The Good Samaritan

Bible Stories Anthology — Luke 10:25-37

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> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

Who Is My Neighbour?

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. He was an expert in the law of Moses, and he asked the greatest question a man can ask: *Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

Jesus turned the question back to him. *What does the law say?* The lawyer answered perfectly: love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and love your neighbour as yourself.

You have answered right, Jesus said. *Do this, and you will live.*

But the lawyer wanted a way out. Love *everyone*? Surely there were limits. So he asked one more question — a lawyer's question, the kind that draws boundaries: *And who is my neighbour?*

Jesus answered with a story. A man was beaten and left for dead on a lonely road. Two holy men — a priest and a Levite — saw him and walked by on the other side. Then came a third traveller, the last man any Jew would expect to stop: a Samaritan.

At the end of the story Jesus did not answer the lawyer's question. He turned it upside down. *Which of these three was neighbour to the man?* And the lawyer, who could not bring himself to say the word *Samaritan*, answered, *He that shewed mercy on him.*

Go, said Jesus, *and do thou likewise.*

This is the story of the Good Samaritan.

The Setting

When. In the last half year of Jesus' ministry, about A.D. 30 by the reckoning this series uses. Luke places it after Jesus **"stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:51), on the long journey that would end at the cross, and just after the seventy disciples returned from their mission rejoicing (Luke 10:17-24). Soon afterward Jesus was welcomed into the home of Martha and Mary at Bethany, near Jerusalem (Luke 10:38-42).

Where. Luke does not say where the lawyer stood up. The story Jesus told was set on the road from **Jerusalem** down to **Jericho**, a road his hearers knew well. Jerusalem stands on the hills of Judea about 2,500 feet above sea level. Jericho lies in the Jordan valley, about 850 feet *below* sea level, near the Dead Sea. The road between them, about seventeen miles long, drops some 3,300 feet through barren, rocky wilderness, twisting through gorges and past caves. It was notorious for robbers. The steep climb near the top was called in Joshua's day **"the going up to Adummim"** (Joshua 15:7), "the ascent of red" — from the colour of the rocks, though in later centuries travellers said it was named for the blood shed there. Even in modern times, before roads and police, travellers on that road were robbed.

What kind of story. Jesus told it as a **parable**: a story drawn from everyday life to teach a truth (see story 47). He begins, **"A certain man,"** and does not name anyone. Whether it happened exactly so, no one can say; it is certainly the kind of thing that happened on that road.

Who.

- **Jesus**, on his way to Jerusalem.
- **A lawyer** — an expert in the law of Moses.
- In the story: **a certain man**, **thieves**, **a priest**, **a Levite**, **a Samaritan**, and **an innkeeper**.

The administration. The **Christ administration**, under the Law of Moses. The lawyer asked how to inherit eternal life, and Jesus answered him from the law under which he lived.

The Story, Told Faithfully

"What Shall I Do?"

> **Luke 10:25** *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?*

"A certain lawyer." Not a lawyer as we think of one, arguing cases in court, but an expert in the law of Moses — a scribe, a teacher of the Torah. The religious law *was* the law of the land for Israel. These men studied it, interpreted it, and taught it.

"Stood up." In the synagogue or in a teaching circle, students sat and teachers sat; a man who wished to put a question to a teacher stood up.

"And tempted him." The word *ekpeirazō* means *to test*, *to put to the proof*. The lawyer wanted to see how Jesus would answer, and perhaps to catch him out. It is the word Jesus used to the devil in the wilderness: **"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"** (Luke 4:12; story 40).

"Master." *Teacher*.

“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” It was a good question — the most important question there is. A rich young ruler would later ask Jesus the very same thing (Luke 18:18). But notice the word *do*. The lawyer was thinking of what *he* could do to earn it. And *inherit* — an inheritance is something you receive because of who you are, not something you earn. His question contained a contradiction he had not noticed.

“How Readest Thou?”

> **Luke 10:26** *He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?*
> **Luke 10:27** *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 neighbour as thyself.*
> **Luke 10:28** *And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.*

“What is written in the law? how readest thou?” Jesus answered the expert in the law by asking what the law said. *You are the expert. What does it say? How do you read it?*

The lawyer answered by joining two commandments from two different books of Moses:

- **“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”** (Deuteronomy 6:5). These words come right after the *Shema*, the great confession of Israel: **“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD”** (Deuteronomy 6:4). Every faithful Jew recited it morning and evening.
- **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD”** (Leviticus 19:18).

Jesus himself joined these same two commandments when another scribe asked him which was the greatest commandment: **“The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart … And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these”** (Mark 12:29-31). The lawyer had learned well. This was the heart of the whole law.

“With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” Four words piled one on another, to say: *with everything you are.* Not part of your heart, part of your strength, but all of it, all of you. This piling up of words with the same general meaning is the figure called **synonymia**.

“Thou hast answered right.” Jesus agreed with him completely.

“This do, and thou shalt live.” Here Jesus echoed the law itself: **“Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD”** (Leviticus 18:5). That was the promise of the law: do it, and live.

But who has ever done it? Who has loved God with *all* his heart every moment of his life, and loved every neighbour exactly as much as himself? Paul quotes the same verse from Leviticus to show that no one can be made right with God by keeping the law: **“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident … And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them”** (Galatians 3:10-12). Jesus’ answer was true. *Do this, and live.* The problem was that no one could.

The lawyer knew it, too. That is why his next question was an attempt to shrink the commandment down to a size he could keep.

“And Who Is My Neighbour?”

> **Luke 10:29** *But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?*

“Willing to justify himself.” *Wanting to make himself look right.* He had asked a question and been told to keep a commandment he knew he had not kept. So he looked for a loophole.

“And who is my neighbour?” If he could limit the meaning of *neighbour*, he might yet be able to say he had kept the commandment. In Leviticus 19:18 the command comes right after the words **“the children of thy people.”** Many teachers of the day took *neighbour* to mean *a fellow Israelite* — certainly not a Gentile, and least of all a Samaritan. Some narrowed it further, to faithful Israelites only. The same chapter of Leviticus also says, **“But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself”** (Leviticus 19:34) — but that verse was easy to overlook.

The lawyer wanted Jesus to draw a line: *These are my neighbours, and those are not.* Jesus did not draw a line. He told a story.

Down from Jerusalem to Jericho

> **Luke 10:30** *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

“A certain man.” Jesus does not say who he was — not his name, not his nation, not his religion. The hearers would assume he was a Jew, travelling between two Jewish cities. But Jesus leaves him nameless, a man and nothing more. That is the first lesson: a neighbour is first of all *a human being in need*.

“Went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” *Down* — from the mountains to the valley, a descent of over three thousand feet in seventeen miles.

“And fell among thieves.” Not petty thieves, but *robbers*, *bandits* — the word Jesus used of those who made the temple **“a den of thieves”** (Luke 19:46), and that is used of Barabbas (John 18:40). They hid in the caves and gullies along the road and attacked travellers who walked alone.

“Which stripped him of his raiment.” They took his clothes — valuable in that world — as well as anything else he carried. Stripped, he had nothing by which anyone could tell who he was. In that land a man’s clothing and his speech showed where he came from. Naked and unconscious, he was simply a man.

“And wounded him.” Literally, *laid blows on him*. They beat him badly.

“And departed, leaving him half dead.” *Half dead*: unconscious, unable to move or speak, near death. From a distance, a passer-by could not tell whether he was alive or dead.

A Priest and a Levite

> **Luke 10:31** *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*
>
> **Luke 10:32** *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

“And by chance.” The word *synkyria* means a *coincidence*, the way things happen to fall out. It seemed like good fortune: here came someone who could help.

“A certain priest.” Of all people, a priest — a descendant of Aaron, one who served at God’s altar in the temple, who offered the sacrifices and taught the law. The priests served at the temple in turns, each group for a week (Luke 1:8-9), and many priests lived outside Jerusalem between their turns. Jericho was known as a town where many priests lived. This priest was **coming down** from Jerusalem, perhaps on his way home after his week of service at the temple.

“When he saw him, he passed by on the other side.” He saw the man. He did not stop. He crossed to the far side of the road and kept walking. The Greek word *antiparerchomai* means exactly that: *to go past on the opposite side*.

Why? Jesus does not say. Many reasons have been suggested:

- **Fear of defilement.** The man might be dead. Under the law, anyone who touched a dead body was unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11), and a priest was not to make himself unclean for the dead, except for his closest relatives (Leviticus 21:1-3). An unclean priest could not serve or eat the holy food until he was cleansed.
- **Fear of robbers.** The thieves might still be nearby. The wounded man might even be a trap.
- **Hurry**, or simple indifference.

But the priest was going *away* from the temple, not toward it. And even if he feared uncleanness, God had said through the prophet, **“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice”** (Hosea 6:6), and Jesus twice told the Pharisees, **“I will have mercy, and not sacrifice”** (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). Whatever his reason, he put his own safety, his own convenience, or his own religious standing ahead of a dying man.

“And likewise a Levite.” The Levites were the descendants of Levi who were not priests. They assisted the priests in the temple: they kept the gates, led the singing, and cared for the sacred things (1 Chronicles 23:28-32). They too served by turns.

“When he was at the place, came and looked on him.” The Levite went a little further than the priest: he came up and looked. He saw clearly what had happened. **“And passed by on the other side.”** He too crossed over and walked on.

Two men who knew the law best, who served God in His house — and both passed by. The hearers would have expected this to lead to a third man: an ordinary Israelite, perhaps, who would put the priest and Levite to shame. That was the usual order: priest, Levite, Israelite.

Jesus said something no one expected.

But a Certain Samaritan

> **Luke 10:33** *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*

“But a certain Samaritan.” The hearers must have stiffened at the word. Jews and Samaritans had despised one another for centuries (see story 43). **“For the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans”** (John 4:9). To call a man a Samaritan was an insult. When Jesus’ enemies wanted to insult him, they said, **“Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?”** (John 8:48). Only a short while before this, a Samaritan village had refused to receive Jesus because he was heading to Jerusalem, and

James and John had asked to call down fire on it (Luke 9:52-55). And now the hero of Jesus' story was a Samaritan.

"As he journeyed." He was a traveller, perhaps a merchant going about his business, with his own animal and some money — and he was in Jewish territory, where he himself was in danger and unwelcome.

"Came where he was." The priest crossed to the other side. The Levite came and looked. The Samaritan came *where he was* — right up to him.

"And when he saw him." All three men *saw* him. Seeing was not the difference. What each one did next was.

"He had compassion on him." The word is *splanchnizomai* — to be moved in one's innermost being. It is the word used of Jesus himself when he saw the multitudes **"as sheep not having a shepherd"** (Mark 6:34; story 46), and of the father who saw his prodigal son coming home **"and had compassion, and ran"** (Luke 15:20; story 47). The Samaritan's heart was moved, and it moved his hands.

He Went to Him and Bound Up His Wounds

> **Luke 10:34** *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.*

Notice the string of verbs: he **went**, he **bound up**, he **poured in**, he **set** him, he **brought** him, he **took care** of him. Each act is joined with *and*. This is the figure called **polysyndeton**, *many ands*, which slows the reader down so that every single act of kindness is seen and counted.

"And bound up his wounds." He probably tore strips from his own clothing or used his own head cloth to bandage the man.

"Pouring in oil and wine." Travellers carried both. Wine, with its alcohol, cleansed the wounds; olive oil soothed them and helped them heal. Ancient physicians used both. Isaiah described the wounded nation of Israel as having **"wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment"** (Isaiah 1:6). The Samaritan did all three for a stranger.

"And set him on his own beast." His donkey or mule. That meant the Samaritan himself walked, leading the animal and steadying the wounded man on its back, mile after mile down the dangerous road.

"And brought him to an inn." The word *pandocheion* means *a place that receives all comers* — a roadside lodging, often a walled courtyard where travellers and their animals could spend the night, with an innkeeper who sold food. Inns had a poor reputation, but on a road like this one, one was needed. (A ruined roadside inn on the Jerusalem–Jericho road is shown to visitors today as the Inn of the Good Samaritan; it reminds us of the kind of place Jesus described, though no one can say it was the very place.)

"And took care of him." He did not drop the man at the door. He stayed with him through the night.

Two Pence and a Promise

> **Luke 10:35** *And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, 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.*

"He took out two pence." Two *denarii* — two days' wages for a labourer (Matthew 20:2). Lodging in a roadside inn was cheap; two denarii would pay for many days of food and shelter.

"And gave them to the host." The innkeeper.

"Take care of him." He asked the innkeeper to go on doing what he himself had begun.

"And whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." He opened an account in his own name for a stranger. Whatever more it cost, he would pay. This mattered: a man who had been robbed had no money. In those days a man who ran up a debt he could not pay at an inn might be held, or even sold, to pay it (compare Matthew 18:25). The Samaritan made sure that would not happen. He promised to come back.

He did not even know the man's name. The man was unconscious when he found him and may still have been too weak to talk. He would probably never be repaid. Everything he did, he did for a stranger who, if he had been well, might have refused to speak to him because he was a Samaritan.

There is an old story in Israel's own Scriptures that Jesus' hearers may have remembered. In the days of King Ahaz, the army of the northern kingdom took two hundred thousand captives from Judah. A prophet rebuked them, and some of the leaders of Ephraim — the region later called Samaria — took the captives,

> **2 Chronicles 28:15** *… and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.*

Men of Samaria clothing the naked, anointing them, putting the feeble on donkeys, and bringing them to Jericho. Whether Jesus had this passage in mind he does not say, but it is a striking picture of the same kindness, on the same road, centuries earlier.

"Which Now of These Three?"

> **Luke 10:36** *Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*
> **Luke 10:37** *And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

"Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him?" Here is the turn in the story. The lawyer had asked, *Who is my neighbour?* — who is the person I must love? Jesus asked, *Who was a neighbour?* — who *acted* as a neighbour? The lawyer wanted to know how far his duty went. Jesus showed him what kind of person he should be. The question is not *Whom must I love?* but *Will I be a neighbour to whoever needs me?*

"He that shewed mercy on him." The lawyer gave the right answer. But notice that he could not bring himself to say the word *Samaritan*. He said, *The one who showed mercy*.

“Go, and do thou likewise.” *You go and do the same.* Not *think about it*, not *discuss it*, but *do it*. The man who asked, *What shall I do?* was given his answer.

Jesus had answered the lawyer’s question, *What shall I do to inherit eternal life?* with the law: *Love God and your neighbour perfectly; do this, and live.* Then he showed what that love looks like — and it was far beyond what the lawyer had ever done, or could do. A love that crosses every wall, pays every cost, and expects nothing back. Measured by that, no one could justify himself. The story leaves the lawyer, and every reader, facing the same truth: no one has loved like this. The way to eternal life would have to come another way — not by our doing, but by what God would do for us.

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

The one who came to us. Many readers through the centuries have seen Jesus himself in the Samaritan. Some made every detail a symbol — the man was Adam, the robbers the devil, the inn the church, the two pence the two commandments — but Jesus did not give the story that meaning, and this series does not follow those allegories. But the likeness is there in the larger picture, and readers have rightly noticed it. Jesus was called **“a Samaritan”** by his enemies (John 8:48). He was despised and rejected by the very people he came to help (Isaiah 53:3). He came to us where we lay, **“without strength”** (Romans 5:6). He was moved with compassion. He paid the cost himself. He said, *When I come again.* This series offers it as a picture, not as the meaning of the parable, but a true one.

While we were enemies. The Samaritan helped a man who would have counted him an enemy. **“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”** (Romans 5:8). **“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”** (Romans 5:10).

The one man who kept the law. Jesus told the lawyer, *Do this, and thou shalt live.* Only one man ever did it: Jesus himself loved God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind, and loved his neighbour as himself, all the way to the cross. **“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”** (1 Peter 2:22). Because he kept the law perfectly, he could die for those who did not. God raised him from the dead and exalted him to His right hand, and through him eternal life is given as a gift to all who believe.

He came to seek and to save. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10) — words Jesus spoke in Jericho itself, at the end of this same road (story 49).

To the Grace Administration

Eternal life is not inherited by doing. The lawyer asked, *What shall I do?* Under grace the answer is plain: nothing can earn it. **“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast”** (Ephesians 2:8-9). **“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith”** (Galatians 3:11). **“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23).

But love fulfils the law. The believer who has received eternal life as a gift now has God’s own love to give. **“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”** (Romans 5:5). **“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law”** (Romans 13:10). **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”**

(Galatians 5:14). We do not love to be saved; we love because God loved us first: **"We love him, because he first loved us"** (1 John 4:19).

Love in deed. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18). The priest and Levite saw and shut up their compassion; the Samaritan saw and opened his.

To all, and especially to believers. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

No walls. The Samaritan crossed the oldest wall in the land. Under grace, **"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"** (Galatians 3:28).

Kindness as a way of life. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

To the Topic of Love for Neighbour

- **A neighbour is anyone in need** whom God puts in your path.
- **Religion without mercy is empty** — the priest and Levite knew the law and passed by.
- **Seeing is not enough;** compassion acts.
- **Love crosses walls** of race, religion and old hatreds.
- **Love costs something** — time, effort, money, risk.
- **Love goes the whole way** — not just first aid, but follow-through.
- **Love expects nothing back.**
- **The question is not "Who is my neighbour?" but "Will I be one?"**

The Main Takeaway

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus: "Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"; Jesus asked what the law said, and the lawyer answered rightly, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart … and thy neighbour as thyself," and Jesus said, "this do, and thou shalt live"; but the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked, "And who is my neighbour?"; Jesus told of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell among robbers, was stripped, beaten and left half dead; a priest came by and passed by on the other side; a Levite came and looked and passed by on the other side; but a Samaritan, the man the hearers despised most, came where he was, had compassion, bound up his wounds with oil and wine, set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, cared for him through the night, paid the innkeeper two denarii, and promised to pay whatever more it cost when he came again. Jesus asked, "Which now of these three … was neighbour unto him?", and the lawyer, unable to say "the Samaritan," answered, "He that shewed mercy on him"; Jesus said, "Go, and do thou likewise." No one but Jesus ever loved like that — and the eternal life no one can earn by doing, God now gives freely through him, together with His own love to give to every neighbour in need.

- **Eternal life is a gift,** not something we earn by keeping the law.
- **Don't ask how far your duty goes;** ask how you can help.

- **Let compassion move you to act.**
- **Cross the walls** others will not cross.
- **Give what it costs,** and follow through.
- **Go, and do thou likewise.**

For Our Learning — The People

- **Jesus.** On his last journey to Jerusalem; the teller of the story.
- **The lawyer.** An expert in the law of Moses who tested Jesus and wanted to justify himself.
- **The certain man.** Unnamed, robbed, stripped, beaten and left half dead.
- **The thieves.** Bandits who preyed on travellers on the Jericho road.
- **The priest.** A descendant of Aaron who served at the temple; passed by.
- **The Levite.** A temple assistant; came and looked, and passed by.
- **The Samaritan.** A despised outsider who had compassion and acted.
- **The innkeeper.** Paid to care for the wounded man.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **Lawyers (nomikoi)** — experts in the law of Moses, teachers and interpreters of the Torah.
- **Standing to ask a question** of a teacher.
- **The Shema** — "Hear, O Israel," recited morning and evening, with the command to love God.
- **The Jerusalem–Jericho road** — about seventeen miles, dropping some 3,300 feet through wilderness; notorious for robbers.
- **Clothing as identity** — a man's dress and speech showed where he came from.
- **Priests and Levites** — served at the temple by turns; many lived at Jericho.
- **Uncleanness from the dead** — touching a corpse made a person unclean for seven days (Numbers 19:11); priests were especially restricted (Leviticus 21:1-3).
- **Jews and Samaritans** — centuries of hostility.
- **Oil and wine** — carried by travellers; wine to cleanse wounds, oil to soothe them.
- **The traveller's beast** — a donkey or mule.
- **The inn (pandocheion)** — a roadside lodging "receiving all comers."
- **The denarius ("penny")** — a day's wage; two would pay for many days at an inn.
- **Debt at an inn** — a man unable to pay could be held or sold for his debt.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Parable** — a story from everyday life told to teach a truth (10:30-35).

- **Synonymia (piling up words of like meaning)** — “with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind” (10:27).
- **Erotesis (questions for effect)** — “how readest thou?” (10:26); “Which now of these three …?” (10:36).
- **Idiom** — “half dead” (10:30), near death, unconscious.
- **Polysyndeton (many “ands”)** — “And went to him, and bound up his wounds … and set him … and brought him … and took care of him” (10:34).
- **Antithesis (setting opposites against each other)** — the priest and Levite “passed by on the other side”; the Samaritan “came where he was.”
- **Repetition** — “passed by on the other side” (10:31, 32), the same words for both religious men.
- **Periphrasis (a description used instead of a name)** — “He that shewed mercy on him” (10:37), the lawyer’s way of not saying “the Samaritan.”

What the Bible Actually Says

- **A lawyer tested Jesus,** asking what he must do to inherit eternal life.
- **The lawyer quoted Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18,** and Jesus said he answered right.
- **Jesus said, “This do, and thou shalt live,”** echoing Leviticus 18:5.
- **The lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asked, “Who is my neighbour?”**
- **Jesus told a parable** of a man robbed on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho.
- **A priest and a Levite saw him and passed by on the other side.**
- **Jesus does not say why they passed by.**
- **A Samaritan had compassion,** bound his wounds, took him to an inn, and paid for his care.
- **Jesus asked which of the three was neighbour to the man.**
- **The lawyer answered, “He that shewed mercy on him.”**
- **Jesus said, “Go, and do thou likewise.”**
- **The Bible does not name the man, the Samaritan, or the lawyer.**

God’s Will and Intent

- **God commands love** — for Him with all our being, and for our neighbour as ourselves.
- **God desires mercy, not sacrifice** (Hosea 6:6).
- **God’s love crosses every boundary** men draw.
- **God shows that no one can justify himself** by keeping the law.
- **God gives eternal life as a gift** through His Son, who alone loved perfectly.
- **God sheds His love abroad in His people’s hearts,** so that they can love their neighbours.
- **God sent His Son to us while we were enemies,** gave him for us, raised him, and exalted him.