

Scripture - Luke 10:25-37 Parable of the Good Samaritan
Part 5 - Clarity: Is the Bible Clear Enough to Understand?
(Perspicuity, Analogy of Faith)

This fall our Bible study is asking, "What is the Bible?" The question today is about the clarity of the Bible: Is the Bible clear enough to understand?

Problem: *The Bible is too long and too hard to understand.*

[Good Samaritan] Let's read the intro to the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-29.

This lawyer is one of the religious leaders in Israel. He's a lawyer in the sense that he's an expert in the Law of Israel; he is a Bible scholar. He asks Jesus THE big question, "You're talking about salvation; you're offering it to all kinds of people. What must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus turns it back on him. "Well sir you're an expert, what does the Law say? **HOW DO YOU READ IT?**" And this expert summarizes the Law perfectly - "Love God and love my neighbor." And Jesus says, "Great, do all that and you get to heaven." BUT the Lawyer pushes back because he doesn't like Jesus saying all kinds of people can go to heaven, so he tests Jesus and asks, "So who is my neighbor?"

And Jesus says, "Mmmm so glad you asked." And Jesus tells him this parable.

Let's read the Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37.

This guy traveling gets ambushed, robbed, beaten, and left for dead. The fact that Jesus is talking to a Jewish crowd and just says, "a man was going from one Jewish town to another" implies this guy traveling is a Jew. He's dying on the side of the road and two Jewish religious leaders walk by, see the guy dying, but neither one stops to help. Then a

Samaritan walks by. Samaritans and Jews hated each other; racially, ethnically, religiously. But the Samaritan sees this Jewish guy dying, stops, and saves him. And Jesus asks the lawyer expert in the law of Moses - so who proved to be the neighbor in the story? And the lawyer is forced to say his enemy is the hero neighbor.

Jesus says, "Go and do likewise - love God and love your neighbor, and your neighbor includes people in need who you consider to be your enemy, so also love your enemy. Go and do likewise."

BUT is that the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan? Is that a good application for us and how we live in the world? Yes, but is that the point of the parable?

What was the original question?
How do I inherit eternal life?

So is Jesus saying to this lawyer expert in the OT law - "The answer to how to inherit eternal life is to fulfill the law by loving God and loving your neighbor (just remember 'neighbor' includes your enemy!)"

How do you know Jesus can't be saying that?
Because the gospel says we are saved by grace, not by our works. The gospel says we are saved by Jesus' works, not our works. Because the rest of the Bible says we are law breakers, sinners and that to be saved we have to put our faith in Jesus that he lived for us and fulfilled the Law for us AND also that he died for our sins and law breaking.

So again, the Problem: *The Bible is too long and too hard to understand. This lawyer expert in the law doesn't even get it.*

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[Perspicuity] Is the Bible clear?

Yes. In a word this is a question about the **perspicuity** of Scripture. **Perspicuity** just means clarity which is ironic because no one knows what that word means.

Is everything in the Bible easy to understand?

No! The **perspicuity** of Scripture does not mean every verse in the Bible is clear.

What about the Bible is clear and easy to understand?

The **perspicuity** of Scripture means the overall message of the Bible is clear.

What is the overall message of the Bible?

The answer to the question, "How do I inherit eternal life?" The gospel. Jesus saves.

Moses, who wrote the first few books of the Bible says to the Israelites in Deuteronomy that the Word of God can be understood and followed. He even says the Bible can and should be taught to children!

This super smart New Testament scholar, Vern Poythress, tells this story about how he was teaching on Revelation at a church one Sunday and he noticed a lot of children in the congregation and he said, *"Parents, I really want you to let your children read and be exposed to Revelation."* And when he finished this 12 year old boy came to him and said, *"I know what you mean. I read Revelation and I understood it."* Poythress said, *"Really? Praise the Lord. How did you understand it?"* And the boy said, *"Well I love to read fantasy. And I read Revelation like it was fantasy except that I knew it was true and in the end Jesus wins."* Poythress smiled at the boy and said, *"Precisely."*

The Bible is like the ocean. It's shallow enough for little children to wade into but deep enough we'll never see all its depths!

[Analogy of Faith] So some parts of the Bible are really deep and hard to understand which is why we also need friends and experts in the Bible to help us understand it. That's why we study the Bible together in the church!

The apostle Peter even says this about the apostle Paul's letters, 2 Peter 3:15-16, ¹⁵Count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶ as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures." The irony of Peter saying that about Paul is his letter 2 Peter is the most complicated Greek in the Bible!

But here is another important hermeneutic/method for interpreting the Bible. Remember we said God is the author behind the whole Bible which means the whole Bible is one story, the metanarrative of the divine and human story intertwined. So if it's all one story then what Moses wrote should fit with what Paul wrote, right?

So what's the best source to understand what a difficult part of the Bible means?

Commentaries are good, scholars and ministers are good. But what's the best, infallible source for what a difficult passage in the Bible means?

The best source to understand what one part of the Bible says is another part of the Bible! This hermeneutic method is called **the analogy of faith** which says Scripture must

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interpret Scripture. Since it's one story the whole thing has to fit together and one part can't contradict another part.

Analogy just means comparison. So because we take the Bible to be the Word of God by **faith**, and that the whole Bible contains **THE FAITH**, we compare a difficult passage to an easier passage in order to understand the more difficult passage. That's the method of the **analogy of faith**.

[Point of Parables] The parables of Jesus are like riddles. And for a good riddle you have to go to the riddler and ask them to give you the answer and explain the riddle. That's why Jesus tells parables. They're supposed to draw you to Jesus. And Jesus explains some of his parables with his own words. Some are explained by the Old Testament, some by the apostles. All of them Jesus explains with his life and death.

The point of the Good Samaritan is the gospel; that Jesus saves us, his enemies, by his grace not because we fulfill the law.

What did Jesus' parable expose about the expert lawyer who thinks he can get to heaven by obeying the law?

The parable exposed the lawyer doesn't fulfill the law. Jesus is saying, "HOW YOU READ THE LAW IS WRONG."

So what should have been the lawyer's next question?

Same question but expecting a different answer! So how do I inherit eternal life?

Looking back at the parable - how do you know Jesus can't be saying to the lawyer that the way to heaven is to fulfill the law by

loving your enemy? How do you know that **CAN'T** be the point of the parable???!?!!

Jesus could have told a story about a Samaritan that gets robbed and beaten and left half dead on the road and then a Jew comes along and loves the man and helps him - and Jesus says - "Now go and be good Jews like that."

But Jesus in a brilliant twist switches the roles and he says, "You, the Jewish person, are the ones who are attacked, beaten, and dying helpless on the side of the road and it's YOUR enemy who comes and saves you."

Jesus is looking at the religious leader who thinks he can earn salvation based on his good life and Jesus says, "You're the one in desperate need of help and love from your enemy. Your only hope of the inheritance of eternal life is for the gracious love of someone who is actually your enemy and owes you nothing but hate."

The answer to the question is we're the person dying on the ground. And our only hope is the love and grace of God who owes us nothing but hate and judgment because of our sin and law breaking. We're the ones who've hated God, turned our backs on him because we're really only interested in loving ourselves, who've failed to love our neighbor as ourselves, and failed to uphold the Law of God and earn eternal life by ourselves.

Jesus is the Good Samaritan. Jesus comes to love his enemies at the greatest cost to himself. Loving us costs Jesus his own life; suffering the wrath of God and taking our condemnation on the cross. Loving us cost Jesus everything and he pays it because he loves his enemies.