

## WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

How do you read the Law? What does the Gospel declare?

Luke 10:25-37

**TEXT:** *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

Are you an expert in anything? If you are, you know that there will be others who will seek you out for your expertise. Maybe you have a "green thumb" and people come to you and ask "How do you get your lawn so green; your tomatoes so big?" Maybe you're an expert on cars, and people come to you for your advice before they buy a used one. Maybe you're a financial expert and always asked for free advice. Maybe you're an expert in the law. Lot's of people look for free legal advice.

The Bible says that *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"* Notice that he doesn't ask, "What must I do to be saved...?" But already assuming that he is well on his way to salvation, he asks about what must yet be done to inherit eternal life? Has he "covered all the bases" as we say?

Jesus response is a parable universally known as the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It was meant to show this law expert that he was not, could not, and would not, inherit eternal life since he had not loved his neighbor as himself. In other words, he had failed and was going to go to hell.

Also note that in this text, there is not one single breath of the Gospel. Instead it only tells us what it told this man concerning eternal life. It will be enjoyed only by those whose lives are perfect in the light of God's Law. The closest thing to any Gospel at all is in the name JESUS which means Savior. We must know and believe what the name of Jesus is so that the question "What must I do to be saved?" it answered in the declaration of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

How do you read the parable of the Good Samaritan? Many read it as their ticket to heaven. Help others. Be a "Good Samaritan" and God will bless you and accept you.

Someone once pointed to this word of Jesus and challenged me, a pastor who should be a relative expert in the Word, to say that this proves that other religions who do not recognize Jesus as the only Way to heaven, can also provide an alternative way. The very sincere Jew who tries his best to please God and live a good life, can make it to heaven. The good Mormon, the good Freemason, so many who do so much good in society, will they not also be accepted? And the Muslim who is not a terrorist or a Jihadist, but one who follows the Quran with all sincerity, will he not be saved? What about all those who never had a chance to hear about Jesus, but who sincerely tried to *'Love the Lord ... with all ... heart ... soul ... strength and ... mind'; and, (who) 'Love (their) neighbor as (themselves)...* After all, it's Jesus, the Divine Expert who says: *Do this and you will live.* Yes, do this and you will go to heaven.

You must read this parable within the context for which Jesus himself made it up and delivered it. You must do this or you will fail to understand it, and in fact you will use this parable to the harm of your own soul.

The context is this: *On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"*

*He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said ... hence, the parable of "The Good Samaritan."* It is Jesus response to a man who *wanted to justify himself ...* He wanted Jesus to publicly declare him to be worthy of heaven for who he was. He had already justified himself. He was an expert in the Law of God, an example of goodness and virtue. He already knew that but now he wanted to hear it from Jesus.

People do that all the time. They want to justify themselves so they read God's Law in a way that gives them the feeling that they are OK. Take the Sixth Commandment for example. The Sixth Commandment honors and protects marriage as God Himself instituted it: the union of one man and one woman for life. And Scripture clearly says: *Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.* He 13 How is this clear Law of God being read today? People have taken it upon themselves to re-define marriage so that they can feel good about themselves and their homosexual sin. Then there are others who obviously do not read it at all for they live together without honoring marriage and so defile the marriage bed. But as it is written: *God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.* He 13

You and I are also guilty of this because that is our nature as well. Our SINFUL nature, the Old Adam, finds its comfort and confidence in justifying himself by comparing ourselves to others whose sins stand out more glaringly before the world than do our "little" secret sins that condemn us just as thoroughly as do the sins of the adulterers and homosexuals. So what kind of parable would Jesus make up to make me aware of MY sins? It might be one even more devastating than this one called "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." And he would do it because he wants us all to read the Law with honesty and truth so that we learn to cry out: "What must I do to be saved!"

That's our original question: What must I do to be saved? Our Lord would have us ask that question, not to justify ourselves, but so that the Gospel can declare to us what God has done to save us.

The "expert in the Law" to whom Jesus addressed this parable was to learn that he was nothing like that Samaritan who showed mercy to the beaten victim. Jesus masterfully held up the mirror of the Law to show him that he was like the heartless priest and Levite who carefully stepped around the man dying in the ditch. Jesus wanted this "expert" to cry out with the words of King David: *Have mercy on me, O God ... For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.* Ps 51 Had this "expert in the Law" cried out with an honest confession of sin and pleaded the Lord's mercy, Jesus would not have concluded the parable with the words *Go and do likewise.* "Go and be like this man in my story, a Samaritan that you actually despise, and have a heart that sees every man as your brother." Jesus would have declared instead: I will have mercy on you! Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven!

That beautiful Psalm of King David, Psalm 51, is the prayer and confession of everyone who knows the Gospel of salvation and is saved. It simply proclaims the grace and mercy of God: *Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.* And then, after his confession of sin, his hopelessness in ever trying to justify himself, after proclaiming the power of God's mercy that alone justifies by the cleansing power of Jesus' blood, David says: *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.* David himself becomes an expert, not just in the Law that condemns us, but in the Gospel that saves us and turns sinners into saints.

Do NOT teach this parable as if Jesus were telling us how to live to be saved. Teach this parable in the context Jesus in which used it to show a self-righteous arrogant sinner his sins. Then when those who hear and listen confess their sins, tell them what God, in Christ, has done for us. Then those who hear and believe the Gospel will also have a heart to *Go and do likewise...* They will want to serve their Savior and their fellow man. They will want to worship and praise their Savior who has done all that is necessary in answer to that most important question: WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved! Amen