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Meet a Good Man

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Have you been in a conversation lately, talking about a mutual friend, a community or religious leader, a good husband or father, and said of the individual being discussed, “He’s a good man”? We all hear this commendation made of people, “He’s a good man.” This commonly-used sentence sums all the best qualities of a responsible citizen, a contributing member of human society.

Jesus told a story at one point during His earthly ministry about “a good man.” A Jewish lawyer, trying to catch the Master in a defective belief so as to discredit His influence, asked the question, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answered directing the questioner to the Old Testament, which he supposedly knew so well: “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” (Luke 10:26). He rightly answered Jesus’ question in these words: “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” (Luke 10:25-27). When Jesus ended this little argument with the words, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live,” the lawyer tried to reopen the discussion with the question, “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29).

At this point, in order to make the lawyer’s moral and spiritual responsibilities to others clear, Jesus told the following story. “Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner, a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:30-37).

We have no reservations about branding the conduct of the “priest” and the “Levite” in this incident as hypocritical. They were not spiritually sensitive to man’s needs. The world speaks a unanimous voice in rejecting this kind of behavior on the part of any human being, much less two religious leaders like these men. There are a multitude of lessons to be learned from their negative examples. But today we want to look at the “good man,” the Samaritan.

First of all, I am impressed with his unchangeable convictions. The two men who preceded him to this important spot on the road acted according to a double standard. In the admiring Jerusalem crowds during the religious festivals, the priest was prominent and very open to all his admiring friends. But somehow, out on that lonely road to Jericho, the distance between himself and the wounded man suddenly became too great to overcome. The Levite served with distinction in the tribe assigned by God to care for the temple and to assist the priests in the religious services. The entire nation looked to him and his brothers for involvement in the service of God. But service to God, at least for this Levite, had nothing to do with coming to the rescue of a wounded traveler.

As in our day these two men spoke of one standard of conduct and lived by another. There are businessmen willing to do anything to get a contract, but who are surprised and shocked at the delinquency of their children. Parents engage in immoral activities and then bemoan the fate of
Second, we almost never remember that the Samaritan was a busy man. If the Priest and Levite had solemn duties awaiting them, if they could not stop due to appointments, meetings, and other responsibilities, we certainly cannot assume that the Samaritan was traveling this dangerous road for no good purpose. Jesus says of him: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: . . ." (Luke 10:33). Like the Priest and Levite, he was going somewhere for some reason. Jesus discussed the nature of the Kingdom of God on one occasion using the illustration of a great supper to which the host invited certain people. But when the host's servant issued the invitations, Jesus says, "they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Luke 17:18). The first guest said, "I have bought a field, and I must needs go out and see it; I pray thee have me excused" (Luke 14:18). The Samaritan could have been a real estate agent on his way to an important meeting with the officials of a giant corporation about to locate in his area.

The Levite stands for all religious people who piously mouth one set of values and live by another. Here, on the Jericho road, was a modern-day merchant of phony religion who grows fat from the support of misguided but sincere souls. Here, on the Jericho road, was a twentieth-century Christendom that no longer weeps over man's fate and serves man's need. He was just like a church Jesus once described. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing: and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

But the Samaritan would not allow these shifting standards and relative values to affect him! He was a man of conviction who could see reality beyond the Priest and the Levite. He was a man who knew that the real indication of his character was not in what he did in times of ease and publicity but what he did in those quiet, unheralded moments of challenge. He heard God say, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, ... and touch no unclean things; and I will receive you, and I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters" (II Corinthians 6:17).

He heeded the Lord's continual admonition regarding such characters. "Be not therefore like unto them: for all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not" (Matthew 23:3). If others neglected their duties, if others showed no interest in needy mankind, if others refused to love, if others said one thing and did another, the Samaritan remained steadfast to his conviction of right and wrong. He was a man of unaltered, unchanging standards. He was a man of conviction who could see reality beyond the Priest and the Levite. But he needed new animal s of burden.

Another proposed guest at the great supper replied: "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused!" (Luke 14:19). Very possibly this was the Samaritan's situation. His fields were large and needed new animal s of burden.

So the Samaritan as he journeyed, came where he was: . . . " (Luke 10:33).

Third, Jesus reveals the secret to this man, the Good Samaritan, in the next words of the story. Listen closely! "... and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:33, 34). To borrow a phrase, here was a man with the "courage to care." Love of our fellow man is difficult for many of us because we have been hurt trying to love and help others. The Samaritan ran that risk in a literal sense. The road between Jerusalem and Jericho in those days was a dangerous one. Bands of robbers fell on hapless travelers who didn't take adequate precaution.

In the third century after Christ, one writer called this steep, rocky road, "the Bloody Pass." In a very literal and physical sense, stopping to care for the wounded man was highly dangerous and took no little courage. He so acted because, in Jesus' words, "he was moved with compassion." This also explains why the Priest and Levite did not stop, and why many of us refuse to help others, to become sincerely concerned about the needs of others. The Samaritan evidently had followed Solomon's advice, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). A world that reads more Marx, Lenin, and Mao Tse-Tung than Bible is not keeping its heart. A people who read the newspaper's comic strips more than they study God's Word has no basis on which to live noble lives. Families that argue and fight more than they pray in family worship can expect no compassion and love to grace their homes. We have never needed Solomon's advice more than this very day: "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Here was a man, the Samaritan, with "the heart to know, and eyes to see, and ears to hear" (Deuteronomy 29:2-4). He had developed, through cultivation of his spiritual life, the ability to see the real issues. The New Testament talks of such people, "full-grown men," in its words, "even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Hebrews 5:14). Rather than quote "the royal law" of God, which the Priest and Levite knew well, the Samaritan displayed it in his life. "Howbeit if ye fulfill the royal law," James says, "according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: but if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin . . ." (James 2:8, 9).

My plea is that none of us will succumb to the subtle pressures that daily call on us to assume the world's ever-wavering moral and spiritual standards. With the Samaritan we must commit our busy lives to the God "with whom there can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning" (James 1:17). This kind of life requires conviction, com-
passion, and courage — all of which are readily seen in Jesus’ example of the Good Samaritan.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ? To what extent have you honestly considered His claims as expressed in the New Testament Gospels. These biographies of Christ provoke the earnest seeker to believe that Jesus is the expected Messiah and Savior, the Son of God (John 20: 30, 31).

Have you made a firm decision to live for Christ? The commitment of an Apostle Paul coupled with the conviction of the Samaritan arises only when we are humbly willing to recognize and repent of our sins (Luke 13:3).

Have you expressed your faith in Christ as Lord and Savior of your life? To believe in Him and not confess your faith publicly is, in the Apostle John’s words, to “love the glory of men more than the glory of God” (John 12:42, 43; Matthew 10:32, 33).

Have you opened the door of your life to Jesus uniting yourself with Him? This occurs, according to New Testament teaching, in the immersion in water of penitent believers who openly testify of their faith (Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12).

The world needs men and women, boys and girls, who will live by the example of the Samaritan and by the life of Christ. Make your decision to be a Christian, in every sense of that word, now!

John Allen Chalk, dynamic evangelist and long-time radio speaker, is the first full-time speaker on the Herald of Truth radio program.

He began his work with the Herald of Truth on January 1, 1966. Previously, Chalk was the featured personality in a 13 week Herald of Truth television series.

A native of Lexington, Tennessee, he began preaching at 15. Chalk and his wife and two children now live in Abilene, Texas, where he spends full time working with the Herald of Truth.

He is a graduate of Tennessee Tech and has written a book, “The Praying Christ and Other Sermons” and two tracts. Chalk was nominated for the Outstanding Young Man of Tennessee in 1964 and was named Cookeville’s Young Man of the Year in 1963.