

According to historian (Paul Johnson) - Karl Marx... the self-proclaimed defender of the working-class proletariat - and the author of Socialism... never truly knew (or had a friendship) with *a single member of the proletariat*. ... So far as researchers know... he never set foot in a mill... or a factory... or a mine... or any other industrial workplace - in his whole life. ... Living a self-conscious... Bohemian... intellectual lifestyle... he always kept company with higher-class intellectuals like himself. ... When he and Friedrich Engels created the Communist League... (and again when they formed the International Communist League)... they made sure that working-class socialists were eliminated from any positions of influence.

It is also clear that for all his efforts to appear that he was the social benefactor of humankind... he (actually) **disliked** people... and continuously fought with members of his family. ... Marx lived his life in an atmosphere of verbal violence... quarreling with everyone with whom he associated for any length of time. He worked hard at keeping his status in the higher-class... *bourgeois*. ... Thanks to Engels... Marx spent the last two decades of his life in the comfortable higher-class... and for the last ten years he never had less than two servants!

What is the point of all this? ... All humans find it difficult to live up to what we espouse intellectually. ... Even Carl Marx could not exemplify the principles of his invented Socialism. Furthermore... so often those who are the loudest proclaimers of certain ideas... are the biggest **contradictions** to those same ideas. ... And even more to the point... it is **not uncommon** to love - the idea - that you love people and are their benefactor... rather than to actually love people themselves.

So... let me say this: ... .. Love for people - or the **lack** of it - reveals the quality and effectiveness of the philosophy we hold. ... And from a Biblical perspective our love for people is even more revealing... because it actually indicates the authenticity and health of our relationship **with GOD**.  
... [ P A U S E ] ...

Proof of this can be seen in the two divisions of the Ten Commandments. The first division... (the first four commandments)... all demand and enhance our **love for God** and are summed up in the *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4, 5). ... The concluding six commandments (the second division of the Law)... all demand that we **love others** and are summarized in the words of Leviticus 19:18: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

The spiritual logic is clear. ... You must first love God with all that is in you... and if you do... you will be able to love others as you love yourself. Love for God produces love for people. ... [ P A U S E ] ...

Turning this spiritual logic on its head... we are able to discern one’s love for God by the existence of a love for others. ... Love for God is difficult to see... but love for people is subject to relational verification.  
... [ P A U S E ] ...

Significantly... Paul... writing to the Galatians... quoted Leviticus 19:18 as shorthand for keeping the whole law: “*The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’*” (Gal. 5:14).

Does this mean we can earn salvation by simply loving our neighbor? **YES!** (If we constantly love the way our passage today demonstrates ALL THE TIME – without fail.) But none of us can do that. ... No philosophy (or world system) can do that... not even the best religious structure.

All of this must be understood – if we are to gain the Lord’s intended benefit from our passage today. ... None of us can love our neighbor well enough that it would earn our salvation. As we look at the parable of the Good Samaritan today... and you find yourself thinking: “*Boy! That sure does not look like me...*” then you are thinking what Christ **wanted** His listeners to think. ... And while we are on the subject... do you know ANYONE who fits the description of *loving the LORD your God with **all** their heart and with **all** their soul and with **all** their strength...* Always – without fail...? Only Jesus could do this – and did!

But... the more we grow as persons who (more and more consistently) love the Lord with all our heart... all our soul... and all our mind – we will be closer to this perfect love that Christ demonstrates in this story.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is perhaps the most well-known parable in Luke’s gospel. ... It must be interpreted on two levels. The first level is the plain teaching that a person - like the Samaritan - should help others in need. ... This is the standard that we all need to aim for. We need to have the heart of a **neighbor**... a person who sees and thoroughly helps **anyone** who has a need.

The second level of our interpretation will be in the context of the rejection of Jesus. ... A Samaritan was an outcast to Jesus’ original listening audience of this story. Yet this outcast was the only one who helped the

man in great need. ... Jesus is like the Samaritan.... He is the outcast One... Who is willing to seek and to save people who are perishing.

Let's turn to our passage now...

### **Luke 10:25**

The question he asked must have sounded innocent, commendable even: "What must I do to inherit everlasting life?" ... However... Luke makes it very clear that the lawyer didn't ask the question as a person seeking a genuine answer. He said it to test Jesus. He threw the question down like a gauntlet... challenging Jesus to a theological duel... as it were.

The fact that this man was testing or tempting Jesus was an indication that he did not sincerely want to know the answer to his question. He wasn't there to be taught. He was there to trick Jesus and discredit the Lord. The lawyers or scribes did not like Jesus.

The questioner was a lawyer and therefore one of "the wise and learned" of whom Jesus had only recently said (just four verses earlier... in Luke 10:21) "*I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.*" ... The lawyer was one of those who were sure they had the truth.

In reality... the lawyer (probably) already knew the answer Jesus would give to his question. ... I say this because Jesus had previously voiced His answer to that question... in a different situation... in Mark 12:28-31. In the previous situation... Jesus gave the answer that this lawyer is about to give. He quoted Deut 6:4-5 along with Leviticus 19:18 ... and Jesus had

almost certainly expressed it other times as well. (Great teachers constantly repeat themselves. ... Great teachers constantly repeat themselves.)

(And) please notice something with me about the lawyers question. ... It inappropriately combines the idea of “doing”— that is... working to gain a benefit — and the idea of “inheriting.” ... He asked what one must do to inherit eternal life. ... (Think about it for a moment)... No one has to work to gain an inheritance. An estate already belongs to the inheritor... and is guaranteed to become his or her property in due time. ... This is such a convoluted question! ... However... first-century Jews believed they automatically inherited eternal life... simply because they were children of Abraham.

### **Luke 10:26-28**

The law-expert’s answer was a correct restatement of Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. These passages imply that the very essence of all true religion is love... and that this love must have both God and the neighbor as its objects.

Jesus replied. ‘Do this and you will live.’ ” There is just one problem... and the lawyer saw it. ... No one can do this. (And) he knew that he certainly did not measure up to the only way the Old Testament says a person can earn eternal life.

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. People who imagine that works is the way to heaven stand condemned by their own religion.

The lawyer looked foolish... having been made to answer his own question and then being kindly told to practice the answer he had just preached. How embarrassing! ... Jesus responded (in effect)... *“You have your answer. Now, get after it!”*

At this point... the lawyer — like all good practitioners of the law — started looking for loopholes. He knew he had not kept the Law to the extent that he needed... nor could he. ... He knew he had long ago lost the moral battle. ... So, he attempted to do what all Pharisees did. Recognizing that the moral standard of heaven is too high... he looked for a way to lower the bar. *“Wishing to justify himself”* ... he sought to define the term *“neighbor”* in the most convenient way possible. ... He used the old debating tactic... *“Define your terms! What do you mean by ‘neighbor’? Who is my neighbor?”*

### **Luke 10:29**

By this time... the lawyer was doubtless beginning to wish that he had not tried to trip the Lord. He tried to confuse the issue. ... *“We can’t love everyone! Where do you draw the line? What about tyrants? What about blasphemers? Really, Jesus, who is my neighbor?”* ... The man’s response should have been to ask: *“How can I do this? I am not able. I need help.”* Instead, he tried *“to justify himself.”*

The man probably thought: *If the definition of “neighbor” includes those people I like and with whom I am most comfortable... then I’m doing just fine!* ... So to answer the lawyer’s question... Jesus told a story. Jesus is going to show the law-expert that the latter’s very approach (his very

question) is wrong. Jesus will change the question from: “*Who is my neighbor?*” to “*Am I neighborly?*”

“Am I neighborly?” is something every Christian should be asking. The answer will show you how strong your love for God is.

### **Luke 10:30**

Jesus gave the story a setting His audience would immediately recognize. When Jews traveled from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north, they typically traveled east, down the mountains toward the Jordan River basin in order to go around Samaria, which lay between Judea and Galilee. Such was their loathing of the Samaritans that they preferred this longer, more treacherous route.

This road was about 17 miles long and it was a very dangerous path to travel. It was steep. Jerusalem is about 2300 feet above sea level and Jericho, which is near the Dead Sea, is about 1300 feet below sea level. This means that a person traveling from these two towns would travel on a wilderness... desolate road that dropped 3,600 feet in altitude.

The narrowness... the ravines... the almost inaccessible cliffs... the caverns... and the sudden turns in this road made it ideal for thieves to ambush travelers and steal their money. ...They could ambush their victims... and quickly flee almost beyond the possibility of pursuit. You took your life into your hands when you traveled on this route. Travel was so bad that the road was named: “The Red Way or the Bloody Way.” It was like a gauntlet of greed and danger.

This man was mugged by thieves. This word “**thieves**” is from the word *lestes {lace-tace}* which means “a robber or someone who plunders another.” ... These men not only took property... they also hurt or killed people. They were extremely violent. These men took his clothes and possessions... and seriously wounded this traveler. He was half dead... indicating the seriousness of his injuries. WHO could possibly not see his need and readily come to his aid...? ... What possible justification could there be for anyone to ignore him...? The man was completely helpless.

### **Luke 10:31**

The first person to discover the poor man on the Jericho road was a member of the cloth: “A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side” (v. 31). Jericho was one of the main country spots where priests lived. So the priest was likely returning from performing holy service in the temple. If the man lying on the roadside was dead and the priest touched him, the priest would be ceremonially defiled (cf. Leviticus 21:1ff.). So rather than risk defilement, he passed by on the far side of the road. To preserve legal cleanliness, he heartlessly transgressed the entire second table of the Law. Oh, was he pure!

Think of all the excuses that this priest might have used:

- “This road is too dangerous for me to stop and help the man.”
- “He might be a decoy for an ambush.”
- “I’ve got to get to the temple and perform my service for the Lord.”
- “I’ve got to get home and see my family.”
- “Someone really should help that man.”
- “If I’m going to serve at the temple I can’t get my clothes bloody.”
- “I don’t know first aid.”
- “It’s a hopeless case.”

- “I’m only one person; the job is too big.”
- “I can pray for him.”
- “He brought it on himself, he should have never been alone on such a dangerous road.”
- “He never asked for help”

You know what...? ... (Sadly... but honestly) I could see myself using any one of these to justify myself. ... Can you? ... and then there is THIS Biblical justification for the priest...

**Leviticus 21:1-3 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> And the LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them, No one shall make himself unclean for the dead among his people, <sup>2</sup> except for his closest relatives, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother, <sup>3</sup> or his virgin sister (who is near to him because she has had no husband; for her he may make himself unclean).*

The dying man on the side of the road (who needed help) did not qualify as one of the exceptions for the priest to make himself unclean. ... But as Jesus continues the story... we see that there is a higher law – the law of love for others.

**Luke 10:32-33**

Levites were not as high-ranking as priests... though they were highly privileged. Levites were descendants of Levi but not of Aaron... and they assisted the priests (Aaron’s descendants) in the temple. ... They oversaw the ceremonies and liturgies of temple services.

The language of the text gives the sense that he actually went up close to the man to see him... and then passed by on the other side.

No one expected Jesus' to finish the story the way he did: "But a Samaritan... as he traveled... came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him" ... A Samaritan? ... Not long before... James and John had urged the Lord to call down fire from Heaven to destroy some inhospitable Samaritans (Luke 9:54).

The hatred between Judea and Samaria went back over 400 years and centered around racial purity... because while the Jews had kept their purity during the Babylonian Captivity... the Samaritans had lost theirs by intermarrying with Assyrian invaders. ... In the Jews' eyes the Samaritans were compromising mongrels. ... Also, the Samaritans had built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim only to have it destroyed by the Jews in Maccabean times.

So in Jesus' day the hatred was ingrained and utterly cruel. The rabbis said, "Let no man eat the bread of the Samaritans... for he who eats their bread is as he who eats swine's flesh." The ultimate insult came in the arsenic-laced Jewish prayer that concluded, "... and do not remember the Samaritans in the Resurrection." Add to this the fact that in Jesus' day some Jewish travelers had been murdered in Samaria... and that some Samaritans had defiled the temple with human bones... and you can begin to imagine the shock of Jesus' introducing a Samaritan **not as a villain** - but as a hero! ... And the hated Samaritan's pity and compassion was extraordinary.

### **Luke 10:34-35**

A hated Samaritan—of all people!—"saw" exactly what the priest and the Levite had seen... but he responded with compassion. Whereas the other

two travelers passed by on the other side of the road... the Samaritan “came to him.” Furthermore... the Lord describes the Samaritan’s care as tender... conscientious... thorough... inconvenient... and sacrificially costly. He gave the best care of the day... washing the wounds in wine to ward off infection... bathing the raw flesh in soothing olive oil... and bandaging the injuries to protect them. ... He took the bruised man to safety and cared for him until morning. ... He even left the innkeeper two days’ wages... charging him to care for the injured man... promising to return and cover any additional expenses. ... His grace toward the unknown victim was extraordinary!

The Lord now turns the lawyer’s attention to the true Savior, one whom the lawyer chose to despise. The Samaritan, despised by the Jews, turned out, after all, to be the one who brought salvation to the fallen man. It now becomes a story of *redemption*. The Samaritan “came where he was”. Blessed be God! Just like Jesus! Out of the glories of Heaven Jesus came... into a world of sin... right to where we were in all of our helplessness and need. ... The Samaritan dressed the poor man’s wounds... pouring in oil and wine — oil to soothe and wine to cleanse. Then the Samaritan brought the poor man to an inn to be cared for until his return — all of which whispers to us about Christ!

### **Luke 10:36-37**

See how wisely Jesus “turned the tables” on the lawyer. Trying to evade responsibility... the man asked, “Who is my neighbor?” ... 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.

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.

Jesus 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.

Jesus’ question reveals a greater concern for the lawyer’s application of the Law than his ability to distill it to something pithy and easy to manage. Jesus’ question also made it difficult for the man to lower the standard of righteousness to something convenient and self-justifying.

Jesus ended the encounter with the challenge: “Go and do the same,” knowing the man could not consistently apply such an impossibly high standard of goodness — at least not day after day and person by person. Jesus’ challenge put all hope of salvation by works completely out of reach.

This is not a call to perfection. Only Jesus totally loved God and His neighbor as Himself. Only Jesus was consistently merciful to everyone who came His way. But it is a call to consider whether in our relationships there is evidence that we love God. ... Are we merciful? ... Are we truly compassionate with others? ... Do we characteristically pass by those who

are in distress — physical... economic... social — those we meet along the road of life...?

The story of the Good Samaritan and Scripture's call to love our neighbors as ourselves... gives us a way of testing our relationship with God. ... It delivers us from *an infatuation with the idea* that we are lovers of God... when we are not. ... Marx's claims to be a benefactor of the proletariat was shown to be bogus by his elite bourgeois preferences and manners. ... Our relationship with fellow human beings validates or invalidates our claims to know and love God.

How we live with others is shorthand for how we are related to God. May self-examination drive us to grace!

We must sincerely confess that it is forever impossible for us... by our own action... to fulfil the demands of God's law: to love others as ourselves – just as the Good Samaritan demonstrated. We must ask for and depend on God's grace. We have received as a free gift... everything we need for life and godliness... so we must now... guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit... live our life to the glory of God.