

Lawyer, Levite, legalism & the Lord's priorities

a. The good Samaritan shames the religious 'right' (10:25-37)

10:25-28 How do we KNOW we have eternal life (I John 3:14-5:3, also v.13)

[1] [10:25] His question, *what shall I do ...?* shows that he was thinking of some form of salvation by works and had no understanding of divine grace. *Eternal life* means life that is proper to the age to come. It denotes life that will never end, but, in the Christian understanding of it, the more important thing is that it is life of a particular quality, that life that is the gift of God. **Leon Morris** Luke p.187

[2] [10:25-28] We should notice, secondly, in this passage, *the high honour which our Lord Jesus Christ places on the Bible*. He refers the lawyer at once to the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith and practice. He does not say in reply to his question, "What does the Jewish Church say about eternal life? What do the Scribes, and Pharisees, and priests think? What is taught on the subject in the traditions of the elders?" He takes a far simpler and more direct course. He sends his questioner at once to the writings of the Old Testament: "What is written in the law? How readest thou?" **J.C. Ryle** Luke Vol. 1 p.371

10:29-32 What is true, regrettably, about these 2 'orthodox' believers?

[3] [10:29] There were different ideas among the Jews on this point, but they all seem to be confined to the nation of Israel; the idea of love towards mankind had not reached them. **Leon Morris** Luke p.188

[4] **Jericho:** deep in the Jordan valley some 17 miles east of Jerusalem. It was the residence of about half of the priestly orders. **E. E. Ellis** Luke p.161

[5] [10:31] Since the man was 'half dead' the priest would probably not have been able to be certain whether he was dead or not without touching him. But if he touched him and the man was in fact dead, then he would have incurred the ceremonial defilement that the Law forbade (Lv.21:1ff.). He could be sure of retaining his ceremonial purity only by leaving the man alone. He could be sure he was not omitting to help a man in need only by going to him. In this conflict it was ceremonial purity that won the day. Not only did he not help, he went to the other side of the road. He deliberately

avoided any possibility of contact. Other factors may have weighed with him, such as the possibility that the robbers might return, the nature of his business, and so on. **Leon Morris** Luke p.189

[6] [10:32] Their twofold witness (Dt. 19:15) certified the unmerciful character of official Jewish religion. Carefully observant of religious duties in Jerusalem, they omit the 'love of God' (11:42). Is it from fear? Or religious rules prohibiting contact with a corpse (Lev. 21:1; Naz. 7:1)? Or the conviction that one need not show mercy to a 'sinner' (Sir. 12:4-6)? It is irrelevant. The story stresses one thing: the religious ones, seeing the victim's need, passed by. **E. Earle Ellis** Luke p.161

**"What shall I DO?"
... man's eternal question!**



G. Campbell Morgan

Freed not to ignore Law, but to obey it! Not 'Do this and live, but ... 'live, and do this!'

10:33,34 What is the religion of this (heretical) Samaritan?

[7] [10:33,34] The audience would have expected a priest and a Levite to be followed by an Israelite layman. They would almost certainly now be expecting a story with an anti-clerical twist. Jesus' introduction of the Samaritan was thus devastating. **Leon Morris** Luke p.189

[8] The difference between Law and Grace is this, The Law says, Do this, and live. Grace says, Live and do this. The new life is not intended to set us free from the moral requirement of law. It is to enable us to obey it. **G. Campbell Morgan** Luke p.140

10:35-37 Notice his compassion endures even when he is NOT present - his neighbour is NOT next door!

[9] [10:29-37] And now let us leave the parable with grave thoughts and deep searchings of heart. How few Christians seem to remember that such a parable was ever written! What an enormous amount of stinginess, and meanness, and ill-nature, and suspicion there is to be seen in the Church, and that even among people who repeat the creed and go to the Lord's table! How seldom we see a man who is really kind, and feeling, and generous, and liberal, and good-natured, except to himself and his children! **J.C. Ryle** p.379

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b. Two sisters, two types of believers (10:38-42)

10:38-40 'Distracted with much serving' – isn't this what Christian life is supposed to be about? (Matt.20:25-28)

[10] [10:38-42] Here is one of the most exquisite scenes which Gospel tradition has preserved to us; it has been transmitted by Luke alone. **Frederick L. Godet** *Luke* p.309

[11] [10:38-42] This story is found nowhere else. Luke appears not to have placed it in chronological sequence, for Bethany was near Jerusalem and at a later time Jesus was still far from the capital (17:11). He may have placed it immediately after the preceding parable as a safeguard against any of his readers coming under the misapprehension that salvation is by works. He makes the point that waiting quietly on the Lord is more important than bustling busyness. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.191

[12] [10:39] The picture is that of a rabbi instructing his pupil The extraordinary feature is that the pupil is a woman. Judaism did not forbid women to be instructed in the Torah (*Ned.* 35b; *SBT*, p.107n). But it was very unusual for a rabbi to lower himself to this. **E. Earle Ellis** *Luke* p.162

[13] [10,38,39] He perhaps inserts it here as a further answer to the question, "What must one do to inherit eternal life?" Mere benevolence, such as that of the Samaritan, is not enough. It must be united with, and be founded upon, habitual communion with the Divine. "The enthusiasm of humanity," if divorced from the love of God, is likely to degenerate into mere serving of tables. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.290

10:40b Where will UN-sanctified service inevitably lead? (18:9-14)

[14] [10:40,41] "Was drawn about in different directions, distracted." ... In any case [anxious] refers to the mental distraction, and the second verb to the external agitation. Martha complains of

having no one to help her; but it was by her own choice that she had so much to do. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.291

[15] [10:41,42] The two sisters have often been regarded as representing two equally legitimate aspects of the Christian life, inward devotion and practical activity. But Martha does not in the least represent external activity, such as Jesus approves. Her very distraction proves that the motive of her work is not pure, and that her self-importance as hostess has a larger share in it than it ought. On the other hand, Mary as little represents a morbid quietism, requiring to be implemented by the work of an active life. Mary served as long as it appeared to her needful to do so. Thereafter she understood also that, when we have the singular privilege of welcoming a Jesus under our roof it is infinitely more important to seek to receive than to give. Besides some months later (John 12:3 et seq.) Mary clearly showed that when action or giving was required she was second to none. **Frederick L. Godet** *Luke* p.311

Martha or Mary?
Which are you – and which is more frequently found in our churches?

10:41,42 What is the 'good portion'? (John 13:1-17, 17:14-19)

[16] [10:41] There was no need of an elaborate meal; a few things, or one, would suffice. Indeed only one portion was necessary; – that which Mary had chosen. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.292

[17] [10:39-42] The issue is not two kinds of Christian service but religious busyness which distracts the Christian – preacher or layman – from the word of Christ upon which all effective service rests. ... Martha's concern was to be a proper hostess, Mary's to be a proper disciple. **E. Earle Ellis** *Luke* p.162

[18] [10:41,42] It is simpler to hold that by the expression *one thing*, Jesus meant to designate spiritual nourishment, the divine word, but not without an allusion to the simplicity in physical life which naturally results from the preponderance given to a higher interest. **Frederick L. Godet** *Luke* p.311

c. The Lord's prayer, or the Lord's priorities? (11:1-4)

11:1,2 The first 3 petitions have what priority?

[19] When His disciples ask to be taught to pray, "as John also taught his disciples," He gives them a prayer very unlike what John would have given, for it contains not a word of that petition for blessing upon Israel, which, in any prayer that an Israelite offered,

contained, to his mind, the gist of the whole. This prayer too was offered, not to the "Lord God of Israel" or the "God of their Fathers," as Jewish prayers were; there was not a word in it, echoing their boast that God was peculiarly their own – but every human being is emboldened by it to turn to God as his Father in Heaven. In all this, however, our Lord never loosens the bonds of Israelite life. He

'Profits and pleasures are dearly purchased, if ...'!!

[23] [10:38-42] It seems so right to provide for our own! It seems so proper to attend to the duties of our station! It is just here that our danger lies. Our families, our business, our daily callings, our household affairs, our intercourse with society, all, all may become snares to our hearts, and may draw us away from God. We may go down to the pit of hell from the very midst of lawful things. Let us take heed to ourselves in this matter. Let us watch our habits of mind jealously, lest we fall into sin unawares. If we love life, we must hold the things of this world with a very loose hand, and beware of allowing anything to have the first place in

our hearts, excepting God. Let us mentally write "poison" on all temporal good things. Used in moderation they are blessings, for which we ought to be thankful. Permitted to fill our minds, and trample upon holy things, they become a positive curse. Profits and pleasures are dearly purchased, if in order to obtain them we thrust aside eternity from our thoughts, abridge our Bible-reading, become careless hearers of the Gospel, and shorten our prayers. A little earth upon the fire within us will soon make that fire burn low. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 1 p.386

proceeds always in a positive and not a negative way; without removing the Kingdom of Israel from view, He lets it dissolve, as it were, into the Kingdom of God. **Henry Latham** *Pastor Pastorum* p.415

[20] ... in the invocation, "Our Father, which art in heaven," He revealed the basis and starting-point of all true and spiritual worship, the assurance of divine love and favour, which all worship which is of human invention, and prompted by the legal spirit, regards as the end to be merited and obtained. **Adolph Saphir** *The Lord's Prayer* p.1

11:3 When praying for self, how are we reminded of the Lord's priorities? (Clue: OUR, not MY. Read thoughtfully Deut.8 – be careful what you want!)

[21][11:3] The petition in Lk. embraces more than the petition in Mt. In Mt. we pray, "Give us to-day our bread for the coming day," which in the morning would mean the bread for that day, and in the evening the bread for the next day. In Lk. we pray, "Continually give us day by day our bread for the coming day." One stage in advance is asked for, but no more: "one step enough for me." **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.296

11:4 Even forgiveness & blessing are communal first, personal after, following the OT (Dan. 9:3-19; Neh.1:3-7)

[22] In every sin there is a dark and almost infinite vista. It is like an opening into a mysterious cavern. Imagination dreads dangers and evils, serpents hidden in the cave, pestilential, poisonous atmosphere, concealed dungeons or pitfalls. It is like the entrance into a dense wood; we hesitate whether we should venture, we dread the attack of fierce beasts or cruel men. And yet men are so little afraid of entering into sin, though they know not what it leads to, fancying they can retrace their steps at any moment. ... In the old dispensation, the test of sincerity was, Do you need a Saviour? In the new, the test of sincerity is, Do you hate sin? **A. Saphir** *The Lord's Prayer* p.296, 302