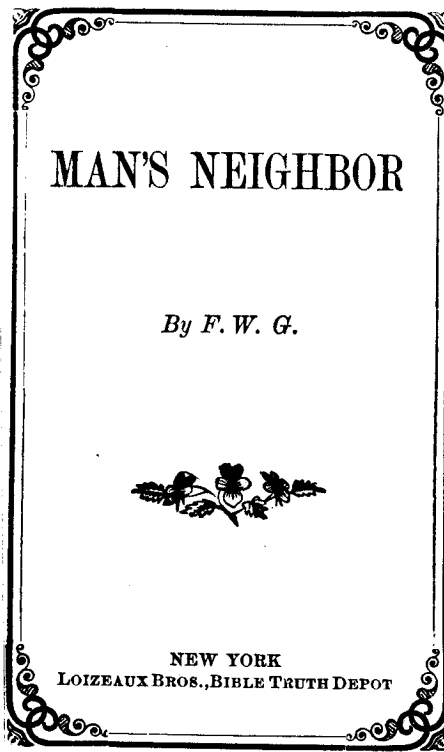


took out twopence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, 'Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.'" There is the care of the Holy Ghost for the saved in the time of Christ's absence. And because it is exercised oftentimes through human instrumentality, therefore this present payment and future reckoning besides. But how the same love shines out from first to last, on to that "coming again" which faith lays hold of and anticipates. "Surely, I come quickly." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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MAN'S NEIGHBOR.

(LUKE X. 25-37.)

THE various ways in which our Lord met and answered oftentimes the same question from different questioners, it is most instructive to see. He never answered a question simply *as* a question, but the state of the soul of him who put it. It is just there that, in reading His answers, people make such great mistakes. They take often the question simply *as* a question, and no more; and thus, if a man comes, for instance, asking, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and hear Him reply, "What is written in the law? . . . this do, and thou shalt live," they put it down as settled that the way of eternal life for man is by the keeping of the law.

But the same Word of God says,

"As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." (Gal. iii. 19.) Is that a way of life? What then about the Lord's answer?

Scripture solves this difficulty very simply. For if "by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. iii. 20)—and what it says it says "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Rom. iii. 19),—then it is clear how the Lord, in answer to this questioner, is seeking to give *him* the knowledge of sins. For this He uses the law, with one whom, when he takes the ground of human goodness, He assures "There is *none* good but One, that is, God."

The case before us is different again from this. "A certain lawyer stood up and tempted Him, saying, 'Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'"

The question is the same as in the former case; but there, a real inquirer, however self-deceived; here, one "tempting Him,"—this makes the difference.

The Lord again appeals to the law—"What is written in the law? how readest thou?" "And he answering said, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.' And he said unto him, 'Thou hast answered right; this do, and thou shalt live.'"

Even so. It is all simple enough, dear reader; and the preacher of the gospel in the present day does not in any wise contradict the Lord's saying. If "this do, and thou shalt live" satisfies you, and you are assured of standing well before God upon the ground of loving Him with this all-

absorbing love, and your neighbor, too, just as well as yourself, none will say that God will not accept that. Only remember, it is "*Do this*"—not half or a quarter of this, or as much of it as you can, or as you please to think you can. "*Do this*" are the Lord's words; "*As well as you can*" is Satan's interpretation of it, for which you will find no Scripture-warrant from Genesis to Revelation.

But, you say, of course we do not pretend to do it altogether. Then, if you go on that ground, you are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things that are written in the book of the law to do them." And, moreover, that is not merely what the *Old* Testament said, but what the *New* Testament says, and for that very reason it adds that "as many as are of the works of the law are **UNDER THE CURSE.**"

Instinctively the poor sinner to whom the Lord spoke felt it. "But he, willing to justify himself, said." Why justify himself, when no one accused him? Ah, conscience had spoken in him, and his excuse was the evidence of a consciousness of fault, which, nevertheless, the heart rose up in its pride to resist. Dear reader, do you want to justify yourself before God? It is the natural instinct, alas! but the very effort shows you dare not leave it to God, in whose hands nevertheless it only is. You cannot rest assured that He will do it,—that is, you cannot *rest* at all.

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, 'And who *is* my neighbor?'"

And what an answer that brings out! How it exposes the narrow selfishness which can raise such a question, with need in the countless shapes

in which it meets us before the eyes! It is what the legal spirit engenders. The cold estimate of duty reckoned by a self-occupied mind, which is sure to seek to spare itself as far as may be, instead of the unreckoning self-sacrifice of love occupied with its object. The priest and the Levite are the examples of the first; the Samaritan, of the second. A little *heart* would have decided the lawyer's question for him. It was his shame to ask it.

But there is much more than this. Hid in a parable, for a solemn reason (comp. Matt. xiii. 13), the Lord gives us a wondrous picture of One whose heart had made Him neighbor to the ruined and helpless among men. The picture of Him who had no duty to the fallen, but love which had found in men its object, and which, looking for no worth in them, or claim, poured itself out in unexhausted fullness. Oh

that some soul, heedless and careless, might be wakened up even now by this tale of love, to find answer in a new way to the lawyer's question, "AND WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?"

"A certain man went down from Jersusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead."

Do not lose the beauty of that description by making it a general picture of man's condition. Its individuality is meant rather to arrest the eye of some consciously ruined and despairing one. The Lord's words are not cold theological statements, but fresh *from* the heart *for* the heart. If *you* are on this Jericho road, stripped, to your shame, and wounded, to your hurt—a convicted and perishing sinner—it applies to *you*.

The road to Jericho was, and is, a

downward one. From the city crowned with the glory of Jehovah's presence, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord—with his back upon all this, and his face toward the city of curse, the traveler journeyed. Upon this road he was stopped, plundered, wounded, thrown aside without remedy, to die. It is the spiritual history of many. The sudden seizure of conviction could be figured by nothing more simple than the onset of robbers; and he who was but a short time ago well-to-do, in his own eyes well-clad and flourishing, has become a bankrupt, naked, and perishing sinner.

Dying without help—lying in his blood upon the road, incapable of even seeking the succor that he needs,—such is the Lord's own picture of the misery that drew Him down to

save. It is not sin in its revolting side, as enmity against God, that is seen in it, but the helpless misery it has wrought. Has my reader ever known spiritually what it was to be in such a state?

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way.” It is a noteworthy thing when the Lord Jesus speaks of chance. It means that the priest was no God-sent messenger to this wounded man. And so it proved — “and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

“And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.”

Think of the hope in his heart when those human forms met his fading sight, and human eyes peered into his! But no help for him was there. The men of law were not the ministers of the needed mercy. Nor have

they now, more than then, help or hope for one that is simply lost; for the law says “Do;” and what can such an one “do”? Ah, you may better go and talk of work to the half-dead man upon the roadside in the picture, than talk of it to the *whole*-dead sinner whom he represents.

So the priest and the Levite pass and give place to another. “But a certain *Samaritan*, as he journeyed, came where he was.” Why a *Samaritan*? It was the name of reproach they had hurled at Him — “Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan?” It was meant to convey the thought of one who walked outside the prescribed path of the law, and whom the law denounced. If the Lord take that name, there is meaning in it, we may be sure. And, indeed, how came He where we were, but by being “made in the likeness of sinful flesh,”

and "a curse for us"? And how could His mercy reach unto us but by His taking a path outside of law? "And when he saw him, he had compassion on him."

Here is that pity of God, true and effective, and equal to the need—which the true gospel bears witness to—which all mixed gospels tend to obscure and nullify, and which the soul needs so greatly, both for peace and to bring it in full reality to joy in God Himself.

That He loved me—not when a saint, but when a sinner—loved me when I was *dead* in sins (Eph. ii. 4,5); loved me so as to give Christ for me, ungodly and without strength; this is the truth by which I know God in very deed, and which bows my heart before Him in adoration and delight. Oh, the joy of knowing His joy who bears me on His shoulders, Shepherd

of the lost, and when He cometh home, calleth together His friends and says, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" Joy over me! Joy in the presence of the angels of God!

Take me, this prodigal with the rags of a far country upon him, put him under rule and discipline, let him reform and get back something of his former respectability before he meets his father, the meeting may be tender as ever, but the wondrous display of a father's heart outpoured over his dead alive again, could it be the same?

I want for my heart, I am jealous over it—this bringing together of my sin and His love, my ruin and His might on my behalf. I delight in such words as these: "When he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him

on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him." All the doing was on the one side here. And with what thankful joy the eyes of the wounded man must have looked on all this activity of love on his behalf. Did he grudge to be its debtor, think you? Do *you*, that the Lord should serve you? The faith that says, Well, it is love's joy to serve, and He came down to serve; He whom all things serve came voluntarily down to do me service; that is what honors Him, for *it credits Him with what He is*.

But come, do you know what this oil and wine are? Do you know what the power of the Holy Ghost (which is the oil) mingles with to form a salve for a wounded soul? The "wine that cheereth God and man" is the remembrance of the poured-out blood of Jesus. He has entered in with that

blood into heaven itself. The witness of its value is His own place at the right hand of God. Offered to, and accepted of God, the Spirit of God bears witness of its efficacy in cleansing from all sin, and setting the cleansed one apart to God as purchased and redeemed forever. This is the Samaritan's balm for our deadly wounds. For whom was it shed, this blood of Jesus? See how He pours it in Himself, how He applies it! He does not leave that to you, He applies it Himself. The blood was shed for *sinner*s. You may be sure, if you are that, it is for *you*.

And then, on and on, toward a bright eternity, the love which has visited you will keep and care. So runs this parable—"He set him upon his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he