

The Good Samaritan

Streams of Refreshing · Luke 10

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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, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? 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 by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:25-37).

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He died for the ungodly. Prophets had repeatedly declared that salvation is of the Lord {Jonah 2:9},

and had long spoken of Jehovah as a just God and a Saviour {Isa. 45:21}.

The gospel prominently sets this forth. He was called Jesus or Savior, because He would save His people from their sins {Matt. 1:21};

and when the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds, he said, Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord {Luke 2:11}.

Jesus Himself taught His disciples that He came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them {Luke 9:56};

and when a sin-convicted woman received Him as such, He pronounced her saved {Luke 7:50};

and when another joyfully received Him, He declared, This day is salvation come to this house {Luke 19:9}.

Paul testified that the grace of God bringeth salvation, and He counted it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners {1 Tim. 1:15}.

How blessed is the contemplation of the fact, that God still proclaims salvation for the chief of sinners, through the atoning death of Christ! Well may we sing --

It is the fact of God having provided a Savior for sinners that so richly manifests divine love, and when received into the heart by faith, the ruined and lost become attracted to the bosom of God. No one ever could have conceived that God had such love for sinful man as Jesus revealed. To condemn sin in His only-begotten Son, that He might bring us to glory, instead of eternally condemning us, as we so justly deserved, was such a deep thought of unutterable love as the cross of Christ alone could fully set forth. No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him {John 4:18}.

Man's estimate of God generally is, that He is a hard master, demanding and expecting great things from him; hence, when he thinks of God at all, it is commonly associated with the idea of bringing something to God, instead of receiving from Him. Paul met this thought in the idolatrous Athenians, by telling them that God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things {see Acts 17:25}.

It is this proud thought of man's ability that is such an impenetrable barrier to the entrance of the gospel into the heart, and it is this that the Spirit of God breaks down, by convincing men of their sinfulness and need of a Savior, and showing them that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Him, who is now at the right hand of God.

"Salvation! let the echo fly The spacious earth around; While all the armies of the sky Conspire to raise the sound.

It is recorded that, on more than one occasion, persons came to Jesus in this erroneous condition of mind. Their enquiry was about doing something to entitle them to eternal life; which served, in the case before us, as a fit opportunity for our Lord to unfold the difference between law and gospel, and to show that He came, not to call the righteous, but to seek and to save that which was lost.

"Salvation! O thou bleeding Lamb, To thee the praise belongs; Salvation shall inspire our hearts, And dwell upon our tongues."

The touching parable of the good Samaritan was drawn forth by the lawyer's self-righteous enquiry. In the darkness of deep ignorance and idle curiosity, he tempted the Lord with this question: What shall I do to inherit eternal life? {Luke 10:25}.

The point was about doing something to entitle to life; our Savior, therefore, could only refer him to what God had written in the law of Moses, in which it had been repeatedly declared, that the man that doeth these things shall live in them. The vain confidence of this enquirer was best met by thus directing him to God's own standard of righteousness; for when men suppose that they are capable of doing that which will entitle them to eternal life, the just balance of God's law and testimony can alone determine the question. Our Lord's reply, therefore, was -What is written in the law? how readest thou? {Luke 10:26}

The lawyer's response showed that, like many in the present day, he was acquainted with the letter of the law, while he knew nothing of its killing, condemning power, in laying bare the conscience, and exposing to his view the depravity of his own evil heart. He unhesitatingly answered, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself {Luke 10:27};

to which our Lord replied, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live {Luke 10:28}.

Thus the righteous balance of God's holy law was brought forth, and the only question was, whether the lawyer, if weighed, would be found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

He drew forth the required standard himself, and the question was, Did it pronounce him righteous, and entitled to life? or did it prove him to have sinned, and come short of the glory of God {Rom. 3:23}?

for the heart-searching demand of that law was, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself {Luke 10:27}.

Thus perfection of devotedness to God, unceasing and unfailing in its continuance, with self-sacrifice for our neighbour's benefit, were involved in the law. Is it not strange that the lawyer did not fall down before such demands, pricked in his heart, and exclaim, God be merciful to me a sinner {Luke 18:13}?

But he did not. So blind and ignorant is the natural man, that he perceives nothing spiritually, except the Holy Ghost enlighten his understanding and open his heart! The lawyer was still willing to justify himself {Luke 10:29}.

How great is the blindness of the human heart! But has it not always been the way of man to seek to excuse and justify himself? Do we not see multitudes around us, having the law of Moses on their lips, but so destitute of the sense of its perfect requirements as to attempt self-justification, by endeavouring to scrape together a righteousness by that very law which so thoroughly proves them to be transgressors, as to be to them a ministration of condemnation and death, so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God {Rom. 3:19}?

Such is the law. Its demands are strict, its measure perfect, its standard unalterable, inflicting death on the transgressor, without any promise of mercy. Holy, just, and good in itself, but capable of showing man's sinfulness, without giving him life or righteousness; for the Scripture saith, If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain {Gal. 2:21}.

Who, then, can lay claim to life on the ground of the law? Who can say, I am clean, I am pure, I have never transgressed thy commands at any time? Blessed be God, there was One who could say, I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

Yes, He magnified the law, and made it honourable {see Isa. 42:21, especially New Trans., JND};

He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength; and He proved that He loved His neighbour as Himself, by redeeming him with His own precious blood. Though the lawyer was so willing to justify himself {Luke 10:29},

yet he failed to do so, for he was standing before the light of truth; and the proposed question, Who is my neighbour? {Luke 10:29}

seems to imply that he had some misgiving about being able to meet this part of the law's demands; and when the Lord drew a picture of one loving a neighbour as himself, and added, Go and do likewise {Luke 10:37},

the lawyer was unable to ask any more questions, for guilt of conscience, under the power of God's holy truth, stopped his mouth. If his heart were opened to receive the blessed instruction set before him, he could not have failed to feel self-condemned, in coming so far short of God's standard of righteousness, and would have perceived in the parable, that Christ had drawn a life-like portrait of himself in the fallen, naked, wounded, needy, half-dead traveller; and that He that was speaking to him was the neighbor ready to bind up his wounds, and pour peace and joy into his wounded conscience. Thus he would be taught the true secret of the gospel, that while he could not inherit eternal life {Luke 10:25}

by doing, nevertheless it could be had without money and without price {Isa. 55:1},

from the Savior of sinners, as the free gift of God. In contemplating the parable, we may notice: 1. Man's fallen and helpless condition. 2. The inability of law or ordinances to meet his need. 3. The depth and suitability of the Savior's love. 4. The security and prospects of the healed and rescued sinner. 1. MAN'S FALLEN AND HELPLESS CONDITION is most strikingly set before us in the wounded man.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead {Luke 10:30}.

We are reminded here that man is a fallen creature. God made him upright, and pronounced him, with every other part of creation, very good {Gen. 1:31}.

He was a stranger to guilt, and knew nothing of death's terrible sting; he was clothed with innocence, and no stain had ever soiled his pure mind. But the great enemy came to him, and he disobeyed God's command. This is sin; and in this way he was stripped of his robe of spotless purity; he was sensible of his wickedness, he felt the deep wounds of fear and guilt, and knew that death claimed him, without having any prospect of deliverance. As the Scripture saith, By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned {Rom. 5:12}.

Thus man is a fallen creature, and he is also without strength {Rom. 5:6};

he is gone astray from God, and sin reigns in him unto death. All mankind are alike in this respect, all are naked, wounded, helpless, needy sinners. It is very important to see this, because it withers up all

thoughts of creature ability, makes us conscious of being outside Eden's blessings, and lays us prostrate by the wayside, helpless, and sinking under the effects of the mortal wounds we have received. Our birth-condition, being a fallen one, teaches us the absolute necessity of being born again {John 3:7},

and shows us the correctness of the Divine verdict, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint {Isa. 1:5},

and that from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores {Isa. 1:6}.

How humiliating to the proud, self-sufficient lawyer, could he have traced his own portrait in this picture of the traveller by the wayside, naked, fainting, gasping, lingering in helplessness and misery, without any resources for healing or comfort, and without a friend to help or sympathize, till the Savior of sinners came where he was. Ah! man may boast of his noble faculties, and vast capabilities, as if he were unfallen; but what is he in the sight of God? How does the pure light of heavenly truth manifest him? What is he when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary? What can be more humbling than the Lord's concise description, stripped, wounded,

and half-dead {Luke 10:30}!

This is God's verdict, and this, I am sure, every Spirit-taught conscience acknowledges as true and righteous altogether. 2. THE INABILITY OF LAW OR ORDINANCES TO MEET MAN'S NEED. Redemption by grace was an eternal purpose in the heart of God. The Lamb was fore-ordained before the foundation of the

world; and when God pronounced the promise of redemption, there was no reference to the law. It was not until 400 years after the call of Abraham that the law was given, and the reason of its being given was to make sin manifest. The law entered that the offence might abound {Rom. 5:20}.

Hence we read; By chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side {Luke 10:31}.

This legal official had no remedy for the fallen and helpless, and he could only be a witness to the fact, that there was a wounded, half-dead

traveller there. The man needed life, peace, healing, salvation, which the priest under the law was unable to minister; he therefore passed by on the other side.

The Levite was equally unable to meet his need; for he had no healing balm for a sin-wounded conscience. His sacrifices only brought sin to remembrance, and could not give remission; -for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins {Heb. 10:4}.

He therefore only looked

on the dying sinner, passed by on the other side {Luke 10:32},

and became another witness that man was stripped, wounded,

and under sentence of death, needing remission of sins. Thus we see something of what man's real state before God is, and what a united testimony there is to his being a fallen and helpless sinner, and the inability of rites or ceremonies to meet his need. Sad indeed would it be, if the Divine record stopped here; but, blessed be God, it does not; for our deep necessity has been God's opportunity of displaying the riches of His grace in the perfect salvation of those who could not save themselves. He loved us while we were yet sinners. And -"Though our nature's fall in Adam Seemed to shut us out from God, Thus it was His counsel brought us Nearer still, through Jesus' blood."

3. This leads us to consider next, THE DEPTH AND SUITABILITY OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE, so blessedly presented to us in His own ways and words; and standing in the widest contrast with the cold, heartless look of the Priest and Levite. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine {Luke 10:33, 34}.

This is what the half-dead traveller needed. It suited such a helpless one. It exactly met his case. Nothing less would do.

Nothing more could be desired. What unutterable grace! How great, how free, how deep, the love of Christ to ruined sinners! Deep indeed, for He came down to us where we were, in our sins, guilt, and ruin. He had compassion, and brought healing and salvation. He saw the depth of our wounds, He beheld the misery and helplessness we were in, and His loving heart so flowed out with compassion, that when nothing less than the tremendous agony, suffering, and death of the cross would deliver us from wrath, He freely laid down His life for us, even when we were dead in sins. The Holy Savior was willingly made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and now, being raised from the dead, He lives at God's right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give remission of sins. His blood has been shed for undone, guilty sinners, and His blood gives peace to the wounded conscience. His blood can heal the broken heart, and He is to us a better robe than unfallen man ever knew; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe {Rom. 3:22}.

This is what Jesus gives. The testimony of the God of truth to the value of Christ's death is the oil and wine that He pours into the troubled soul. When the Holy Spirit bears witness to the broken heart, of the law being fulfilled, its curse borne, sins purged, and death under the judgment of God endured by His Son for the sinner, so that now there is full liberty for those who believe to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, this is like oil and wine poured into the sinking soul, filling it with joy and peace. What amazing kindness! What sovereign love! How deep! How suitable! But who can speak of its power and virtue, but the wounded that have been healed by the loving Savior? "Nothing but thy blood, O Jesus, Could relieve us from our smart; Nothing else from guilt release us, Nothing else can melt the heart. "Law and terrors do but harden, All the while they work alone; But a sense of blood-bought pardon Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

4. THE SECURITY AND PROSPECTS OF THE HEALED AND RESCUED SINNER. Christ saves to the uttermost. He not only begins a good work, but He perfects it. He not only cleanses, but brings nigh to God, and by His Spirit unites us to Himself. He met us as beggars on the dunghill, and set us among princes. He quickened us when dead in sins, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. We thus become His for ever. And so we read, that after the wounded man had been bound up, and oil and wine had been poured in, he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee {Luke 10:34, 35}.

The security of the healed man was, that the Samaritan had exalted him from the wayside to his own seat -set him on his own beast,

and undertook to care for him, making provision for the whole time of his absence from him; and the blessed prospect before him was the hope of his coming again. We might enlarge to show the responsibility of the Church, symbolized by the inn, to care for the lambs of the Lord's flock; but we can now simply refer to it. The Samaritan's care of the restored man is brought out, not only in the statement that he took care of him,

but also in committing him to the ministration of others, on whom he had bestowed gifts for the service, saying, Take care of him.

The knowledge that the kind friend, who had so mercifully rescued him from death, had made arrangements for the supply of all his present and future need must have been very consoling, and calculated to deliver from all fear and distrust; while the expectation of his coming again could not fail to be an object of the deepest interest. When the shepherd found the lost sheep, and laid him on his shoulders, the security of the sheep was, that he was borne up by the strong arm of the good shepherd. The security of Noah when he entered the ark was, that God shut him in {Gen. 7:16}.

The security of the children of Israel, when the destroying angel came in judgment, was the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their lintel and door-posts. And so now the security of the believer is, that he is in Christ, justified by His blood, upheld before God by the perfect love and almighty power of the great High Priest. Most blessed is it for every true believer in the Lord Jesus to know that by one offering he is perfected for ever {see Heb. 10:14},

and that God hath made Christ to be unto him wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption {1 Cor. 1:30}.

In Christ he has life, righteousness, and completeness, and can never be separated from His love. Christ will care for him continually, help in difficulty, comfort in sorrow, restore when erring, and lead him into paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Christ, who died for him, ever intercedes for him, and will come again for him. Christ dwells in him, and he dwells in Christ, and the love, wisdom, work, worth, and power of Christ are all for him. "Once in Christ, in Christ for ever; Nothing from His love can sever."

Such is the believer's security, and the bright prospect of his soul is, that Jesus will come again, and receive him unto Himself. He knows that the same Jesus, who went into heaven, shall so come in like manner as the disciples saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). He looks for the Savior, and loves His appearing. Then he knows that Christ will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied {Isa. 53:11};

and he says, As for me, I will behold His face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness {see Psalms. 17:15}.

Time was when God's dear people were so living in the power of divine truth, that they turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

Oh that we, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, were so much in love with Christ, so rejoicing in His finished work, so sensibly affected by His amazing grace, as to be continually rejoicing in hope of His coming! But perhaps my reader is a stranger to grace. You are, it may be, so far dead, as not to be sensible of your naked, wounded, perilous state. Is it so? Then let me ask you to consider how you will bear the light and terrors of the judgment-seat, and be judged according to your works? Death steals slowly but surely over you, and will quickly hurl you far from the reach of mercy, to stand before God. But, dear fellow-sinner, you are naked, wounded, and dying, though you think little of it. Do ponder these things. God pronounces all to be guilty before Him. And is not Jesus, the Good Samaritan, able to heal you? Did He not die for the chief of sinners? Does He not delight to pardon iniquity? Does He not now come where you are with the sweet balm of His blessed gospel? Does not His precious blood cleanse from all sin? Does He refuse one sinner, however vile, that comes to Him? Then why not believe on Him to save you, that He may bind up your wounds, pour joy and peace into your soul, and make you happy in the present enjoyment of His perfect and unchanging love, with the joyful prospect of being with Him in glory for ever. May God grant His blessing. Amen.