ready to do toward any and all of the brethren as Jesus did; namely, to lay down his life for them. He is not to say, "I would lay down my life for him, and so I expect him to be willing to lay down his life for me." No! Regardless of his own interests and life, regardless of what others do or do not for him, he is to be willing to spend and be spent for the blessing of the brethren. He is to have *sacrificial* love, which goes beyond the Golden Rule. Thus are we to be true disciples.

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