

The “Good Samaritan” Luke 10:25-37

Introduction

To most of us the “*Samaritans*” constitute that helpful organisation that provides telephone counsel to those unhappy individuals who might be planning suicide. The name, therefore, Samaritans conjures the picture of helpful, positive, and supportive people for whom many are grateful.

This was not the case, however, in the days of the New Testament. Far from it. The Samaritans were a race of people who were hated by the Jews. They constituted that mixed group of people that were neither pure Jews nor Gentiles. Within the Old Testament we are told that the Samaritans arose from the Assyrians policy of national convergence when the northern ten tribes of Israel taken captive and were subsequently mingled with many other tribes. They thereby became a mixed breed of people. On their return from exile in Babylon, the Jews did not wish to associated with them neither did they allow them to take part in the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its walls. This history can be read in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

At the time of Jesus this form of racism had become a significant and accepted element of society. John expresses this in chapter 4:9 “*For Jews do not associate with Samaritans*”. This, of course, was an understatement. It is probably true to say that, in terms of racial hatred, history has never witnessed such an extreme and intense racial loathing as that which existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. It would not be uncommon for a Jew, when leaving the region of Samaria, to wipe the dust from off his feet as a sign of contempt for the Samaritans.

The Samaritans were a hated people. For a Jew, the only good Samaritan was a dead Samaritan! The Samaritans were cursed in the synagogues. Petitions were daily offered begging God to deny them any participation in eternal life. Many rabbis even said that a Jewish beggar should refuse alms from a Samaritan because their very money was contaminated.

It is for this reason the parable is most striking, especially as the hated Samaritan becomes the hero of the story in contrast to the conceited religious Jews. Jesus could not have chosen a hero more offensive to the sensitivities of his audience. If Jesus had made it a Jew helping a Jew, it would have been acceptable. Even a Jew helping a Samaritan might be tolerated.

The lawyer’s total dislike for the Samaritans is highlighted by the reply he gives to Jesus in answer to the question about which was the one out of the three who was a “*neighbour*”. The lawyer could not even bring himself to say the word, “*Samaritan*”, it stuck in his throat, so he simply says, “*The one who showed mercy....*” (vs 37).

1. The initial question raised by the lawyer that led to this parable

“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 neighbour as yourself.’ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” (vs 25-28)

The parable only arose following a second question raised by the lawyer. Initially, he presented himself as someone seeking to find out the way to eternal life, “*what must*

I do to inherit eternal life?" (vs 25), but Luke informs us that this was not a sincere enquiry, rather it was an attempt to make Jesus look foolish, "*An expert of the law stood up to test Jesus*". But, before we tackle this section, we ought to find out who were the lawyers in Israel.

The lawyers were a professional class of teachers who generally belonged to the Pharisaic party. The term "*lawyer*" in the Greek is νομικός from the root word νομος meaning "*law*". All scribes were originally students of Scripture, but later, in the 2nd century became lay scribes who had begun to expound the minutiae of the law without direct reference to Scripture. The NIV calls this man "*an expert in the law*", for that is exactly what he was. He was a theologian and biblical scholar who spent all his time studying the law and seeking to teach others. He would probably have memorised the whole of the Pentateuch.

Jesus had some strong words to say to lawyers who did not fulfil their task, "*Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.*" Luke 11:52. The lawyers were accused of not fulfilling their offices of trust and responsibility. Jesus says that they took away "*The key of knowledge*" (NRSV), so that they not only refused to enter into knowledge themselves, but they actually prevented others from entering as well. The key controls access. The lawyers should have used their offices to gain knowledge and to unlock that knowledge for others; they were stewards of the truth. Because they did not fulfil their duties, however, it is implied that the key has been taken away.

The study of theology must never become an end in itself. There is a grave responsibility laid on the shoulders of those who engage in Bible Study to share it with others for the purpose of equipping the saints (Eph 4). Is this why James says that those who are teachers of the Word will receive "*judgement with greater strictness*" (James 3:1)?.

Getting back to the story, let us ask what was meant by the question raised by the lawyer, "*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" Was this man being sincere? Was he really seeking from Jesus an answer to the eternal state of his soul? I think not. He was really only trying to test Jesus, attempting to get Him to lose face in the sight of the crowd and thereby lose credibility. It was a trick question.

However, he was not the first individual to ask this question about eternal life (see Matt 19:16). But the question is this, "*How much does the OT teach about eternal life?*" Job clearly held the view that there was a resurrection to eternal life, "*And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God*" (Job 19:25). Then the Psalmist knew of a life to come beyond the grave, Psalm 86:13 "*For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave*". Psalm 16:10 "*...because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay*". Then, Daniel 12:2 "*Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt*".

Added to these references are the accounts of two individuals being taken from earth to glory without going through death, such as Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 11). Jesus makes an interesting comment regarding the resurrection of the dead in the Old Testament, "*But about the resurrection of the dead-- have you not read what*

God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living." (Matthew 22:31-32)

But, how was eternal life found in the OT? It would appear from the answer Jesus gives that salvation and eternal life are to be found through keeping the law, *"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 neighbour as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."* (Luke 10:26-28).

If the lawyer had read his bible correctly he would have known that people like Abraham and David were *"justified"* through faith and not by works. He would have known of Genesis 15:6, *"Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness"*, and Psalm 32:1-2, *"Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit"*. Both these passages of OT scripture are used by Paul in Romans 4:1-12 where he is arguing that salvation has always been on the basis of faith and not works.

However, this still does not answer the question as to why Jesus answered this man's question by referring to the law and telling him, *"Do this, and you will live"*. What is the answer? Why did Jesus not turn to this man, as He did to Nicodemus and say, *"You must be born again"*? Or talk to him about repentance and faith?

I suggest, in the first place, that Jesus knew this man was not honestly seeking eternal life and that he was really seeking to ridicule Him in front of the crowd. This man was not in the same category as Nicodemus who sought a personal interview with Jesus and was genuinely seeking to know how to gain eternal life.

Secondly, I suggest that Jesus was answering the lawyer on his own ground. It was the theology of the time that salvation, eternal life could be gained through observance of the moral law – salvation by works was the theology of the day. So Jesus throws back to the lawyer an answer that was fully expected; an answer that seemed to have surprised the lawyer and provoked yet another question. It was as if the lawyer thought, *"All right clever clogs, let me push you even further and see what a fool you can make of yourself; answer me this, who is my neighbour?"* Remember, this lawyer was a theologian whilst Jesus was just an itinerant preacher who had never attended the university of the Pharisees – what could He possibly know about the OT in contrast to this theologian!

Thirdly, I suggest that Jesus, far from trying to make this man look a fool in front of the crowd, was sincerely concerned for his soul. What Jesus wanted from this man in answer to his statement, *"Do this and you will live"*, was an admission of complete failure. Jesus wanted this man to confess that he could not keep the law; that he was a sinner; that he could not save himself. Indeed, within his own question, by using the word *"inherit"* he had shown that salvation by works is not the answer. You do not gain an inheritance through works, it is given or granted.

In a sense, what Jesus wanted this man to say was the same as that uttered by another Pharisee some years later, *"We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to*

do; no, the evil I do not want to do-- this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? (Romans 7:14-24).

It is the application of the law that produces conviction of this nature. The lawyer should have cried out to Jesus that he is a sinner in need of forgiveness and that he is powerless to save himself; that, like the young man in the Prodigal Son story, he was not worthy. Or with the Publican in another story who cried out, "*God be merciful to me a sinner*". Then, as with Nicodemus, Jesus would have spoken about the Holy Spirit, new birth and then faith and repentance. Furthermore, if the lawyer had been listening to Jesus he would have been aware that the Gospel Jesus proclaimed was one of "*repentance and faith*" (Mark 1:15) as means of entrance into the Kingdom.

Sadly, the lawyer was asking the wrong question. He said, "*What must I do...*" He wanted something to "*do*" so that he could merit eternal life. In spite of his study of the Old Testament he was still locked into the misunderstanding that justification was through works. The correct question would have been not "*What*" must I do, but "*Who*" can give me eternal life.

Now, it is time for us to examine more closely the OT quotes used by Jesus in this passage. The first statement comes from Deuteronomy 6:5, "*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength*". This was part of a common statement as it was part of the "*Shamar*" repeated by Jews in all their Synagogues each Sabbath Day.

How to love God with "*all*" of the heart, soul and strength, is the question. The law of God is set very high, but it is there to demonstrate human failure and to show the need of divine forgiveness and salvation, not through works, but through faith. As Paul puts it, "*Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith*" (Galatians 3:24).

The second quotation of Jesus comes from Leviticus 19:18, "*...you shall love your neighbour as yourself*". It must be remembered that in the time of Jesus the OT did not contain chapter headings or verse numbers. Consequently, when Jesus repeated a single verse in his teaching it is likely that He is referring to the whole context. This would also apply to His quote from Deuteronomy chapter 6.

The section in Leviticus 19 to which Jesus is referring runs from verse 9-18. It is a passage containing laws relating to social behaviour and addresses the needs of widows; orphans; servants; physically disadvantaged and court procedures. The term "*neighbour*" is used five times. This passage will become very significant when we begin to address the case of the Samaritan and the oppressed Jew.

Within this passage from Leviticus there is no indication as to who is the "*neighbour*", and it is this that provoked the next question by the lawyer.

2. The essential lesson taught within this parable

"But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"

When faced with a parable it is always important to look first for any teaching given by Jesus that may lead us to identify the main lesson that is being taught. An important principle to bear in mind is that parables only teach one single lesson. It would be incorrect to spiritualise the story and seek to make each stage of the narrative teach a spiritual lesson. Here is Jesus, the master of story-telling, providing graphic details to draw the attention of His audience. We must look for the single lesson and regard the remainder of the story as additional material giving colour to the main plot.

This parable was given in answer to the question raised by the lawyer, "*Who is my neighbour*" (vs 29). The parable, then, is given to answer this question and this question only. After giving the parable Jesus asked a question of the lawyer and in so doing draws us back to the main lesson, "*Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?*" (vs 36).

Before engage in an explanation of the lesson taught within this parable, it is useful to stop and think about the question itself and why the lawyer proposed it to Jesus. I suggest that like many of the questions put to Jesus this question was double edged. If Jesus, in answer to "*Who is my neighbour*" had answered by saying, "*the Jews*", then He would have lost credibility with all the Gentiles and Samaritans who followed Him. If, on the other hand, Jesus had said, "*the Samaritans and Gentiles*", He would have lost all the Jews in His crowd and the Jews would have wanted to stone Him. How was He to answer?

Jesus told a story and then, cleverly, left it to the lawyer to answer his own question. He put back to the lawyer the question, "*Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?*" "Luke 10:36. In answer the lawyer gave the solution to his own question, "*The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.'*" (vs 37).

Now, it is important for us to note that this is not a parable telling us "*what to do for our neighbour*". Rather it is answering the "*who is my neighbour*". The lawyer already knew what he had to do for his neighbour as this was clearly taught in Leviticus 19:9-18. There is much within this passage that talks about – caring for the socially disadvantaged (9-10); honesty in society 11-12; justice for the employee (13); care for the physically disabled (14); justice in the law courts; the prevention of slander, the absence of revenge and aggression.

What this passage leaves out is the "*who is my neighbour*". There is the assumption that the neighbour is the fellow Jew and him/her only. However, this same chapter in Leviticus does extend the parameters to include all non-Jews; "*When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt*" (Lev 19:33-34). Within the exclusivism of Judaism this aspect had conveniently been omitted.

Jesus, therefore, in his parable of the "*Good Samaritan*" was not teaching something new – the lawyer knew of this teaching in the Pentateuch. Yet, there was something new within this story; and this was the sting in the tail! Instead of a Jew obeying the teaching in Leviticus, it is one of the hated Samaritans. Instead of the law-abiding Jews – even the Levite and Priest - it is the rejected Samaritan. Of course, we must not imagine that the Samaritans were without the OT law. They believed that only the Pentateuch was the word of Yahweh and they worshipped Yahweh on mount Gerazim.

So, here in this story Jesus chose a Samaritan, the one who held to only a small part of the OT, yet an important part for the Jews, as the obedient one; not the Jew. This is where the story was so embarrassing. We have already noted that the Jew, to his great shame, could not even bring himself to say the word, “Samaritan”, and just use a pronoun, “*The one who.....*”.

3. The issue of racism highlighted in this parable

NT days were riddled with racialism. Everyone hated other races. The Jews hated the Samaritans and the Gentiles; the Samaritans hated the Jews and Gentiles, and the Gentiles despised the Jews and Samaritans. Racism was the order of the day – each was taught to hate the other. It was a part of life; you would have been brought up through childhood to hate the other races.

So, whilst Jesus is not teaching “what” we should be doing for our neighbour, He was certainly teaching “who” is my neighbour. The parable is teaching us to cross all boundaries; all ethnic and language demarcations established by man. The parable is dealing with issues of “*diversity*”.

It is probably true to say that within the days of the NT you could not find more polarised groups than the Jews versus the Samaritans – this is something that we have already noted. So, Jesus chose a Samaritan not a Gentile and certainly not a Jew to be the hero of His story.

One of the most important issues addressed within the NT is the issue of racism especially in relation to the Gospel which seeks to break down all the racial barriers. Frequently the word “*world*” is used both in the Gospels and the Epistles. For example, John 3:16 stresses this point in the words, “*For God so loved the world...*” And then goes on to add, “*so that whosoever...*” What is John saying? He is telling us that in the eyes of God there are no divisions in mankind, that there is no exclusivism in the Gospel’s availability. It is universal; it is open to the “*world*” bridging all barriers between Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles (and within the latter group there are hosts of racial differences). It is interesting to note that it was the Samaritans who, when describing the mission of Jesus, coined the phrase, “Saviour of the world” (John 4:42).

The last words of Jesus to the disciples contained these words, “*...you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” (Acts 1:8). The narrative of Acts is a commentary upon these words as Peter preaches, first of all, to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost; then the Samaritans are reached through Phillip (chapter 8), and finally the Gentiles (chapter 10-11). This latter emphasis is broadened out through the ministry of Paul to the Gentiles.

The breaking down of racism was a powerful feature of the early Church. Ephesians 2:11-22 is largely devoted to this topic. Instead of there being Jew and Gentile (and Samaritan) there is now a new humanity, the body of Christ. The previous walls of division have been broken down through Christ and whereas there were two (or three), there now only exists one.

This is what Paul says, “*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He*

came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone".

This was how the Palestinian problem was solved in the NT days. It was not through war or even conference. It was through Christ. I often wonder what the NT Church must have looked like to their contemporaries. Here was a very odd group of people made up of Jews, Gentiles, and Samaritans sitting together; worshipping together and loving each other and visiting each other in their homes, and, most importantly, sharing meals together. To the outside world the Church must have been an enigma! This had never happened before. No wonder the Christians were accused of turning the world upside down.

It is my belief that here lies the key to the present day Palestinian problem. There is unlikely to be peace amongst the Palestinians and the Israelis until Christ is proclaimed and preached amongst them and accepted. Today, there are Churches comprising both Palestinians and Israelis where peace, love and commitment exists.

Finally, the very last book in the Bible repeatedly points out the fact that around the throne of God in glory are gathered representatives from all the nations of the world; *"And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9); "The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it"; (Revelation 21:26); "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it" (Revelation 21:24).*

Applications

I suggest, therefore, that within this parable of the *"Good Samaritan* Jesus was laying the groundwork for the development of the racially integrated Church. The issue that Jesus is addressing here is racism, plain and simple. It is not *"What should I do for my neighbour?"*, but rather, *"Who is my neighbour?"* The NT Church took on board this teaching and, in the light of the great commission, went across the known barriers and preached to the Samaritans and the Gentiles. To them, their neighbour was not solely their fellow Jews, but included those outside Judaism, especially the Samaritans.

But, what does this have to teach us today? Where is the application?

1. First, I suggest that within the Church we reject all manner of racism. We might protest by saying that there is no racism within our fellowship – we include and welcome all those of various ethnic origins.

Of course, it is impossible and not right for me to pass an opinion on any Church fellowship; this is for you to decide. Similarly, as individuals we may claim that we are not racist and that we consider all and treat all with equality. Once more, I am not proposing to be a judge on this issue.

What I do say, however, is that within our present nation racism is a blight upon our society and that if there are any who should be so opposed to racism it should be the Christian Church, and Christians as individuals. Let every person examine their own conscience.

An interesting feature within this parable is the emphasis upon the individual. The issue before us today is not simply how does the evangelical Church at large approach the matter of racism, but how do I, as an individual deal with it. It is easy to generalise but more difficult to particularise. This is echoed in the words of Charley Brown in the cartoon Peanuts when he said, *"Of course I love the human race, its just that I can't stand Lucy"*.

Let me put it this way. Has 9/11, or the present danger of terrorism changed your thinking? Have you, or are you, in danger of forming an *"Islamaphobia"*? Whatever you may think about Islam and Muslims in general, beware that you do not let this create or re-enforce a racist attitude.

In Genesis 1:27 we are told that God created man in His own image. It has always confused the minds of Bible experts as to the exact meaning of this phrase. We are all agreed that we are not looking at an external physical *"image"* and that it is spiritual. But does the terms relate to man's dominion over the created order – as some have portrayed it? On the other hand, does it have to do man being created without sin, pure and holy as Yahweh is holy? I suggest that this is nearer the truth especially in the light of Ephesians 4:24, *"...put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"*.

The image of God in us was the resemblance of His holiness. This holiness was marred and spoiled seriously in the Fall. But, although that image has been contaminated with sin, there is still a residue of the image left within us.

This means that when we face another human being, irrespective of race; background; culture or ethnic origin, we see that person made in the image of God. He or she is to be respected; cared for; loved irrespective of whatever appears to make that person different – be it language, creed, or skin pigment. We are all made in the image of God.

This parable, known as the *"Good Samaritan"* is tell us that our neighbour is anyone whom we may mean on the journey of life. There is to be no discrimination whatsoever.

2. But, let me take this issue still further. There existed a common hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans and the Gentiles. It was not merely discrimination, but pure abhorrence and disgust. The Samaritans were the enemies of the Jews just as the Roman and Greek Gentiles were.

But the parable cuts across this enemy/hatred barrier and tells us something that Jesus had already taught and Paul was yet to re-enforce. Jesus said, *"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. 'But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"*, Matthew 5:43 – 44. Paul added a kind of commentary on this statement by writing, *"Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,'" says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."* Romans 12:17-21.

Who then is my neighbour? It is the one who cut me up on the motorway: that unreasoning person living next door; that obnoxious man who works with me; the

over-bearing boss whom no one likes. It is not easy obeying the teaching of this parable – it cuts across the grain, as it were.

3. Finally, this parable teaches us of the universality of the Gospel. I believe in universalism! That means I believe that the Gospel is available to anyone; whosoever will may come; whosoever believes, etc.

Christianity is not a white, middleclass religion. It may be difficult to realise but Christianity did not originate in London or New York! It is a Middle Eastern religion. Jesus was not a white man.

Somehow, we are apt to think in terms of Christianity being the white man's domain. Christianity being European. No, it began in Israel and finds its roots in Jerusalem. The early Church was made up of Jews, Samaritans, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians and Arabians. If we really want to know something about the universal nature of the early Church we only have to read the first chapter of Acts where we come across a vast cross section of individuals from, *Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs,* (Acts 2:9-10).

This parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that the Church is open to all, irrespective of their character and background. It includes nice people and not-so nice people. For example, Paul told us to consider our calling, *"Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things-- and the things that are not-- to nullify the things that are (1 Cor 1:26-28).*

It gets even worse! The Gospel is for all sorts, *"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor 6:9-11).

Did you ever pray for Saddam Hussein before he was executed? When you see the pictures of terrorists on the TV do you think of praying for their conversion? Or do you think that perhaps they do not deserve the Gospel? Surely, in view of their evil actions it would be an offence for them to join with us in the fellowship of the Gospel!

Think of Saul of Tarsus. Did anyone in the early Church ever consider that this man could become a Christian? Here was an early terrorist! He hated Christianity and felt that it was his mission from God to destroy the Church. He confessed himself to be a murderer.

From a collection of NT passages this is what we have: Acts 9:1 *"Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest"; Acts 8:3 *"But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison". Acts 22:4 *"I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison"; Acts 22:19 *"'Lord,' I replied, 'these men know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you";****

Acts 26:10 “And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them”; Acts 26:11 “Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them”; Galatians 1:13 “For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it”; 1 Timothy 1:13 “Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man”.

Could such a man ever become a Christian and should the Gospel be preached to such a person? Yes. The parable of the Good Samaritan tells me so.

Conclusion

My conclusion is simple. I use the same words that Jesus used to the lawyer, “Go and do likewise” (vs 37). Such a phrase could be rendered, “Go and to the same”. Perhaps Jesus is saying the same words to us today.

I recall a story of a Church in Scotland where the preacher finished his sermon with the words, “That’s it, I am now done”. Then a woman in the congregation got up and cried out, “The preaching may be done, but the doing’s not yet done”.

Richard Lee