

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Concerning parables, it was Jesus himself who told his disciples who enquired of him why he used that form of speech:

“Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables that seeing they might see and not perceive, and hearing they may hear and not understand lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them” (Mark 4:11-12).

What was true when those words were spoken to the followers of our Lord, are as true now, as then.

In giving a definition of a parable, Bro John Thomas in *Elpis Israel*, page 274 wrote the following:

“A parable is the setting forth of a certain thing as a representative of something else. Hence it is a comparison, or similitude. It may be spoken or acted. In the former case, fiction is used to illustrate that which is real, while in the latter real actions on a smaller scale are representative of remoter and grander events. Whether spoken or acted, parables are dark and unintelligible to those who are not skilled in the things of the Kingdom of God, but once they come to comprehend these, the things they resemble immediately appear. To allegorise is to represent Truth by comparison. For certain features of the Kingdom of God to be illustrated parabolically is to speak or act allegorically, and is a mode of instruction more calculated to keep up the attention, and to impress the mind more permanently than a set discourse or formal disquisition. The Scriptures are constructed after this ingenious plan by which they are made so much more interesting and capable of containing so much more matter than any other book on the same subject and of the same size. They are a study of themselves and no “rules of interpretation” or of “logic” are of any value to the understanding of the things which they reveal”.

It is quite evident from this testimony that any understanding of the parable of the good Samaritan or indeed of any other of the parables of Jesus which is general among the ‘Christian churches’ (so-called) must be either false or lacking in any spiritual insight because they are ignorant of the True spiritual teaching concerning the Kingdom of God, and His Purpose relative to it. The sincere disciple will desire, and not be satisfied until he has searched out the fullness of meaning which is intrinsic in all the parables spoken by our Lord.

It surely is not necessary to utter a parable to make plain what is meant in doing good to anyone who in the course of our daily life and for whatever reason is in need of help. A little drop of the “milk of human kindness” which all but

the most bestial of men possess, is all that is necessary and indeed is given by all with but a spark of benevolence. In the every day world around us not only is this seen, but also the existence of many “charities” so that a parable on the subject would appear quite out of place. Yet that is how the “Good Samaritan” parable is interpreted by the religious leaders of today, and the organisation called “The Samaritans” as well as our own “Samaritan Fund”, to explain why they exist.

In reality they have nothing to do with the parable, but everything to do with the humanitarian “do-gooders” who leave God entirely out of account.

So what does the parable of the Good Samaritan actually teach? To get the fullness of the intended message it contains, we must first fill in the background – the context against which it is set. We first turn to the gospel of Luke, chapter 10 where the record of that parable is found. The first 16 verses are found only in Luke and it is profitable to reflect upon what is written. Jesus had sent his 12 disciples to preach the Kingdom of God throughout the towns and villages in Israel giving the power and authority to heal the sick in confirmation of the Divine nature of their messages, as chapter 9 informs us. Besides these 12, Jesus then appointed 70 others to go and do likewise and take the same message of the Kingdom of God. We note that it was in pairs that they were to go into every city and place which he himself would subsequently visit, so that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established (Mat. 18:16). They acted as forerunners of their Master in preaching the Gospel, and would experience opposition to their message of Salvation on their travels through the land as he himself would encounter.

But why 70? We can appreciate why the 12 disciples were first sent and the number with all its association with the nation of Israel. EW Bullinger, in his book “Numbers in Scripture” informs us that 70 is the perfect numbers 7 and 10. Seven in Scripture denotes spiritual perfection, and 10 the fullness of Divine order and supplies the evidence for these assertions. Seventy therefore signifies perfect spiritual order carried out with the fullness of spiritual power and significance. The preaching therefore of the kingdom of God first, by the 12 disciples and then the “other 70” throughout all Israel as lambs among wolves was a complete testimony of the purpose of God to bring Salvation to all who believed. They were to carry out their mission with singleness of purpose, and not be diverted from it even by saluting any man along the road or indeed by any other course. They were to carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes, and be physically sustained by what those who received them into their house gave them.

Such was the significance of their message of Salvation that those who did not receive it were cursed. As Jesus said: “*He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me*”. At the close of their mission having traversed the land of

Israel, they returned to Jesus with joy and related to him their experiences. Jesus in his turn also rejoiced and said: "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so Father for so it seemeth good in thy sight" (Luke 10:21).

There is more in the record of a spiritual nature than we need here state, but two things stand out, namely:

1. The whole record relates to the purpose and land of Israel. They constituted the "House". As Jesus himself stated, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel". He never went outside the land during his ministry.
2. By reason of the mission of first the 12, and then the 70 of the disciples of Jesus, the general atmosphere throughout Israel was one of expectancy of the coming of their Messiah with his message of salvation. It is in that context that the parable of the Good Samaritan must be considered.

With that background, and seeking out its spiritual meaning, we are informed that a certain lawyer stood up and tempted Jesus saying, "Master what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

A "lawyer" in Israel was a doctor, or teacher of the Law of Moses of which he was regarded an expert. It surely is not surprising that in the prevailing excitement of the people aroused by Jesus and his disciples with their message of Salvation, one of the recognised religious leaders "stood up", asserted himself and in what was a supercilious way put Jesus to the test. After all, the lawyers considered themselves the custodians of the knowledge of God as Moses disciples but as "for this fellow [Jesus] we know not from whence he is" (Jno. 9:29).

So addressing Jesus as "Master", or "Teacher" like himself, as the original word signifies, he put to them that vital question, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" as though he did not know what the Law of Moses stated on the matter. So Jesus knowing his thoughts turned the question around upon the lawyer:

"What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" he was asked. Without hesitation, the lawyer, revealing his keen knowledge of the Law gave the answer: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself" So Jesus responded: "Thou hast answered right, this do and thou shalt live".

The lawyer then, not having succeeded in finding fault with this, what to him, was a young upstart of a teacher who had the audacity to tell him what to do,

could not leave the matter there:

“He, wishing to justify himself said to Jesus: And who is my neighbour?” It is interesting to note that the expression “justify himself” has the significance of assuming that he was superior in his knowledge of the Law, despising all others. In Luke chapter 19, verse 9, we get the idea when Jesus spoke a parable “unto certain which *trusted in themselves* that they were righteous and despised others”.

The sequel to this in the parable of the Good Samaritan was to give the lawyer such an answer to his question which not only gave the Truth but did so with such an example that completely defeated the egoism of the man revealing his conceit and hypocrisy. So then, the parable:

THE PARABLE EXPLAINED

The man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho started his journey from high ground and proceeded downhill all the way until he had reached his destination, had he got that far. From a physical point of view therefore, his journey was easy, requiring little effort. But in the parable we are in the realm of things spiritual and what we read must be understood in that context.

The Scriptures often speak of going up to Jerusalem, not only because it is a city built on a hill, but because it is the city of God – a holy city which men visited to worship as is expressed in Psalm 48:1, where we read:

“Great is the Lord and *greatly to be praised* in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness”.

Jericho on the other hand was cursed of God as is recorded in Joshua chapter 6, verse 17:

“The city *shall be accursed* even it and all that are therein”

Moreover such was Gods’ judgements of it that it was burnt with fire and the oath of God spoken by Joshua: “cursed be the man before the Lord that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho” (verse 26).

It requires little reflection in respect of the scene presented to us in the parable to realise that the Jew referred to was, in the spiritual sense leaving all that was enshrined in the Truth of God, and in losing his faith was descending morally into that state of mind which lets go of the anchor of the soul and leaves God behind.

In that easy but perilous road of life, he fell among thieves who first stripped him of his raiment, then wounded him, before leaving him half-dead. It seems rather peculiar in such a case that his raiment should first be taken. Highway

robbers, as even present day experience confirms, first disable their victims before robbing them of their valuables. But in the spiritual meaning of the parable, we see how the robe of righteousness with which he was arrayed when in the City of God was taken away first of all in his descent into apostasy.

But who were the thieves that did it? Let the Scriptures themselves supply the answer: In the parable of the Good Shepherd, as found recorded in John chapter 10, we learn that Jesus alone is the door of the sheepfold wherein is salvation and the sheep hear his voice and render obedience in following him. But there are others who profess falsely to have another way of salvation other than through the door. These are described as “thieves and robbers”.

By going out of the sheepfold which Spiritually is Jerusalem and going down and away from the abode of the Shepherd who is “the way, the Truth and the life”, the false teachers are waiting to strike and wound. Their weapons are carnal and of the devil (diabolos) penetrating the mind, as did the serpent in the beginning, beguiling with false promises of life, especially where there is a receptive heart.

But this man was left half dead, which means his wounds which were of the mind had not completely extinguished the life of the spirit – because he was still half alive. So it was that in that semi-conscious state, and half-way to perdition, a certain priest by chance going down the same road saw him, crossed over the road and ignored him. Small wonder when we consider that as one of the religious leaders of the day, going down the same route to apostasy, his own spiritual state was no better than the wounded Jew, and had no means to help, for he had nothing to offer by way of healing. The same is said of the Levite.

When we consider what these two represented in respect of the Law of Moses and how far they were from it’s high ideals in the worship and obedience of God in the days of Jesus, as he himself remonstrated against them, what irony there is when the Lawyer who prompted the parable was himself a teacher of that same Law!

But the greatest irony of all is seen in what comes next:

A Samaritan, one of the mixed race of people occupying the northern area of Israel and hated by the Jews, being at the scene had compassion on the wounded Jew, went to his aid, and bound up his wounds.

It is interesting to learn that the Samaritans held the first five books of Moses as their “sole rule of conduct of their daily life” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary), and it was evidently because of this that prompted the good Samaritan to act as he did.

What a contrast to the Jewish experts who were so particular in keeping the details of the Law that as Jesus told them, they had omitted the weightier matters – “judgement, mercy and faith” which it took the despised Samaritan to exhibit.

But when we consider the spiritual aspect of the action of this man, we realise the depth of meaning in the parable. The wounds that were bound up were not physical, but moral – wounds of the mind as we have stated.

In the Greek, the word here used for “wound” is *trauma*, a word which has been transferred to our language and having reference to an injury of the mind whether by shock or emotion.

As for his binding up the wounds, we are reminded of the words of the Prophet Isaiah concerning our Lord (of whom the Good Samaritan was a Type). In chapter 61 and verse 1, we read:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: he hath sent me to **bind up** the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound”.

Or again, the message in Psalm 147, verse 3:

“He [God] healeth the broken in heart and bindeth up their wounds”

All of which confirms the spiritual nature and message of the parable.

This is further confirmed by the treatment of the wounds. The Good Samaritan, it is stated, poured in oil and wine. Not, I would suggest the sort of medicine was necessary to treat physical wounds, but more conducive to treat and heal a troubled mind*

Representing as they do, the Oil of the words of life (remember the oil in the lamps of the wise virgins), and wine, the symbol of our Lord’s atoning blood, we immediately recognise and appreciate both the faith and knowledge as well as the mercy of the Samaritan revealing why in Scripture terms he was “good”. Not only so, but having provided the spiritual medicine and applied it, he then took steps to ensure the injured man’s convalescence by setting him upon his own beast, taking him to an Inn, taking care of him.

And what, we may ask, is the spiritual meaning intrinsic in all that? First of all, there can be no doubt that the beast referred to, that was used to convey the man to the Inn was an *Ass*. There is great significance in this when we re-

* *Note: the description of physical illness relating to a spiritual disease occurs several times in Scripture: see for instance, Isaiah 1:5,6—CAM*

call that:

“every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it, thou shalt break it’s neck” (Exo.13:13).

This edict is repeated in chapter 34, and verse 20. We ask why is this unique action of redemption of such an animal by sacrificing a lamb so emphasized? There must be vital meaning to it.

The ass was a beast of burden, an animal that carried people as well as loads. Of Jesus, it is recorded in Isaiah chapter 53, and verse 4: “Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”. Moreover as the antitypical ass and the first born it was necessary for him to be redeemed with a lamb of which he himself was the Type in his own offering as the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of this world of sin and death. So that as there is no salvation in any other, so we realise why it was that the wounded man was carried on his own beast to an Inn, where he continued his care for him.

The following day, the Good Samaritan gave the proprietor of the inn money requesting him to continue the care, and telling him that if he spent more, he could recompense him on his return.

It is evident that the Inn was a haven of refuge and security where the necessary nursing care was available. It is also significant that the specific word used for “care” is found in only one other place in Scripture. This is found in Paul’s inspired 1st letter to Timothy, chapter 3, verse 5, where it is written:

“If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he *take care* of the Ecclesia of God?”

So there is a direct connection with the Inn in the parable, and the Ecclesia whose responsibility it is to continue the supply of spiritual medication typified in the oil and wine of the Gospel.

This fact is confirmed by the money given to the proprietor. This was equivalent to the redemption money which God commanded Moses under the Law to charge every firstborn male of the Children of Israel as a poll tax. The money was then given to Aaron and his sons, whose duty it was to teach the Divine Law to Israel who were, as God himself stated “my son, even my first-born” (Exo. 4:22).

Then, in the parable, the Good Samaritan upon returning from his far journey promised to make up whatever may have been spent more in completing the recovery of the injured man – the reward for those services, even Life Eternal.

We have not exhausted all that could be extracted in spiritual terms from the parable, but we feel sufficient has been exposed to discern the depth of mean-

ing here unfolded. We are able to appreciate why, as we began this review, Jesus told his disciples the reason for so speaking in parables, so that those “that are without” would not perceive the meaning which was intended and directed only for those who had the knowledge of the Kingdom of God and were separate from the world.

We appreciate also the perceptive words of Bro John Thomas when he wrote:

“whether spoken or acted parables are dark and unintelligible to those who are not skilled in the things of the Kingdom of God, but once they come to comprehend these, the things they resemble immediately appear”.

So it is that with the knowledge of what is comprehended by the Kingdom of God we are able to rightly divide the word of Truth, and so understand the message contained in the parables of our Lord.

The Neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan was, as we have made plain from the Scriptures, the man with the understanding of the purpose of God in the salvation of men sought to teach and remind those who fall away from its life giving message, of the great goodness and mercy of God made manifest in Christ and so by that means restore them to spiritual health and vitality. A good work indeed!

How sad it is that so many professing the Truth interpret the parable as does the Christian (so-called) world to today, as an illustration of the “charitable” work done by the association called “The Samaritans” or by those who operate and support the “Samaritan Fund” in the name of Christadelphians.

One thing is certain, which is that they have nothing to do with the parable of the Good Samaritan. They operate under a misnomer, are humanitarian in essence, and are not “neighbours” as defined in the Scriptures.

Eric W Phipps

*In many respects, the wisdom of God that is communicated
in His Word is hidden. It is accessible only to those who dig,
and this digging to be serviceable must be a continuous process.
It must not be done in fits and starts. It must be
constant, patient, and reverential,
- a daily feeding on the manna from heaven.*

Brother Robert Roberts