

Leaving All To Follow Jesus

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Date: 07 August 2011

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[0 : 00] Particularly the words in verse 27c, we have left all and followed you. The subject is leaving all and following the Lord Jesus Christ.

Leaving all and following the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, last week, whether we liked it or not, the state of the financial markets in the UK got a real double whammy.

And people who felt secure are no longer as secure as they were. Today, people who felt less secure are even worse off than they were.

Suddenly, the whole situation changed from a measure of security into a situation wherein people are alarmed.

If they know anything at all about what it means to have lost 150 billion of the markets, then 150 billion is a lot of money and it affects a lot of people and their pensions and so on.

[1 : 23] So, there is a situation where a lot has changed. And you will notice that in this context, in the passage we are looking at, we read in Mark 10 from verse 28 and we read in Luke 18 from verse 28.

The subject of leaving all for Christ was in the context of a man refusing to give up all for Christ. And he had plenty to leave, but he refused to leave it. And so, this subject of leaving all and following Christ is the most important subject.

No matter what's going on around us, no matter how our finances are affected by the world markets and the UK markets too, ultimately there is no more important subject we can think about than following Christ.

It is the great business of our lives. It is the great business we ought to concern ourselves with most. And yet, in the passage we are looking at, it is clear that it is a demanding business.

[2 : 45] It is a costly business. For we are being asked to forsake all for Christ, for Jesus. That is to say, to put him first.

Now, those of us who are already in the faith and follow Jesus, you will recall that from the very beginning of the life of faith and following Jesus, we discovered that the Saviour expected us to take this view that we forsake all and follow him.

Our peace with God, our right standing with God, our knowledge of the forgiveness of sins, that they all came to us through committing ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, those of us who were perhaps more self-righteous than others, we know that one of the most difficult things confronting us was to forsake our own self-righteousness, our own feeling that we were, we just needed a wee bit of a polish up here and there and God would accept us.

And all that was skittled. And we know that was costly to discover it had all to be forsaken. All the hindrances in our lives that kept us back from committing to Christ, these were all swept away and by his grace we followed him.

[4 : 17] But from time to time we are required to look at this subject and to think about the very matter of leaving all and following Jesus.

Because concerns can creep in, anxieties, interests, things that prevent us from going on as we went on at first.

Or, in the case of those who have not yet committed, we need to see the thing the way Jesus would have us see it. We need to see what it is to forsake our native attachment to the here and now things.

And to even those whom we love most in this world. Now, of course, in the case of this rich young ruler, you see that he had a rather good religious upbringing.

He could say to Jesus, I've been brought up on the commandments of the Bible. I've kept them. I've had a good religious upbringing.

[5 : 33] What do I still lack? Verse 20. And sometimes people think Jesus was saying, Well, if you keep the commandments, you'll earn heaven. He wasn't saying that at all.

He was simply putting pressure on the young man to see how the young man thought. And then to really challenge the young man.

To make them see what following Jesus was really all about. And you see that when Jesus put him to the real test.

Verse 21. If you want to be perfect, that is complete. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven.

Come, follow me. Can't do it. That was it. Bridge too far. Can't do it. And Jesus, you see, in his own way, he used the easier things, if you like, before he came to the real sticking point.

[6 : 43] He knew where to press so that this young man would react. And we're told in verse 22, this is where he stumbled, that when the young man heard what Jesus said, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

And so, we are brought back to this great business of forsaking all for Christ.

Of weighing all that we have and all that we love in the balance. And finding that Christ outweighs everything and everyone.

The young man went away sorrowful. He wasn't prepared for such sacrifice. It's too much to ask of me.

But it's clear that the disciples had committed in this way. And although, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, the others all had made this commitment.

[7 : 54] Peter can say, see, verse 27, see we have left all and followed you. So they had come to that point.

And they made that commitment. And now, this is about the third time that Jesus had dealt with the subject of calling.

And they had committed, or if you like, they re-committed, they reaffirmed their commitment. See, we have left all and have followed you.

And the very fact that this reaffirmation of their commitment comes in a context where a man who had so much going for him refused to commit brings to us the challenge of thinking about ourselves, of considering ourselves.

And I want to think about this subject under two headings. First of all, the disciples' commitment commitment and then the Lord's assured blessing.

[9 : 06] We notice then, we have left all and followed you. The modern versions of the Bible tend to translate the word behold as see or look.

But in the original it's a great word that focuses attention, behold, focus, think, consider. And they're saying to Jesus, behold, behold, we have left all and followed you.

But there's a question with it, therefore, what shall we have? Sadly, some people think that they had made this commitment because of what they were going to get out of it.

that it was really a business deal. It was better to give up everything for Jesus in the meantime because gain would come.

That's not the way to view this at all. And this is not a question that implies greed on their part. Not indeed exaggeration on the part of Peter and the others.

[10 : 20] as if to say, well, they hadn't really committed themselves. They hadn't forsaken all. We have left all. What we have to do is accept it as a straightforward and honest statement of fact.

We have left all and followed you. What therefore shall we have? Jesus, you see, accepts that they had left all for him and for the gospel's sake, for the kingdom of God's sake.

He doesn't rebuke them for the question either. It's interesting that in all the three passages we read, he doesn't round on them for saying mercenary lot.

What are you asking this question for? Is that all you're interested in? What you'll get out of it? No, he doesn't. He doesn't rebuke them for that. Therefore, he saw the question as a genuine and sincere question without any implication of greediness.

And that that is true is borne out by the fact that Jesus actually tells them what will be theirs in the cosmic regeneration, in the renewal of the universe at last.

[11 : 43] He says that they will benefit. Verse 28, Assuredly, I say to you that in the regeneration, that is in the cosmic renewal, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me, and then he lists what will be theirs.

And so then, we can say that their statement of commitment was as true, as true as could be, as true as their question was without guile.

The disciples, you see, were in fact shocked and saddened by the young man's response to Jesus. I think we need to take this seriously.

They were dismayed that this was the young man's response. that he could become sad and disheartened and turn away.

They saw this as dreadful because, you see, the young man revealed that his heart was set on and ruled by his earthly treasures.

[13:05] He wouldn't give them up for Jesus. He wouldn't give Jesus the place in his heart that belonged to these treasures. And therefore, he would not and could not be saved.

He walked away. And so, it's against that background we see that the disciples had left all.

They had been persuaded in their hearts, obviously enabled by grace too, to put Christ Jesus before all else. And it's not fair on them.

I'm saying this because some interpreters have suggested that they were unthinking in their commitment. That's simply not fair. It is a slur on their character.

No, rather, they had considered. They had listened to Jesus. They had beheld his work, his miracles. They listened to his words.

[14:14] They received his words. And they had committed themselves to him. Remember at the very first when Andrew went home and told Simon Peter, we have found a Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth.

and the whole business was important to them. We have found him of whom the prophets spoke. He's come.

And they listened to him as their Messiah, Saviour. And they committed to him in that way. And so it's important for us today to check our ground as it were.

And to think about whether by the grace of God we have committed ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ above all things and above all persons.

If we are followers of Christ, this is the commitment he requires of him. See we have left all and followed you.

[15:25] And this is something we come back to again and again. we look at where we have come from in the life of faith, if we are in the faith. And we look at our attitude to Jesus and we think and we reaffirm.

You see what I am saying? The disciples had followed Jesus for quite a while and they were confronted by the response of this young man and it made them check their ground.

It made them think again. It made them reaffirm their position. We have left all and have followed you.

Now, I agree that some folk will say, well, there is not much I have to forsake and make compare yourself with a rich man, the rich young ruler or the rich in this world and say, well, you know, I have so little.

What is there to forsake? That misses the point entirely. This is not about being rich or poor. This is an attitude of heart. This is about putting Jesus first in our hearts.

[16:43] Whatever we hold dearest in the place of Christ is a stumbling block to us. It stands in the way of saying with Peter, we have left all and have followed you.

We have put all that is dearest to us in its place, all of its people in their place, and we have put Jesus where he belongs, on the throne of our heart.

We set aside all for his sake. church. And it's important to see it that way. This is not just about Peter and the disciples.

This is not about ministers and missionaries or other office bearers in the church. This is about every one of us. This is about whether you have made that commitment, see, Lord, I have left everything and followed you.

This is about our young friends with us here today, too. You know not what the future holds, but you see, the Savior speaks to us today and he seeks our heart.

[18:06] My young friend, give me your heart. That's the heart of the matter here. That was a problem with a rich young man. He made no such commitment.

see, we have left all. We put everything in its rightful place, out of the center of the heart.

See, Lord, we have left all and followed you. And when that is true of us, then we can serve the Lord in an unfettered, in an uncluttered way, wholeheartedly. whatever role in life we have. We need that full commitment of heart and of mind to Jesus. We need to be all in all for him. And that, my dear friends, who are members in the church today, that's the way we are to be. All for Jesus, committed to him.

[19 : 12] He requires nothing less of us. He requires us to say, not my will, but yours. And he requires us to make that known in a public and open way, to commit ourselves.

And it is as we do that, we will have grace from him to advance in his ways and to advance his kingdom too. You see, this, to go back to the rich young ruler for a moment, he would not give up his wealth.

He wouldn't give it up in his heart for Christ. And it's important for us to put it in its place. I often think about Abraham, whom the Bible calls the father of believers. He was a wealthy man. He was a hugely wealthy farmer.

man. But clearly, all that he had didn't occupy the place in his heart that belonged to the Lord.

[20 : 25] The Lord was first in his life. And that is what Peter is saying here effectively. See, we have left all and followed you.

we see everything we are and have as the Lord's for the you saw. In days gone by, some of the older Christians here will remember preachers like Alan Redpath, a bit before my time, but these preachers were always seeking to arouse Christians to greater service and greater usefulness. And quoted famous songs like Havergal's song, Take my silver and my gold, not a mite will I withhold.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure stow. Take myself, and I will ever be, only always, all for thee.

That's really what Peter is saying. See, Lord, we have left everything and have followed you. That's the spirit that is needed and may the Lord grant it to us in abundance.

[21 : 51] And secondly and lastly then, the Lord's assured blessing. Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, the word behind assuredly there is Amen.

And it all was prefaced, what was followed it, as a solemn declaration. In John, you have a double Amen, Amen, Amen, Verily, Verily, was the authorized.

And Jesus solemnly assures them, you will be blessed. You will be blessed in the cosmic regeneration, he says. Assuredly, I say to you that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will be richly blessed.

And he says more than that, actually, because he says that even in this world you will receive. We read Mark's account, and we read Luke's account, because in these accounts he says not only in the world to come, in the renewed heavens and earth, the renewed universe, you will have all the blessings that I promise you.

But even in this world, you will have blessing. You will have my provision for you. You are not going to be the losers for following me. And I think what we need to do is recognize something that Jesus is saying here, and something he is not saying.

[23 : 35] Verse 29, everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit eternal life.

the first thing we need to say here, he is not saying you abandon your family responsibilities. Of course not. Remember what we were saying earlier on, this is about the heart of the matter, this is about putting the nearest and dearest in their place, and not in the place that belongs to Jesus. That's what's being said. we put those that we have family responsibilities for, children for their parents, parents for their children, and so on, and the wider family too.

Of course we have to fulfil our responsibilities and duties. He's not encouraging us to hive off wherever. No, he's saying to us, we put our loved ones and our means in their appropriate place. things. It may be that in the passage of time, he requires us to do what is most difficult, to sacrifice time and our family situation, the easy side of it, for the sake of the gospel and the kingdom of heaven, for Jesus' sake, to put personal preferences to the side, to put personal ambitions to the side, in order that Christ may be served more effectively, because he's entitled to nothing less.

[25 : 33] Christ's call demands our all. That's what Jesus is saying, and Peter has said, see we have left all and followed you.

It's interesting to me aside here, but remember when after Jesus rose from the dead and had appeared in Jerusalem, then the disciples went away up to Galilee.

Most of them lived there anyway, and Jesus came up there and appeared to them and commissioned them and so on.

But it's interesting to notice that they went back to what they knew best. They went back to fishing. They went back to what was familiar and in a measured course.

He gave security. And Jesus took them beyond that. He showed them that He had something else for them and His call demanded more of them.

[26 : 47] He says in one place, if you don't hate your own life for my sake, you can't be my disciple. And He means, by such a stark way of putting it, think about it, I demand all from you in my service.

The Apostle Paul got that so well, probably better than any mere mortal. I count not my life, dear to myself, he said, that I might finish my course.

He was so absolutely committed to Jesus, it makes one blush with embarrassment to think about what He did in the Saviour's name.

But you see, Jesus assured blessing, not only in the world to come, in the renewed universe, but in this world too, before we leave it, before we finish our course.

And to me, one of the best ways to think about our own lives in terms of motivating ourselves to do all for Jesus is to think about the all that He did for us.

[28 : 01] He left the realms of glory for the cross of shame. Paul, actually, and interestingly too, when he's wanting to encourage the Corinthians to be more generous in their giving, what he does is he takes Jesus and he says, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who being rich for our sakes became poor.

He impoverished himself in order that through his self-impoverishment you would become rich. And to my mind, there's no better way of seeing the thing.

We're giving back just a little when we give out all. When we serve him with all our heart, our soul, our mind, our strength, and all our means, we're only giving back a little.

When we look at him and we see what he's done, who being rich with all the riches of God himself, impoverished himself, became man, servant, was a servant, and the servant of all, washed dirty feet, got in and did the little things for the enrichment of others.

And when he laid down his life on the altar of Calvary, he did the utmost for us. And he says, therefore, to all who forsake all for him, you're never the losers in following me.

[29 : 57] And he gives that list. We're not the losers. We don't give out all in order to gain.

It's not about business transaction. Perish the thought. No, we're just seeing in an honest and guileless way what this is about.

Don't let the enemy deceive you into thinking you'll lose if you follow me. There are some of you here, I know, just like me, who when you shared your faith with others, they immediately think about what they'll have to give up.

Yep, they do. They think about, I'll not be able to go there or there or that, not be able to do this or that. It's all about loss. You're smiling.

It's all about loss. That's the way they think. They think about it almost like business proposition.

You see, no, pass. That's a despicable way to think, really.

[31 : 08] It's a beggarly way to think. No, no, no. Let us think nobly. Let us learn from this poor, rich, young ruler who thought about it all in terms of business, in terms of what he would lose.

You see, Jesus says he loved his riches and he trusted in his riches. This is a wee aside, but those of us who are in the faith today, we should pray for those who have whacks of wealth, who on the world markets have lost more than we can dream about.

They're not immune to losing everything. And we want to pray for them as much as we pray for ourselves, that they will not trust in uncertain riches, but in the Lord who being rich became poor for rich sinners and poor sinners to make them everlastingly rich.

And let this rich young ruler in his sad state challenge our own hearts, that we will not trust in uncertain riches, that we will not be devoted, I say devoted, to anyone in the place of Christ.

Let him be first to us, foremost to us, all in all to us. And may he give us the ministry of his own spirit to strengthen us in our commitment to him, and to reassure us that he will supply our needs according to his glorious riches by Jesus Christ.

[33 : 18] Well, let's, as we leave this now, let's remind ourselves of what the Savior requires of us. He requires us to wholeheartedly surrender ourselves to him.

See, we have left all and have followed you. Let us not be afraid to say that we will surrender our all to Jesus.

Oh, those are words of a hymn, aren't they? All to Jesus, I surrender, I surrender all. And that, you see, is what we're being asked to do, to surrender out all to him.

All to thee, my blessed Savior, I surrender all. See, we have left all and have followed you.

And he assures us, in such a commitment, let no one say to us. We will be the poorer, we will be losers.

[34 : 33] No, never. Let us wait upon him and trust him and know that he will supply our needs spiritual and temporal according to his will and in the cosmic regeneration more than we can begin to imagine.

Amen.