

The Danger of Looking Back

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Date: 22 July 2018

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a wee while to the chapter we read in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 9. Gospel of Luke, chapter 9. And reading at verse 62.

Jesus said to him, No one puts his hand to the plough and looks back as fit for the kingdom of God. Now, probably the great, or as great a question as any person can ask is the one that the Philippian jailer asked, What must I do to be saved?

It is an absolutely essential question. And we remember the answer that was given, a very simple answer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

It's very straightforward at one level. So you say to yourself, Is that it? Is that all that is required? Well, at one level, yes. In fact, at every level, yes.

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. But the Bible shows us that believing involves certain things.

[1 : 21] And this passage is teaching the absolute importance of commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. That Jesus wants us to follow him completely.

Not half-heartedly. Not a little bit. Not following one day and not following the next. But a commitment, a total commitment.

That's what Jesus is looking for. And we find here that Jesus highlights the importance of this total, as we said, commitment and following him.

But coming back to the question about believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have to ask then, what is it to believe? Well, there are certain things involved. First of all, there has to be what we would term, there has to be knowledge.

A person must know who it is that they're believing in. You can't believe in nothing. Or you can't believe in someone that you don't really know anything about. You have to know something of who Jesus is.

[2 : 28] You don't have to know everything about who he is. Because there are people who have great head knowledge about the Bible and the doctrines.

They have great knowledge of the passion and the work of Christ. But they don't know Jesus. It's all in the head. There has to be more than that.

But the fact is that we have to know. We don't need to have the knowledge of great theologians or professors. But we have to know in whom we believe.

That's what the Bible says very clearly. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? You see, people cannot believe in someone that they haven't heard of.

So that's one of the great essentials of proclaiming the gospel. So that people will know something of who the Lord Jesus is. So that's the first thing.

[3 : 26] There has to be knowledge. Then the second thing is that there has to be belief. In other words, there has to be an absolute persuasion. That what you know of the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely true.

That's another absolute certain key to this believing. That you, everything that you know and that you've heard and that you've read of Jesus, you are now absolutely persuaded that it's all true.

And so that's the second part. There's the knowledge and then there's the believing that it is true.

And then, because of that knowledge and believing what is true, there then comes the trust.

In other words, this is at the point where there is this absolute persuasion of who Jesus is. And you say to yourself, I now have put myself, I have cast myself, I have thrown myself completely upon Jesus.

Because of what I know of him. And now because of what I believe in him. There is this trusting our whole being. Trusting our life. Trusting our future.

[4 : 49] Trusting our day by day. Trusting for time and for eternity upon Jesus. We come to the place where we no longer trust ourselves.

You see, in life, normally that's what we do. We trust ourselves. And that doesn't mean that we stop at one level trusting ourselves. But we, as the Bible says, trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your paths. We come to this place where we exercise faith in him. Where we trust him for our lives.

It's like if you were up in an airplane and you decided, or you had gone up to do a parachute jump. There was a day when I really wanted to do a parachute jump.

I have to say that these days have passed. And I've never had the opportunity. But it was something I always, for years, would love to have done. But obviously, if you're going to do a parachute jump, there has to be a huge level of trust or belief or persuasion that this parachute is going to open and it's going to carry you down safely, to land safely on the ground.

[6 : 06] So there's a huge element of trust when you jump out of a plane thousands of feet up that that parachute is going to open and that parachute is going to do what you expect it to do.

In fact, we're exercising a kind of a trust all the time. When you go and you sit down in a chair, you expect that that chair will hold you up. If you weren't sure whether it would hold you up, you would be lowering yourself down very, very gently and probably trying to hold something else at the same time, just in case, just in case it didn't hold you up.

So in life, we are always exercising a trust in different things. And at one level, that is how it is with the Lord Jesus, that we are trusting him to be everything that he says he is, that he is the savior, that he will save you, that he will forgive you your sins, that he will work within you, that you will be renewed and reshaped and that eventually he will take you home.

So you believe, you trust in him entirely and altogether. And then there's another thing that we sometimes overlook.

And this is, I wouldn't say, is absolute key to the salvation, but it is part of it, of this believing. And it's something maybe we don't put sufficient emphasis on, but there has to be confession as well.

[7 : 45] In other words, we have to confess Jesus Christ. And our lives really should be confessing Jesus Christ. Remember what it says in the Bible that, with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

So you see, that faith that you have, this belief that you have, ought to become evident within a person's life. That doesn't mean that every single moment of every single day, that that person, who is now a believer, is a shining example of Jesus Christ.

Should be, but we know, because we're so human, that there are times that we fail the Lord, we let him down. But the overriding way of our life, ought to be one, that is reflecting more and more and more, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, so they will glorify your Father, which is in heaven. And so the Lord wants us to confess, and to profess his name.

And of course, one of the great ways that he has done that, it's not, we all know that, there are lovely Christians, who have never gone to the table, they've never confessed Christ publicly, publicly in this way, and professed being a believer.

[9 : 13] But there's always something, that they miss out on. Because we've always got to remember, that the table is a means of grace. The Lord has given us that, to strengthen our faith.

And by coming there, remember what it says, you proclaim, by taking of the bread and the wine, you proclaim, it's a public witness, you proclaim, the Lord's death until he returns.

So there's something very powerful, in being at the table. But the Lord uses it, as a means of grace, to strengthen us in the faith, to encourage us, as we go along.

Now as we know, faith is progressive. Faith is something that, should be growing, within us all the time. Now so Jesus says, no one who puts his hand, to the plough and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Now this statement comes, as a result of Jesus meeting three people, three different people. But Jesus is teaching, this one lesson, that nothing, is to come in the way, of commitment to him.

[10 : 20] That first and foremost, he must have first place, in our lives. And so, that's the same as saying, seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

Now some people, have found Jesus' statement, in particular, to the one, who wanted to go, and bury his father. To another he said, follow me, but this man, this is in verse 59, Lord, let me first go, and bury my father.

And Jesus said to him, leave the dead, to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim, the kingdom of God. Now some people, have found that statement, very harsh. that Jesus, is forbidding this man, to go and to bury his father.

But I think we've got to understand, the culture of the day. In the Middle East, we've got to remember, that a funeral, followed very, very, very quickly, after death.

Sometimes on the same day, most certainly, the next day. So that if this man's, father, had died, that day.

[11 : 30] At the very latest, the funeral would be, the next day. Or it could even be, before the day was out. So Jesus, is not saying, to this person, I'm not going to allow you, to go and bury your father.

This statement, often, was used, about, burying your father, when your father, was still alive. It was often, a statement, that was saying, well, I'm going to stay, stay at home, till I bury my father.

The father, the father might be quite well, or the father might be ill. But it was, it was saying, I'm not going to move from here, until my father, actually dies, and is buried. So, that might go on, for six months, might go on, for a year, might go on, for a few years.

So that's what Jesus, is saying. Because we know, of Jesus, his compassion, and his love, with regard to, to funerals. We see, with the widow, whose son, was being buried.

We see how he raised that, raised her son. We see his compassion, and love, at the grave of Lazarus. So Jesus, is not, in any way, dismissing, the sorrows, and the griefs of death, or dismissing, a funeral, which are essential parts, of, can I say, life, of our way of life.

[12 : 44] But what he's saying is, if you're going to follow me, you follow me. You're not going to wait, at home, all these months, or years, until something happens. And so, Jesus demands, this complete loyalty.

Now, again, people would understand, exactly what, Jesus was saying, when he said, no one who puts his hand, to the plow, and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God. Because, the plowing, then, the plows, would be very flimsy, and obviously, the person, the plow, plow, would be attached, to the oxen, and, the person plowing, would be following on behind, and they were rickety, they would be kind of, moving all over the place a bit.

So, there had to be a complete focus, when you were plowing. You couldn't be, following, plowing, and looking this way, or looking that way, or looking behind.

If you did, you'd be all over the place. The plow would be upside down, and if you were in employment, you probably wouldn't be in employment, much longer, if you were that type of plower.

So, in order to plow properly, there had to be, a complete focus, upon you, what you were doing.

You had to be, focused, looking ahead, looking at where you were going, and directing, so that the oxen are walking, are moving on, in the right direction, and you're following on, with the plow.

[14 : 19] And what Jesus is saying here, is that, nobody, who claims to be, a child of mine, an heir of the kingdom of glory, who spends their time, looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

So, what does that mean? Well, two things. First of all, it means this, that by looking back, it means, that you're too fond, of what you've left behind.

Now, that doesn't mean, that a Christian, never, ever, ever looks back. And it doesn't mean, about not looking back, with regard, to your Christian development, and your Christian life.

It doesn't mean, not looking back, to the time you were converted, and the way the Lord, has worked in you, and with you. That doesn't, that's not what it's talking about. But it means, looking back to life, before, you started to follow, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you spend your time, looking back, it really is saying, I, prefer, the world. I prefer, where I was, rather, than to where I am, now.

[15 : 30] Now, as you and I know, God made us, and he made us, in order, to enjoy life. God's, God's original intention, was for us, to enjoy life, but above all, to enjoy him.

And our greatest, fulfillment in life, and it means that, our whole life, will take on, a whole new meaning, is when God, is at the very center, of our life.

And we're able, to enjoy him. Remember the first, catechism, what is man's chief end? Man's chief end, is to glorify God, and to enjoy him, forever. So, the desire, for happiness, is an absolute,

essential, within our lives.

Everybody wants, to be happy. But of course, the problem is, that, because of the fall, we always, try, to find, our happiness, in other places, other, than centering it, in God.

That we look here, we look there, we look everywhere else, and we tend, to forget, that it is in him, that we live, and we move, and we have our being. We owe, our existence to him, we live, every day, in him.

[16:47] So, the person, who is always, looking back, is somebody, who is, still, too fond, of the world, that they've been, taken out of.

And, Satan is very good, at bringing, your past, to the, to your forefront. And, particularly, times, that, you remember, you might remember, pretty good times.

There were times, that you would say, oh, you know, that was a great time. But, he will remove, from your thinking, the uncertainties, and sometimes, the consequence, of sin.

He will hide, from you, the sting, and the tail. He was a master, at hiding, all these things. So, he just brings, before you, something, that you once enjoyed, but maybe, there was problems, with it. But, he'd hide, all these things, and help you, just to focus on that. He loves to do that. But, what we've also, got to remember, is that, this looking back, is incredibly dangerous.

[17:51] That's why Jesus said, remember, Lot's wife. Lot's wife, along with Lot, was taken out of Sodom. And, although she was taken out of Sodom, Sodom wasn't taken out of her.

And, she, ended up looking back, and we know, how she was turned, into a pillar of salt. It was the same, with the Israelites, in the wilderness. It tells us, that they were lusting, for the flesh pots, of Egypt.

Which is really, quite extraordinary. You see, what was happening there? They could only, they had the most, horrendous time, in Egypt, before the deliverance.

They were in, absolute bondage, and slavery. They were in misery, and they were crying, out to God, for deliverance. God delivered them.

But, in the wilderness, because their life, was harsh, their mind, was going back, to Egypt. And, they could only, at these moments, remember, some of the good times.

[18:58] Remembering, some of the, the food, that they had. And, they were saying, oh, just, we've only, could get a proper meal, rather than this manna, day after day. And, they began to lust after, and hankering back, to the flesh pots, of Egypt.

It's incredible. Because, they're, they're tending, at this point, forgetting, the misery, they were in. The bondage, they were in. The slavery, they were in. And, that's what Satan, does with us as well. That there are times, that our mind, can go back. And, we might, have to catch ourselves, and say, what am I thinking of here? Do I not, can I, not forget, how it once was?

The sense of lostness. The sense of being, distant from God. And, sometimes, these things, can sadly, become a distant memory. So, we've got to, what Jesus is saying is, if you're following me, you follow me.

You can't be going, you can't walk, in two directions, at the same time. You can't walk forwards, and backwards, at the same time. You can't be going, east and west, at the same time. Or, north and south, at the same time.

[20:11] It's one, way, or, the other. Now, having said all that, that doesn't mean, that we don't, enjoy life, as we live it.

Of course we do. And in fact, the Christian should enjoy, living out their days, more than anybody should. Because, Christ, is at the center, of our lives.

And we see him, or we should be seeing him, in everything. And it makes a huge difference, to your life. When he is our focus, when he is, at the center, of things.

And we were able to, see that everything, that we have, we have received, from him. So those, looking back, are really saying, I'm missing, the world, that I've been taken out of.

But the second thing is, those who look back, are almost demonstrating, that they're not, fully satisfied, with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21:21] That, Christ is, no, isn't, our fulfillment, our satisfaction. Now, as you and I know, as Christians, we ought to be growing, a little more, all the time.

That's the nature, of our Christian life, that we're growing, growing, growing every day. We're growing in grace, growing in the knowledge, of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, of course, everybody, doesn't grow, at the same pace.

It's the same, in the natural world. Everybody doesn't grow, at the same rate, the same pace. It's the same, with a person, is in, wherever they are, whether it's a school, or whatever, some people, some people learn, more quickly, than others.

And it's the same, in our Christian walk. Some people, when they're converted, there's just this, amazing, like a growth spurt. They seem to develop, and to flourish, and to grow, and to grow, and to grow.

Others, it's a slower growth. But, and probably that's the way, with most people. It's a kind of a slower, on-growing development. And so, we see, as we go through life, there has to be this evidence, within our heart, within our life, that Jesus is, at the very center of it.

[22 : 37] And again, by saying, we're not satisfied, with Jesus. Really, those who look back, are saying that, they aren't focusing, on the final, aspect of the kingdom.

If today, you're following, the Lord Jesus Christ, you know one of the things, you keep thinking about, keep thinking about heaven. It's where you're going to go. If you were going to go away, supposing you're going to go abroad, or somewhere, where you've never been before.

And, supposing you're, supposing it's next year, next summer, you're going to go, and you're going to go to, Canada, or Australia, or somewhere, somewhere, somewhere of a, fair distance.

You've never been before. It's, you wouldn't, spend the next year, never thinking of, the holiday you're going to have. You would never, not, look up, in whatever way, about the actual place, that you are going.

It would interest, you're thinking, and you would like to have a, an idea of, what it was going to be like, and where you were going to go, and what sort of things, would be there. That's natural for you.

[23 : 51] And so it is, for the Christian, because we're just on a journey. We're passing through. We're pilgrims and strangers. Yes, this is where we are, and in the Lord, we ought to enjoy, every day, and count our blessings, and name them.

However, this is not, our final residence. And, we're just, as it were, on a journey. We know where we're going.

That's one of the things, that happens, when you become a Christian. It's part of the assurance, that the Lord gives, is that, the Lord's saying, I'm going to take you home, at the end. You don't know, when the end will be, but I do.

The Lord is saying that. I know, you don't know, but one day, it will be the end, and I'm going to take you home, to be with me. That's what Jesus said, when he, was parting from the disciples.

I go to prepare, a place for you. And I, when I do that, I will come again, and receive you unto myself. Where I am, you will be. It was part of the, high priestly prayer.

[24 : 52] There's this longing, in the heart of Jesus, for all his people, to be with him. Father, I will, that all those, some that you have given me, be with me, where I am.

So there's a longing, in the heart, that it's a desire, in Jesus' heart, to see, the fulfillment of his prayer, and the fulfillment of his work, to have all his people home.

You know, if you're, if you're away, and particularly, if you get tired, or supposing, you're not well, there's nowhere, you would rather be, than to get home.

Particularly, if you're, if you're away somewhere, and you take ill, you're unwell, you say, oh, I just would like to get home. Because, at the end of the day, there is nowhere like home.

In the place where, you are at home, and you feel at home, where you can be, just yourself. We should always, just be yourself, wherever we are.

[25 : 50] But, just, when you say, you kick off the shoes, and you just, you can lie out. If you went to, to visit somebody, they would find it very strange, if you came in, and stretched out on their couch, and threw off your shoes.

But you can do that at home. Because it's home. And you know, particularly if you come, and you're, you haven't been feeling well, and you come home, and you say, oh, it's good to be home. There's no place like home.

Well, that's what it's going to be, spiritually, when we arrive in glory. Where there's this sense of, I am, I'm home now.

This, is where I wanted to be. Because you know, we get weary, in the world. That in itself, is one of the evidences. It's a mark of grace.

There was a day, when the world, meant everything to us. But you know, as we go on, a weariness, begins to develop, within our, within our, heart.

[26 : 49] And we're saying, you know, I'm getting tired. I'm actually longing, to get home. It's not that we're, wishing our lives away. But you know, it's a wonderful thing, to have, this hope, within our heart.

Here it is. And as we go on, day by day, how thankful, that we say, I know where I'm going. And I'm actually, looking forward to it. And that's how Jesus, expects us, to be following him.

And the great thing is, if that, is what is in your heart, it's an evidence, that you're not looking back. Because you can't be looking back, and having this longing, to be home, at the same time.

Of course, as we said, there are days, and there are times, when the evil one, and our own sinful heart, will get the better of us, and we lose the focus. And sometimes we can slip, and sometimes we can stumble, and we might not be walking, the way that we should, all the time.

But the main thrust of our way, is focused upon Jesus. Is that how you're walking today? Are you walking? Are you plowing, as you walk through this world?

[28 : 00] Looking ahead, looking to Jesus, who is the author, and finisher of our faith. Or is it possible, that you're looking back?

Or is it possible, that you've never started walking, with Jesus at all? If you haven't, I would ask you that today, this belief, that we talked about, at the beginning, of our knowledge, and our belief, and our trust.

Ask the Lord, that you would have this, that you would be given this, so that you could follow him, and follow him, all the days of your life. Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we give you thanks again, for being able to meet together, and to enjoy your word.

We pray that this word, may burn down, deep within our hearts. And we ask you Lord, to forgive us our sin. Forgive us Lord, when we're not walking, in the way that we should.

Forgive us Lord, when we lose the focus, and when we get, distracted, distracted, by the voices, of this world, and distracted, by all the other things, that may come into our lives.

[29 : 09] Help us then Lord, to seek to follow you, with all our heart, and that we may know, what it is, to be walking, in the paths of righteousness. Lord, may your goodness, and mercy, follow us, all the days of our life, and that you will take us, to dwell, in your house forever.

Take us all, to our home safely after, and forgive us our sin, in Jesus name. Amen. Let us conclude singing, in the 80th Psalm, Psalm number 80, Eto, and the last, two verses of the Psalm.

Verse 18, Shall we head, today's ■■■■■■■■, You come and ready and do some music only, as we know, kaphailšin ut riī■Š.

Um Grant's Ring Merci.

Thank you.

[31 : 52] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.