

The Christian's Assurance, Part 2

Luke 18:24-30

Well, we are back in Luke 18. One final look at this section that began with a question, as we've seen, from a rich young ruler, Luke Chapter 18 and verse 18 and following. That's where you'll find us in the text. We see that the rich young ruler in verse 18 came to Jesus with a question. And he asks that question in Luke 18:18. "What must I do? To inherit eternal life."

Let's read the entire account starting in verse 18 and read through verse 30. "A ruler asked him, 'Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.' And he said, 'All these have kept from my youth.' When Jesus heard this. He said to him 'One thing you still lack. Sell all

that you have. And distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come follow me.'

"When he heard these things. He became very sad. For he was extremely rich. Jesus, seeing that he had become sad said, 'How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.' Those who heard it said, 'Then who can be saved?' But he said 'What is impossible with men is possible with God.' And Peter said, 'See, we have left our homes and followed you.' And he said to them, 'Truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.'"

So Peter gets it. Peter gets that his only hope is Christ, but he's got a follow up statement. It is a question. It pertains to assurance. And what Jesus has said here, it really has upset the assurance of his disciples. It's troubled their hearts a bit, but only momentarily. And it's with, in his heart, a kind purpose. And Jesus intends to establish their hearts

further and solidify the ground of all true assurance. We love nothing more than Christ. Everything else we love, everything else that we have an affection for is subjugated to this one supreme love, the love of Christ. Peter said, "See, we've left our homes and followed you."

Again, Peter is speaking for all the disciples. No, notice the first person plural, "we," he's speaking for all of them. And though it doesn't seem at this point like he's asking a question, he actually is. Luke and Mark record his statement. Just the statement itself. But it's Matthew who gives the added question. "See, we've left everything and followed you. What then will we have?"

So he's asking that question. He's also picking up on what Jesus is laying down. He says, "Okay, so what is there for us? We have done what you've commanded us to do." Peter comes to his Savior and he seeks assurance for himself. But he seeks assurance really for all his fellow disciples who are troubled.

He's got a shepherd's heart that's being cultivated right here. I love it. Love seeing his shepherd's heart, his concern for everyone, he wants to bring him all in. "Come on, gather around, guys. We all have this question don't we? Let's ask it. Let's ask it." And what he reveals when he speaks, though, what he confesses, what comes out of his mouth, the testimony, is what we see here is a heart affected by Christ. It's a heart that's been affected by Christ.

And it points to a reason here for assurance. Peter's words reveal within him and within all who share his thinking here. A supreme and exclusive love for Jesus Christ. And that is the love, the kind of love that exists in every true believer. In fact, no believer is without it.

Remember what Jesus told the rich young ruler in verse 22. "Sell, distribute, then come follow me. Cut ties with anything and everything that has a hold on your heart and give me the supreme place." That's what Jesus is saying. He's, Jesus has, and he's making the claim he has exclusive rights to be the supreme object of our love and our devotion and all our

affection. And for the Christian he has it, does he not? He has it. Can I get an amen?

I mean, Christian, listen, you read through the Psalms, right? "Shout joyfully to the Lord." Why? Because he has our supreme affection. He's given that to us as a gift, that we are bound to him in love. He loves us. We love him. That is salvation, and in a word, isn't it, that picture?

Here in verse 28, Peter's saying "Jesus, we've done that. Cut loose of everything. Anything that would hold on to our hearts, we've snipped the cord with the world. We followed after you, so what's to become of us?" He's seeking assurance. He's seeking assurance for his fellow disciples that their hope is not going to be disappointed, that they will indeed enter into the Kingdom of God. And even in the question, and ironically but beautifully, the reason of assurance is revealed.

If Peter could read ahead to Paul's words, which will come years later, but in Romans chapter 5, verse 5, Peter, if he could read those words now at this point, he would understand

the supreme love for Christ in his heart. That's evident in his forsaking all to follow Christ and didn't come from himself. It came from God.

"Hope does not disappoint us [Paul writes] because God's love has been poured out into our hearts [through whom?] through the Holy Spirit." Through a person. The Holy Spirit who's been given to us. Love for Christ assures us. Our hope is well placed. Back in verse 28, Peter says, having left our life behind, that is, leaving everything behind, is what's required to follow you. The ESV has Peter saying here, "See we've left our homes." Like our homes, our houses, the literal expression, though in the Greek text is far broader, far more comprehensive. It's literally "the things that are our own, the things that are our own, anything that I can call mine."

So homes are included, yes. Property is included. Responsibility is included. Ambitions are included. Duties, privileges, wealth, holdings, animals, whatever. It's all included. It's all comprehensive. He's speaking here broadly enough to include anything and everything that he and his fellow disciples have left behind, whether wife or children, extended

family and close friends, private and public affairs, homes, fields, property, businesses, interest holdings, everything.

And when he speaks, he's extending out his arms to all the disciples and says, "Here we are, Lord, here we are, having left everything. We have followed you. Listen, Lord, we have not been in Capernaum for a long, long time. We're here with you. We're going wherever you go. We're in it for the long haul."

That, folks, is indicative of an exclusive devotion. It's evidence that he has sacrificed all other loves. It's a supreme love for Christ that's subordinates all other affections. The rich young ruler seemed like the prime candidate for discipleship, what he could not do Peter and the disciples had done.

Again, is that because Peter and all these disciples happened to be made of the right stuff? Is it mean that deep down inside they've got good hearts after all? No, not at all. Remember, first point, no hope in man, no hope in anything else. Our only hope is in Christ.

No one becomes a disciple by doing better, by working harder, by thinking the right thoughts, finding within himself a supreme love for Christ, reaching deep within to gut it out and forsake all and follow Christ. That's just more enslavement to another religion. This supreme love for God that's centered on Jesus Christ is not something natural. It's not a love that's generated from within. It's not found in a human being.

It's not summoned forth from the heart of man. It doesn't come up bubble up from the bowels of the depths of his of his soul at all. Doesn't come from human affection, supreme love for Christ, which is the operating principle of every single believer, it comes to us not from within, but from without, from above. "In this is love," John said, 1 John 4:9, "not that we have loved God but that he loved us, and he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

He showed love to us. First John 4:19 we love because he first loved us. I know the law. Exposure to the law is supposed to take us down to the depths, to see our sinfulness, to see

God's holiness. His great righteousness in our imperfection and our inability to keep it.

And we've blown his holy standards and thought, word, and deed. We've sinned sins of omission and commission. We've got so many sins that we don't even know them all. We're not even aware of how much we sin against God. And so the Law exposes that and it does a good job. But you know what really crushed me when I was coming to Christ? The Gospel. Because I saw the love of God.

Knowing all that he knows about me, seeing all the wicked thoughts. All the vile things. And he loved me when I was his enemy, not his friend. He loved me when I was loving sin and never loving him. He loved me when I loved unrighteousness and played around in filth, and he picked me up out of that filth, out of the miry clay, and he set my feet upon the rock.

Has he done that for you? He loved us first. And by the Spirit whom he put in us, made to dwell within us. Love comes from within us because it comes from him. And the love comes outward because it comes from him.

When we're confronted with Jesus' call to exclusive lifelong all forsaking discipleship in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me," what is it that generates an obedience response to Christ's call. What generates that? It's because of a supreme love for him. Given to us by him, by his Spirit.

It's because of a supreme love for God in Christ, it's a total abandonment to his love, to his care. That kind of love is generated only and exclusively by the Holy Spirit. I'm guessing as a Christian, you can probably look back in your own life and see the times when your love was tested, when you had to make a choice between two loves, or three or four or eight.

I can think back to several times in my life God has tested me on this. He's exposed that tension in my heart of competing loves. And by his Spirit, by his Word, God clarified for me what it is I really want. Who it is that I really want. First, my salvation involved a direct confrontation with my idolatry, with another love.

I'd set my heart on a certain profession, certain career path. And I was stubbornly reluctant to give it up. And for me, this profession, this career path, was not about making a boatload of money. It had nothing to do with money. But to me, it was wealth.

It was wealth, and it had a hold of my heart in a deep, deep way. But by God's kindness and grace, he set me free from that foolishness. He set me free from the hold that that idolatry had on my heart, and he replaced all my idols with Jesus Christ. I can tell you I've never lamented the trade.

Second, my call to vocational ministry involved a direct confrontation with a similar kind of idolatry. Same kind of idolatry, it crept right back into my heart. Once again, I was pining for a career or a profession I thought would satisfy the kind of person that I really am. The disposition and the nature that I thought defined me.

Once again, God was so kind to pry open my stubby little baby fingers, take the dead corrupting idol out of my hands, and give me what I had never deserved. A lifetime of serving Christ, serving his words, serving his flock. I've never regretted that. Not once.

Third, my call to this particular ministry. To accept a call to come and be a pastor at Grace Church. Externally, outwardly, it could appear to some that I'd obtained a certain level in my former life, had a stewardship of influence, had a bright future in the place that I was living and serving. Well provided for, well provisioned God want me to leave that behind and set out on what seemed, maybe too many, as an uncertain future.

However, by this point in my life, when I made that decision, a decision was a whole lot easier. He'd helped me to see that what he calls me to, though I can't see it in the immediate foreground. He's got blessing, rich and free, and joy and satisfaction. That decision was a whole lot easier. My heart was soft, easily persuadable, pliable at that time.

I found once again that loving Christ supremely, following him with what may have seemed to some to be reckless abandonment and stupidity, but what really was a well reasoned, reasonable faith. And I have once again joy and satisfaction in loving him supremely. And it doesn't have to do with circumstances, surroundings, place, geography. It doesn't have to do with income or lack of income. It doesn't have to do with prominence or lack of. It doesn't have to do with influence, doesn't have to do with any of that stuff.

It has to do with knowing and loving Christ, wherever you are. Paul and Silas knew that in a Philippian jail. Hearts were filled with song. As a Christian, I know that you have had similar experiences in one form or another. Maybe it hasn't been dramatic, but it's got to be there.

In order to come to Christ, you have to confront what is it that you truly love? Will you kill it? Let it go for Christ. Because if you can't do that, you haven't been regenerated. If you can do that, it's only because you have been regenerated and born again.

When Jesus said, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me. He wasn't prescribing some great work that you do and generate from yourself. He was calling to all those and only those who've been born again. The point has to be pressed to every conscience. Because he will countenance no rivals to his love.

Have you forsaken other ambitions and career aspirations, life goals, things like that, to follow Christ? Have the things of this world, its ambitions, its measures of success, it's voices of approval, and they lost their grip on you, having no hold on you? Do you really only care about one performance eval in your life? His.

If so, Jesus' command has become attractive to you when he said sell your possessions and give to the needy. Luke 12, "Provide yourselves with money bags that don't grow old with treasure in the heavens, that doesn't fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Beloved, what do you treasure?

And I know for you who are Christians, who you have been born again, you treasure Christ. He is your all in all. He is your supreme joy, supreme love. Everything else is a potential rival. Have you counted the family of God as more important than your flesh and blood family? It's a tough one, isn't it? Is the church that Jesus Christ died for, are the members of his body and bride, are they closer to you than the family that you were born into? Or do you keep them at a distance?

Because listen, this is how Jesus thought about his family. His flesh and blood family, Luke 8:19 and 21. "His mother and his brothers came to him, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside desiring to see you.' But he answered them [remember what he said] 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.'"

Do we Christians think the way Jesus did? Because we should. Every believer who hears the Word of God and obeys it is closer to us than any blood relation who doesn't. It's with those kinds of people that Jesus calls closer to him than his mother and his brothers. It's with those kind of people, that we

will live forever as brothers and sisters in the same family, as fellow citizens in the same Kingdom, the Kingdom of God.

So have you forsaken all? To gain entrance into the Kingdom of God, to enter through the narrow gate and walk the narrow path of eternal life. Because I'm telling you the, the gate and the way is so small you cannot squeeze through with anything else. If your answer to those questions is yes and amen, then you are finding reasons in yourself, coming out from within yourself, evidences coming out from your heart of assurance of your salvation. Because no one says those things unless God has done it in them. It's evidence you possess eternal life.

So we hope and nothing but Christ. We love nothing more than Christ. And now Christ answers Peter and verses 29-30 and he gives another reason for assurance. We trust in nothing but Christ. Back in verse 22 when Jesus called the rich young ruler to discipleship, remember the promise that accompanied the call. What was that promise? You'll have treasure in heaven, right? Jesus was calling the rich young ruler to let go of what's temporal, what's comparatively inglorious, in order to bless him with what is eternal and what is all glorious.

Well, the rich young ruler didn't make the trade, did he? But we do. We make that trade. We'll make it any day of the week. Why? What marks the difference? The difference is the absence of the presence of true saving faith.

In Jesus' answer to Peter, verse 29, he's speaking to those who believe. He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come, eternal life." The way that Jesus has structured his answer, the way Luke has recorded this, you can see it in there in the English, can't you? That double negative, it kind of comes across as awkward.

But that's intentional. No one who will not receive, double negative. It's strongly worded. It's strangely worded. Because it's emphatic. Any one of them, if he has left anything, whether it's a house or a wife or brothers or parents or children or whatever it is, if it is for the sake of God's Kingdom, there is

no reality that exists in which that person will fail to receive what God has promised.

Emphatic negation there denies the possibility, it denies even the potentiality of leaving promises unfulfilled. This is an ironclad guarantee. The way he began his answer, look at verse 29, He began it with an amen. "Truly I say to you." That's Jesus' signature statement, and you've heard it before. Truly, truly I say to you, *amen, amen*, I say to you. It's an emphatic affirmation that he begins the statement with he pronounces an amen.

He declares a "so be it," even before he says it. It's just the strongest positive form of expressing assurance that Jesus can give. Namely, what is that form of assurance? The promise of his word. Here's your gear, your ironclad guarantee, Jesus says, I said it. Period, end of paragraph, end of chapter, and a book.

So there's this emphatic, positive affirmation. "Truly, I say to you," followed that by this emphatic double negation. It's a bomb proof ironclad affirmation of salvation for us. You

can go back to verse 17. Jesus said the same thing about receiving children into the Kingdom. "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

Remember it, there's another double, double negation there. So think about it. Those who truly receive the Kingdom of God, they're not like the rich young ruler, right? He came with his wealth, his strength, his influence, his authority. That's not the promise here. Those who truly receive the Kingdom, they come to Christ, they come to God, they come to the Kingdom like Peter and all these other disciples. Coming like an infant, having forsaken all, they come with infants with nothing to commend them.

They're stripped bare of anything that might commend them. Nothing in their pockets, nothing on their backs, nothing. And they do that in order to follow the Jesus as Lord. Why did they do that? Because by God's grace they have come to see that only Christ is trustworthy. Only his Word matters. They've come to trust only in Christ and what he's taught to them about the Kingdom.

Notice the phrase of the end of verse 29. They do this why? "For the sake of the Kingdom." "For the sake of" is one word in the Greek, it's *henneka*. It's also translated "by reason of." Has to do with thoughtfulness on their part. They're reasoning this out. They're making a rational, well reasoned decision. Okay, house and stuff and property, family, everything I love have, hold, have influence over, ambition, on this side. Over here, what Jesus said. And they say goodbye and hello. And they embrace him.

By God's grace they take him at his word. They reason from faith. They forsake all to follow Christ because it makes perfect sense to them. It makes the only sense to them. Because they believe him. They believe him above all else. Believe him above every other word. Every other authority that vies for their attention, every other command on their hearts.

They believe him over everything else. Take him at his word. They've heard what he's been preaching about the Kingdom, and as they listen to him, their hearts are burning and bursting with joy as they believe his words. They trust in his promises.

They long for what he describes, and they will follow him wherever he goes.

That's, that's the same with all of us, isn't it? We have the same experience as Peter and his fellow disciples. Consider the amazing promise, that promise that Jesus gives to Peter and these disciples in verse 30.

Jesus says that those who left behind what they once counted precious. Those who did it by faith for the sake of the Kingdom of God, reasoning that out, they will receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life. Jesus speaks there of two periods, two eras, two epochs. And they're set apart by different words for time.

In the first, it's in this time, the word is *kairos* there. And *kairos* refers to a temporal segment. It refers to a fixed period. It's marked by a particular characteristic of particular event, a particular era. It's got a characteristic to it. Jesus calls it this time. So he's talking about the time in which they're living, right then, starting with the first advent of

the Messiah. So what would we call this time? It's the Messiah's time. It's his time.

This time it's the *kairos* of the Messiah. It's the Messianic age started with his incarnation and it's gonna end as Paul says first Corinthians 15:24 when he delivers the Kingdom of to God the Father after destroying all rule and every authority and power. So after the millennial Kingdom, for he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, the last of which is death itself. It's after this time, immediately following the millennial Kingdom, when he delivers the Kingdom to God the Father. This will end the Messianic age, and it will usher in a new era. And that's the second expression, the word *aion*.

Aion being a very long period of time, a segment of extended time. Translated era, age, you could even put in the word eternity, that is the word *aion* or *aionos* for eternity. It's the age to come. It's the age that is future to the Messianic age they just described. So we got two periods of time here, Messianic age followed by the age of Eternity, the age of everlasting life.

Believers. All believers will have their part in both ages. Any so-called sacrifice that you or I have made in this life, anything that we have forsaken, anything we've let go of, anything we've turned away from. I could tell you, read the promises, read the Scripture. It is nothing compared with what we will receive as citizens of God's Kingdom in Christ.

Mark and Luke are closely parallel and really abbreviating this section, but in Matthew's account, again, Matthew is written with primarily Jewish readers in mind. He gives a fuller account of what Jesus said that day to his disciples. In answer to Peter's question, Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne."

By the way, the new world there, it's the word regeneration, in the regeneration. There's a spiritual regeneration. There's also a physical regeneration and regeneration of the world. So that's why the ESV translated in the new world. "In the new world, when the Son of Man will sit

on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, that promise applies specifically to the twelve apostles. Mathias, obviously appointed to replace Judas Iscariot, Acts 1:15 to 26. Everyone else, though, continuing in Matthew 19, "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for my namesake," very parallel to our text, "will receive one hundredfold and will inherit eternal life."

All of us, all those believers who have forsaken anything, whatever it is for my name's sake, or as Luke records it, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, one and the same. Everyone who believes in the Son has eternal life, and he will see to it that they are rewarded, well, many times as much. Matthew says hundredfold in this time.

Earlier, I described several of my own ambitions that I'd given up at my salvation, my call into vocational ministry, my

call to this particular ministry. I just want to tell you a very honestly that I have never given up anything. Really, I've not giving up anything.

I've really sacrificed nothing in my life. Whatever, I supposedly gave up was actually holding me back. It was preventing me from God's good, from God's blessing, from the profound joys that God had planned and charted out for me, the good works, Ephesians 2:10, that "he planned beforehand that I should walk in them." It's the same for you.

We have to let go, don't we? In order to receive what he has intended to give us. Following Christ is always a bed of roses. No, of course not. Forward for Christ from this point, for him meant very literally the cross, didn't it? Pain, suffering. Ignominy. Embarrassment. Shame. Humiliation. Death. We see that coming in versus 31 to 34 right in this text Jesus reminds his disciple of that fact.

Humiliation comes before the glory, the cross comes before the crown. Should we not expect that following after him that's

not going to involve suffering for us. May it never be. Paul saw suffering as communion with Christ. He saw suffering with Christ and for the sake of Christ as privilege. Not as something to be denied, shunned, turned away from.

Colossians 1:24, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh I'm filling up what's lacking in Christ afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the church." He counted suffering for the sake of Christ, in Christ's name, for his purposes, he saw it as a fellowship, as a partnership. He saw that as true Christianity. I know that you do too. You do too, because that's how Christ in his word has taught you.

We can do it all by his grace. When we're fully assured by faith in his promises, when we're wholly devoted to him in love, when we set our hope fully in God, in Christ, and on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ by him, we can do it. The real tragedy in the story, obviously, is the rich young ruler. And the tragedy is what he held onto.

Because it was an all an illusion. It was like a mirage in the desert. He thought it was water. He thought it was going to give him refreshment. He thought he was going to be able to bathe in the desert oasis underneath the palm tree, eating his own dates, eating his own coconuts and all that stuff. Nothing there. Gets there, it's just more desert. It's just more burden. It's just more enslavement.

He forfeited absolutely everything. He was promised treasure in Heaven. He forfeited that in exchange for absolutely nothing. Such a foolish, tragic decision, one that is haunting him even now and will do so for all of eternity. Remember, stories not a parable. It's real life. He's no longer with us.

What he failed to realize, is the truth that we all need to be intentional to remember. The most important things in life are not tangible. They're not physical. The most important things in life are intangible spiritual realities. We look, Paul writes, not to the things that are seen. But to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient. But the things that are unseen, they're eternal.

So the lesson for us? For those who have forsaken all for his sake, for those who have followed after Christ. We who hope in Christ. We who love nothing more than Christ. We who trust wholly in Christ. He is both the source and the object of our faith, hope and love.

Those virtues, when they are effectual in our lives, they give our hearts full rest and assurance. We have great confidence. We have complete security and assurance in him that we have eternal life. By his grace we are those who have obeyed, and have the privilege of obeying, Luke 9:23, when Jesus said "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would lose his life for my sake will find it," Let's pray.

Our Father, we count all things as loss for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ our Lord. And so we share the testimony of all of Scripture. The beloved apostle Paul and all those who have taught us that it is worth it to exchange all, even the world itself, for salvation in you. We count our discipleship and this call, that you've made to us is to for discipleship, we count that to be such a privilege that we have heard that call,

that you have brought us to a direct confrontation with anything that would rival your love.

We thank you so much for breaking any hold that this world and any other love and any other affection has on us. And then you have lashed us to the mast with Christ as the captain of the ship. And he is steering us into our heavenly home. We pray that you would keep us faithful to the end and proclaiming our great salvation with a loud voice to this world. They so desperately need to hear this message. May you be pleased to grant salvation to many more. In the name of Jesus Christ and for your glory, Amen.