

It appears that Jesus' question was intended in the active sense: "Who was neighbor (i.e., became a neighbor) to the wounded man?" And the answer that the lawyer gave, which Jesus pronounced correct, was simply, "The one who showed mercy to the wounded man."

The Application of the Parable (verse 37b)

The parable has a twofold application: first, to the lawyer and the unsaved onlookers; and second, to Christ's own disciples and to us today.

What is the application to the lawyer and the unsaved onlookers? Jesus says that if a man would inherit eternal life legally, he must fulfill the demands of the Law; i.e., he must love God with all of his heart, soul, strength, and mind; and he must love his neighbor as himself. If the lawyer will do this and do it perfectly, he will earn eternal life.

Why does Jesus say this? Why does He set this standard before the lawyer? Doesn't Jesus know that this is an impossibly high standard for sinful human beings to reach?

By correctly explaining and illustrating what is meant by "loving one's neighbor as oneself" the Lord Jesus Christ in effect challenges the lawyer to attempt to earn eternal life by obedience to the high, holy requirements of God's Law, knowing that if the lawyer really tries to love God with all of his heart and really tries to love his neighbor as himself, he will discover that he is a lawbreaker, a transgressor, a sinner (a fact of which the lawyer seems unaware); and that trying to earn eternal life by keeping the Law is an impossible and hopeless task for a sinner. But the lawyer needs to find this out for himself!

Once he discovers his true condition, he will be in a position to look to God for mercy, for grace, for some other way to obtain eternal life and forgiveness of sins; and then he will be ready to hear the message of salvation through the gospel of Christ. Christ wishes to bring the lawyer into total despair at any attempt to save himself by his own efforts or works, in order that the lawyer might be brought to repentance and to the place of seeking God's great mercy and free salvation through Christ and His redemptive work.

What is the application of this parable to Christ's own disciples and to us? They and we are called upon to know and to understand the will of God addressed to our obedience. We are called upon to love God with the whole of our being, and to love those with whom we come in contact in this world. Even though our obedience is