

“Self Justification”

Luke 10:25-37

Introduction: It was expected that rabbis would discuss theological matters in public, and the question this lawyer asked was one that was often debated by the Jews. It was a good question asked with a bad motive, because the lawyer hoped to trap our Lord. However, Jesus trapped the lawyer! Our Lord sent the man back to the Law, not because the Law saves us, but because the Law shows us that we need to be saved. There can be no real conversion without conviction, and the Law is what God uses to convict sinners. The scribe gave the right answer, but he would not apply it personally to himself and admit his own lack of love for both God and his neighbor. So, instead of being justified by throwing himself on the mercy of God, he tried to justify himself and wriggle out of his predicament. He used the old debating tactic, “Define your terms! What do you mean by ‘neighbor’? Who is my neighbor?”

1. Self Justification Luke 10:29- *“But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?”*
 - a. Job 9:20- *“If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.”*
 - b. Luke 16:15- *“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”*
2. Sovereign Justification Isaiah 53:11- *“He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”*
 - a. Romans 3:30- *“Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.”*
 - b. Galatians 3:8- *“And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.”*

Body: This parable is a perfect illustration of what happens to the sinner when he is justified. The victim becomes the lost sinner who is half dead (alive physically, dead spiritually), helplessly left on the road of life. The priest and Levite represent the Law and the sacrifices, neither of which can save the sinner. The Samaritan is Jesus Christ who saves the man, pays the bill, and promises to come again. The inn stands for the local church where believers are cared for, and the “two pence” are the two ordinances, baptism and Communion.

- I. The Occasion for the Parable vs. 25-28
 - A. The Lawyer’s Question v. 25
 1. The questioner was an expert in the Law, a man with letters after his name.

2. This man and his kind, however, were jurists rather than theologians. This particular man hoped that Jesus would fail the test. He is the type of person who likes to trap people with subtle arguments.
- B. The Lord's Question v. 26
1. Jesus threw the man's question back to him. What is written in the law?
 2. If something has to be done to acquire eternal life, then surely the Law is the place to go.
- C. The Lawyer's Answer v. 27
1. The lawyer tossed two key passages from the Mosaic Law back to Jesus.
 2. Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5
- D. The Lord's Answer v. 28
1. The Lord gave the man's "do" right back to him.
 2. Here we have the gospel of good works. The theology of the man who says, "I'm doing the best I can."
 3. We cannot do anything to gain eternal life for the simple reason that we are incapable of doing anything good enough for God. Romans 3:9-20
 4. The two passages the lawyer quoted prove man's incompetence to produce anything good enough for God. No one but Jesus ever loved God with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength. No one but Jesus ever loved his neighbor as himself.
 5. People who imagine that works is the way to heaven stand condemned by their own religion. Therefore, he tried to justify himself (v. 29).
- II. The Overview of the Parable vs. 29-35
- A. The Lawyer's Question v. 29
1. By this time, the lawyer was beginning to wish that he had not tried to trap the Lord.
 2. He tried to confuse the issue, willing to justify himself (something most people try to do when they are driven into a corner).
- B. The Lord's Answer vs. 30-35
- Rather than answer the lawyer's question, the Lord told him a parable, thereby forcing the man to answer a much more pointed question: "Am I a neighbor?"
 - The story that Jesus told this lawyer is in three parts. It is a story of ruin, rejection, and redemption.
1. The Trip v. 30a
 - a. The man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.
 - b. When a person has turned his back on the city of God for a city accursed (Joshua 6:26), the only way he can go is down.
 2. The Trouble v. 30b
 - a. The road from Jerusalem down to Jericho was indeed a dangerous one.
 - b. Since the temple workers used it so much, you would have thought the Jews or Romans would have taken steps to make it safe. It is much easier to maintain a religious system than it is to improve the neighborhood.
 3. The Test vs. 31-35

- a. The Two Who Fails vs. 31-32
 - (1) Both of the men who showed up at this man's great point of need represented organized religion.
 - (a) The Priest was concerned with the Rites of Religion
 - (b) The Levite was concerned with the Rules of Religion
 - (2) Most of us can think up excuses for the priest and Levite as they ignored the victim. (Maybe we have used them ourselves!) The priest had been serving God at the temple all week and was anxious to get home. Perhaps the bandits were still lurking in the vicinity and using the victim as "bait." Why take a chance? Anyway, it was not his fault that the man was attacked. The road was busy, so somebody else was bound to come along and help the man.
 - (3) The priest left it to the Levite, and then the Levite did what the priest did—nothing! Such is the power of the bad example of a religious man.
 - (4) The priest and the Levite lost far more by their neglect than the Samaritan did by his concern. They lost the opportunity to become better men and good stewards of what God had given them. They could have been a good influence in a bad world, but they chose to be a bad influence.
 - (5) All of the doing must be done by someone else—how about that, Mr. Lawyer!
- b. The One Who Prevails vs. 33-35
 - (1) The Priest was concerned with the Rites of Religion. The Levite was concerned with the Rules of Religion. The Good Samaritan was concerned with the Robe of Redemption.
 - (2) We may read this passage and think only of "the high cost of caring," but it is far more costly *not* to care. Never say that such ministry is wasted! God sees to it that no act of loving service in Christ's name is ever lost.
 - (3) It all depends on your outlook. To the thieves, this traveling Jew was a victim to exploit, so they attacked him. To the priest and Levite, he was a nuisance to avoid, so they ignored him. But to the Samaritan, he was a neighbor to love and help, so he took care of him.
 - (4) By using a Samaritan as the hero, Jesus disarmed the Jews, for the Jews and Samaritans were enemies. John 4:9, 8:48
 - (5) It was not a Jew helping a Samaritan but a Samaritan helping a Jew who had been ignored by his fellow Jews! The Samaritan loved those who hated him, risked his own life, spent his own money (two days' wages for a laborer), and was never publicly rewarded or honored as far as we know.

III. The Observance from the Parable vs. 36-37

- A. The Lord's Question v. 36 (The Lord was not through with this lawyer. He demanded to know which of these was a neighbor.)
- B. The Lawyer's Answer v. 37a
 - 1. Unwilling to speak the words the Samaritan, the lawyer said he that showed mercy on him. The truth had to be dragged out of him.
 - 2. What the Samaritan did helps us better understand what it means to show mercy, and it also illustrates the ministry of Jesus Christ.
 - 3. The Samaritan identified with the needs of the stranger and had compassion on him. There was no logical reason why he should rearrange his plans and spend his money just to help an "enemy" in need, but mercy does not need reasons. Being an expert in the Law, the scribe certainly knew that God required His people to show mercy, even to strangers and enemies.
- C. The Lord's Answer v. 37b
 - 1. See how wisely Jesus "turned the tables" on the lawyer. Trying to evade responsibility, the man asked, "Who is my neighbor?"
 - 2. But Jesus asked, "Which of these three men was neighbor to the victim?" The big question is, "To whom can I be a neighbor?" and this has nothing to do with geography, citizenship, or race. Wherever people need us, there we can be neighbors and, like Jesus Christ, show mercy.
 - 3. Jesus said to the man who wanted no part in a salvation that came by way of one whom he despised, "Go, and do thou likewise."
 - 4. Note the constant beating of the drum: Do! (v. 25), Do! (v. 28), Do (v. 37). The law says "Do!" while the gospel says "Done!"

Conclusion: The lawyer wanted to discuss "neighbor" in a general way, but Jesus forced him to consider a specific man in need. How easy it is for us to talk about abstract ideals and fail to help solve concrete problems. We can discuss things like "poverty" and "job opportunities" and yet never personally help feed a hungry family or help somebody find a job. Of course, the lawyer wanted to make the issue somewhat complex and philosophical, but Jesus made it simple and practical. He moved it from *duty* to *love*, from *debating* to *doing*. To be sure, our Lord was not condemning discussions or debates; He was only warning us not to use these things as excuses for doing nothing. Committees are not always committed!