

Session 1

NO TURNING BACK

Luke 9:51-62

Memory Verse


Jesus told him, “Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”⁵⁹ Then he said to another, “Follow me.”


– LUKE 9:58-59, CSB



No Turning Back

THEOLOGICAL THEME: From the moment of Jesus' miraculous conception He was going toward Jerusalem, specifically Golgotha and the cross.

 Do you consider yourself a needy person or a self-sufficient person? Explain.

 What are some things that you are unable to provide for yourself without utilizing outside sources?

Nothing is independent. Let's use plants as an example. Plants must have sunlight to grow. A huge star shines its light on our little earth, and living organisms called plants take the light and turn it into food. There is a lesson there for Christians. Plants are totally dependent upon something that is completely outside of their selves and completely outside of their control. The plants have absolutely no say in what the sun will do today, but they are one hundred percent dependent upon it.

The fact of the matter is that people depend on outside sources to supply their needs. We are needy creatures, and unless we get help from outside of ourselves, we are doomed. Think about it. The very air you are breathing isn't produced by you. We have to depend on this planet's atmosphere to provide the right gas in order to breathe and be alive.

God, on the other hand, needs nothing. He is completely self-sufficient. He isn't dependent on anything outside of His own being. Furthermore, God is not only self-sufficient, He is able to provide for His creation. We must understand that we find ourselves in a very vulnerable position: extremely needy, but dependent on a completely powerful and trustworthy help—God Himself. In our lesson today, we will discuss what it means to bring our needs before God the Father.

Christians are dependent upon God. Christians are especially dependent upon the work of God in their lives to save them and keep them. Today we will consider not only the saving work of Christ, but also His directing of our lives.

Session Summary

The Christian's faith may be aided in three specific ways upon careful analysis of faith in this passage. First, Christians are reminded that Jesus' mission on earth was to get to the cross in order to serve as an atoning sacrifice. A reminder of the gospel should always be like a refreshing drink of water in the desert. Secondly, a Christian's faith is spurred on by Jesus' command to His disciples to follow Him. The authority and command of Christ strengthens the faith and resolve of those who have been redeemed by Him. Finally, Christians are helped by Jesus' warning about turning back from following Him. Those who have been truly born again will hear those words and tremble, and they will surely endure to the end.

1. Toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56)

Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem because He knew that it was there that He would fulfill the mission for which He had been sent. Though His disciples still didn't understand (even though He had told them plainly), Jesus had no doubts about where His supreme work was to take place.



Why must we always keep the cross of Christ in our sights in the same way that Jesus did? What problems are presented if we make other things such as Jesus' acts of mercy and healing our primary focus?

Jesus' miraculous works mean nothing apart from His work on the cross. Furthermore, if those acts were completely deleted from the earthly ministry of Jesus, the hope and faith of Christians would not be changed or diminished in the slightest. Yet, if one removes the work of Christ on the cross, then all of Christianity collapses.

Jesus did do many amazing, compassionate, and awesome works before He went to the cross. He multiplied food to feed thousands, made the blind see, caused the lame to walk, calmed a raging storm, walked across water, and raised the dead to name a few of His astounding works. These works, however, were garnishes to His supreme work. Those acts were signs that proved His identity (God in flesh). They were the opening act to the glorious work of the cross.

What makes Jesus' work on the cross so special?

The reason that Jesus' work on the cross was special and superior is because it was absolutely necessary and its ramifications were eternal. The other works that Jesus did, as amazing and wonderful as they were, did not deal with the fundamental human problem. All people are born in a state of sin and misery, and without divine intervention they will spend eternity in a state of sin and misery. Jesus' work on the cross was the only remedy for the sinful state of man. The cross was special because it was unique in its ability to deal with human sin. No other act before or after the cross meets the requirements for the salvation of corrupted sinners. It was absolutely necessary.

Furthermore, the ramifications of the cross of Christ are eternal. When Jesus turned the water into wine, it was truly amazing. The results of that work, however, were temporary. That wine is gone. The wedding is over. That village is no more. The family has passed away. When Jesus fed the 5,000, the people were amazed and satisfied. Their satisfaction, however, didn't last. They became hungry again. Now, contrast that with the work of the cross. Jesus' shed blood on behalf of sinners results in the justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification of sinners. Those states of being will go on for eternity. The benefits of the cross of Christ are forever. Souls are satisfied at Calvary, and they will never hunger or thirst again.

? Application: Do you value and rejoice in Jesus' work on the cross on your behalf above all? Do you see Christ primarily as the one who provides for temporal needs today or the one who has made provision for your soul for eternity?

2. Follow Me (Luke 9:57-59)

Christians should be the most grateful, humble, and generous people on earth. They were dead in their sins and trespasses, and the God of the universe intervened on their behalf. Jesus Christ, God in flesh, suffered upon a tree in their stead. His suffering was terrible. The crown of thorns pierced His brow. The nails tore open His hands and feet. The spear penetrated his side. But that suffering was surely light in comparison with the unfathomable wrath of God the Father that He bore for sinners.

Christians have nothing to boast about except for the work of Christ on their behalf. Their boasting in Christ turns to praise and adoration. And praise and adoration, when it is fully formed, turns to obedience.

? What was the command that Christ uttered in this passage? What is your response to this command of Jesus?

An integral part of the American spirit and Western civilization in general is independence and autonomy. Our society values liberty and self-rule. Thus, we tend to look at authorities with some suspicion, and we can view commands as a threat. This way of living does have its benefits in maintaining a free society by keeping the power of government in check. However, King Jesus and the kingdom of God are not the same thing as our earthly citizenship. Christians who approach the kingdom of God with the idea that they have the liberty to rule their own lives and need to limit the power of God in their lives have not truly understood the nature of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Those who have been redeemed by Christ joyfully and fully submit themselves to Christ the King. They understand that the one true and living God is both mighty and good. Those who truly know and love God respond to His commands with ready and humble obedience. John wrote, “For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden” (1 John 5:3). The psalmist wrote that God’s laws were perfect and that they refreshed his soul (Ps. 19:7).



What did Jesus mean by this command? What does it mean for Christians today?

The commands of the Lord are a joy to the children of God. Even the Old Testament law is precious to those who are in Christ. Though they are no longer under the law, it does give them clarity about how to live in such a way that is pleasing to their heavenly Father. The command in this passage is different than the Old Testament laws. It is also different than the commands that we see in the New Testament. It doesn’t fit perfectly in either group because it was uttered after the coming of Christ, but before His atoning work on the cross. So, what should we make of it?


The command is simple enough. Jesus said, “Follow me,” to a man who had just pledged to follow Him wherever He went. It is likely that this man had witnessed some of Jesus’ miraculous works. Jesus explained that He had nothing of this world to offer, but to follow anyway.

The first thing we must recognize is that Jesus spoke those particular words to a particular person, and that we ought not apply them directly to anyone else. As we study Scripture we must be careful to get the meaning of the original author by considering the context, discern the universal principles, and check those principles against the full counsel of God. Once we have taken those steps, then we are ready to apply the text to today.

Remember, Luke wrote this account in order to give his readers certainty about the testimony of Christ. So, first, we should recognize that Jesus did call people to follow Him, and to do it sacrificially. Next, we should note, based on the incredible acts that Luke also recorded, that Jesus Christ is worth following. But how can we follow Christ


today? Those who are Christians cannot follow Jesus Christ in flesh walking on the earth, but they are certainly called to follow Him: “For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21).

To follow Christ means two primary things. First, Christians follow Christ by trusting in Him as the Savior of their souls. Second, they follow Christ by walking in accordance with the Word of Christ: “Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you” (Col. 3:16).

 **Application: Have you submitted yourself to the authority of Christ? Where is He calling you to do this further?**

3. Fit for the Kingdom (Luke 9:60-62)

This story about Jesus calling people to follow Him has a jarring ending. A person said that they were going to follow Christ, but first they needed to say goodbye to their household. Jesus responded by saying, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

 **Was Jesus saying that we have to work to earn our way into heaven? What did He mean with this statement?**

Jesus’ answer to that person seems harsh, unkind even. The truth is, Jesus was telling this man the truth, and we can be assured that He said it with the right tone and body language. Furthermore, we must remember that just because something is uncomfortable or offensive doesn’t mean it is wrong. We may very well need to be offended in order to understand the truth.

Jesus was not saying that a person must follow Him without ever faltering or sinning in order to one day enter heaven. Rather, Christ was pointing to the fact that those who are redeemed by Christ will be totally transformed, and the new trajectory of

their life will be one of following Christ. There will be many who profess the name of Christ, join churches, submit to baptism, and even preach God's Word, but they will fall away. John explained why some put their hand to the plow, but later turn back: "They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us" (1 John 2:19).

How does one become "fit" for heaven?

If we don't read carefully and compare this text with the whole counsel of God we might make the mistake of thinking that Jesus was saying that it is the faithful plowing that makes one fit for heaven. In other words, some might look at this passage and conclude that Jesus meant that if a person remains faithful to Christ their whole life, then their faithfulness will make them fit for heaven. But this was not what Christ was saying. Jesus was explaining that those who have hearts fit for heaven won't turn back after taking up the plow. Or, in other words, those who faithfully stay at the plow are the ones whose hearts are fit for heaven. The extraction of the sword in the stone didn't make a man King Arthur. Rather, the pulling of the sword made it clear the identity of the man.


The Bible says that those who are in Christ have been made fit for heaven. They are a new creation; they are born again (2 Cor. 5:17; John 3). A person who is dead in their sins is made fit for heaven when they hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and respond with repentance and faith.

Application: Are you in Christ? Where is He calling you to respond to Him today?

Conclusion

Jesus is the Savior of the world. His whole life was directed toward the great suffering that He would undergo at Calvary in the stead of ruined sinners. Christ calls those who have trusted in Him to love, worship, and obey Him. Those who are in Christ follow Him and they don't turn back. Those who are truly born again are kept by God, and their fruit will reveal their true identity.

 What does Jesus' suffering at Calvary have to do with you today? Why does it matter?

 How do you look to the Word of God for commands? How do you desire to be led, limited, and corrected by God's Word?

 If you are in Christ, how has He called you to follow Him by having gospel conversations with those who are far from Him?

CHRIST CONNECTION: Jesus' acts of healing and teaching are important, but they are side notes to His march toward Jerusalem. There He would bear the wrath of God in the stead of ruined sinners, so that all those who look to Him with faith and repentance might be saved.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Jesus told His disciples, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (John 20:21). Jesus called His followers to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).



FOR NEXT WEEK

The Rich Young Ruler

Main Passages

- Luke 18:18-34

Session Outline

1. A Critical Question (Luke 18:18-20)
2. The Ruler's Confidence and Christ's Scalpel (Luke 18:21-22)
3. The Rich Ruler's Sadness (Luke 18:23-34)

Memorize

Jesus told him, "Foxes have dens, and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."⁵⁹ Then he said to another, "Follow me."

- Luke 9:58-59, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 9:1-6
- Tuesday - Luke 9:10-17
- Wednesday - Luke 9:18-27
- Thursday - Luke 9:28-36
- Friday - Luke 9:46-48
- Saturday - Luke 9:51-62