

## Suffering Loss And Reaping Rewards

Luke 18:28-30

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Rev. Greg L. Price

When we come to Christ in faith, embracing Him alone for our eternal salvation, we learn that Christ also graciously rewards us for our obedience to His revealed will. This is truly amazing. For Christ not only purchased for us the faith to trust Him. Christ not only purchased for us the robe of Christ's unspotted righteousness which He imputes to us and the free and absolute pardon of all our sins. Christ not only purchased for us the adoption of sons so that God as Judge who forever declared us righteous in Christ then removes His judicial robes and steps down from the bench to take us into His arms, and as our Father He then puts the family ring upon our finger and freely bestows upon us the status and privileges of the very children of God. Christ not only purchased for us the desire and the will to follow Him so that none of His sheep can ever be lost again. But dear ones, what humbles and melts this cold heart of mine is this: as if all that Christ had purchased for us already was not enough to endear Him to us now and for all eternity, Christ also purchased for us innumerable rewards which He freely lavishes upon us for our obedience, an obedience which He Himself works within us by His Spirit. O what a glorious Savior! How cold and indifferent our hearts have become when we forget how gracious and merciful is the Lord Jesus Christ to us in the Covenant of Grace. This Lord's Day let us consider the grace of Christ in bestowing upon His people both temporal and eternal rewards. The main points from our text in Luke 18:28-30 are these: (1) The Loss Of Those Who Follow Christ (Luke 18:28); (2) The Reward Of Those Who Follow Christ (Luke 18:29-30); (3) Such Rewards Call Us To Humility Rather Than To Pride (Matthew 19:30).

## **I. The Loss Of Those Who Follow Christ (Luke 18:28).**

A. Our text today cannot be isolated from that which precedes it. For it is closely connected with the discourse which the Lord had with the rich, young ruler (Luke 18:18-27). This young man who was very wealthy had come to the Lord seeking to know what good works he must do in order to inherit eternal life. Since eternal life is not an item that sinners can earn by their law-keeping, due to their natural corruption and inability to present unto God what He requires in exchange for eternal life (namely, a perfect obedience), Christ sends this rich, young ruler back to the Law of God in order to show to him his law-breaking and the utter futility of seeking to earn eternal life by his own good works. For a sinner must first see his own sin and just condemnation before a holy God before he can see the glorious righteousness of Christ offered to him in the Gospel. The Lord reveals to this rich, young ruler his sin of covetousness when Christ commands him to sell all that he owns, give it to the poor, and come follow Him as His disciple. He walks away from Christ grieved—for his wealth was more valuable to Him than was Christ.

B. The Lord then takes the opportunity to instruct the disciples concerning the impossibility of men entering into the Kingdom of God by their own riches, works, or gifts. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, because he trusts in his riches rather than trusting in Christ and His righteousness. But the Lord extends this hope to all (not only the rich, but all sinners who trust in their own riches or in their own righteousness): that which is impossible with men is possible with God (Luke 18:25). God is able to save the most ungodly by revealing to them their sin and the condemnation they deserve by means of the Law of God, and the Law then sends them to Christ to receive by faith alone the justifying righteousness of Christ. God even saves the chief of sinners (1 Timothy

1:15).

C. In response to this discourse with the rich, young ruler and in response to the instruction the Lord had given to His disciples about the dangers of misplaced faith in riches, Peter interjects the following on behalf of all the disciples: “Lo, we have left all, and followed thee” (Luke 18:28). The parallel account in Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 19:27) adds this question posed by Peter: “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” In other words, “Look here, Lord, that which the rich, young ruler was unwilling to do, we have done. For we have forsaken our vocations and our possessions and have followed thee. What will be our reward?”

1. It is certainly true that Peter and the other disciples had forsaken their vocations in order to follow Christ.

2. It is certainly true that Peter and the other disciples who were married had also sacrificed time with their families in order to follow Christ.

3. There appears to be in Peter’s question the drawing of Christ’s attention to what they themselves have personally sacrificed in order to follow Him. As if to say, “But, Lord, look at us. Look at what we have sacrificed. Compared to the rich, young ruler, look at what we have forsaken to follow thee.” This question may not have been motivated by pride, but knowing the sinful tendency of our own hearts to compare ourselves with others, so as to place ourselves in a better light, and knowing the problem with pride and rivalry the disciples have manifested in the past (“Who is the greatest in the kingdom of God”), it is not impossible that Peter had turned his attention away from Christ to what honors their sacrifice should bring upon them (this is especially reasonable in light of soon follows when James and John ask to be seated on each side of Christ in God’s kingdom of glory, Mark 10:35ff).

4. On the one hand, it is right and faithful for the child of God

to look to the gracious rewards promised to him by Christ as a further incentive for perseverance in following Christ (Matthew 5:10-12; Matthew 10:41-42; Hebrews 11:24-26). There is a proper use of faith in looking to the gracious rewards which the Lord has promised us.

5. On the other hand, there is a danger which we must avoid in looking to the gracious rewards promised to us.

a. We must not look to them in pride as if we could earn them or deserve them (1 Corinthians 4:7).

b. We must not look to them apart from looking to Christ who freely purchased them for us (for He Himself is our exceeding great reward, Genesis 15:1).

c. We must not forget that it is due to the grace of God that we even desire or will to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

d. We must not value rewards more than we value Christ. Heaven is only heaven because Christ is in heaven. Our chief motive in serving Christ should be love and gratitude to Christ for the love wherewith He first loved us.

e. We must not expect to receive the promised rewards too soon—before the battle is ended or before the race is finished. We must be patient and faithful.

6. If we are using rewards which Christ has promised us and purchased for us as we ought, we will find ourselves broken before the Lord at the thought of these gracious rewards, filled with humility at the reception of such gracious rewards, and driven to Christ to embrace Him with ever increasing faith.

## **II. The Reward Of Those Who Follow Christ (Luke 18:29-30).**

A. The Lord then answers the question posed by Peter, for there is nothing wrong with the question in and of itself. In His answer, the Lord promises gracious rewards to those who have followed Him in faith.

B. Note first the absoluteness of this promise of reward: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man who hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake . . .” Let’s stop there for a moment. Whatever you as a Christian forsake or have taken away from you in this life in order to follow Christ and to be faithful to Christ, you will without exception be rewarded by the Lord. Absolutely none will fail to receive their reward who deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ.

C. Not next what it is that Christ mentions here that we must be **willing** to forsake for Christ’s sake? Even if Christ does not actually take from us the relations and possessions mentioned, we must be willing to forsake all (even our own lives) in order to follow Christ.

1. **All earthly possessions** which are summarized by house and lands, but would not doubt include money, jobs, cars, and all other earthly possessions, we must be willing to forsake.

2. **All earthly relationships** which are summarized by brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, and children (the only reason husband is omitted is because Christ was speaking to men in the immediate context). What we are willing to forsake may also include what we have a godly desire to have (like a husband or wife and children). All must be willingly sacrificed unto the Lord, if we are to follow Christ.

3. We must remember that we do not absolutely own anything in this life. We are stewards or tenants to whom the Lord has loaned certain gifts and resources to manage for Him (whether it be a possession or a relationship). When we begin to act as though what we have is ours in an absolute sense, we have then robbed God of what is rightfully His (Psalm 24:1). Therefore, when the Lord calls us to let go of anything in this life, He can do so not merely because He is infinitely more

powerful than us, but because it did not belong to us in the first place, but rather belonged to Him. It is, therefore, His to do with as pleases Him. Does that mean we should feel no pain or sorrow if the Lord should take a child, a parent, a brother or sister, a husband or wife from us? Of course not. But all who trust in the Lord will come to know the comfort of the Lord, and will recognize that it is His divine right to do so for His own holy and wise purposes (Job 1:21) and for the good of all those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. How might the Lord take away from us either earthly possessions or earthly relationships?

a. By means of natural calamities: such as fires, floods, storms, or earthquakes.

b. By means of economic recession or depression or cycles in the financial market one might lose a job or lose money in investments.

c. By means of theft or robbery, whether by one breaking into your house or swindling you by fraud.

d. By means of a tyrannical government many liberties may be stolen.

e. By means of God's will for our lives, we may lose that which we never had, but that for which we prayed so much: a wife, husband, children, a home of our own, a particular job or position.

f. By means of illness or an unexpected accident we may lose our health.

g. By means of death we will lose our earthly life or the earthly life of loved ones.

h. By means of standing for the truth we may lose family members and friends. Or we may become martyrs for the faith.

4. Are we not taught by such truths to cling loosely to the things of this life and tightly to Jesus Christ? It is reported concerning Martin Luther that when his daughter was very ill he said, "Lord thou knowest that I love this child; yet if thou wilt take her, I am ready to give

her to thee with both arms.” These are questions we must ask ourselves now if we would be ready should the Lord bring us to that place in our lives. What are we willing to sacrifice in order to follow Christ and in order to be faithful to Christ?

D. Another observation about the promised rewards made by Christ is the reason given for the loss: for the kingdom of God’s sake (i.e. for our faithfulness to Christ and His truth). This is not a suffering on our parts for our sin, for our pride, for our anger, for our envy, for our impatience, for our rudeness, but for our suffering for being faithful to Christ and His truth (1 Peter 4:13-16—you are united to Christ in His sufferings just as you are united to Christ in His exaltation). Dear ones, the Lord will not forget whatever the sacrifice you have made in standing humbly and faithfully for the truth of Jesus Christ. He figuratively keeps our tears in a bottle and writes it all down in a book (Psalm 56:8). The Lord will perfect that which concerns you (Psalm 138:8). Dear ones, we may even suffer for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s sake by way of attacks from the enemy, even when it is not so obvious to us (as in the case of Job).

E. Luke 18:30 simply states, “who shall not receive manifold more in this present time.” However, we see in the parallel passage (in Mark 10:30) the rewards promised to those who let go of the things of this life for the Cause of Jesus Christ.

1. Christ’s rewards are said to be poured out upon us a “hundredfold”, which is to say that the Lord will not take from us anything that He will not more than abundantly bless us with so much more—both in this life and in eternity.

- a. In this present time are mentioned the possessions and relationships which have been forfeited for Christ’s sake.

(1) How is this possible that what we must forsake in this life is replaced a hundredfold in this life? Through the love and blessedness of our greater family—our brothers and sisters in Christ (1 John 3:17). Through the abundant grace God gives when we learn again and again to find our contentment in Christ, and grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Through the love and grace of Jesus Christ which makes us more than conquerors through Christ (Romans 8:35-39). God’s estimation of what He supplies when we must forsake that which is near and dear to us is that He supplies a hundredfold in blessings by way of reward to those who trust Him.

(2) Christ adds “with persecution”, so that none forgets that persecution and suffering in patience and perseverance for Christ is a gracious gift of God (Philippians 1:29). The disciples counted it a privilege that they had been counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ (Acts 5:41). Dear ones, if we would know Christ’s glory, we must know His sufferings. It is by these sufferings that we grow in our faith, grow in our love, our pride is crushed, and Christ is seen to be all that we truly need in this life. It is only because of our sin and our clinging so tightly to the relations and possessions of this life that we do not see the gracious gift of God given to us in our suffering loss for Christ’s sake.

b. The Lord continues in presenting what is our reward in eternity: we shall receive eternal life, which summarizes all the treasures and indescribable glories of heaven. Both that **from which** we shall forever be set free (sin, temptation, weakness, illness, fears, distress, persecution, loneliness, and death), and that **unto which** we shall be set free to enjoy without interruption forever and ever (holiness, strength, joy beyond our imagination, uninterrupted communion with Christ and His people forever).

**III. Such Rewards Call Us To Humility Rather Than To Pride (Matthew 19:30).**



A. Finally, Christ reminds the disciples that they must not look with pride at their outward position or rank in the Kingdom of God as the basis for which they are rewarded by Christ. The Lord is pleased to reward us who trust in Him for His own name's sake, to glorify Himself, to glorify His mercy and grace. God gives us the grace and ability to obey Him, and then He graciously rewards for that obedience. How then can we rob God of His own glory, but turning a gracious reward into a deserved payment?

B. The Lord concludes His discourse on suffering and rewards by saying that many who are first in the eyes of man, due to their positions in the Church of Christ, due to the size of their congregations, due their evident gifts and abilities in apprehending and articulating the truths of Christ, due to their earthly wealth and accomplishments, will be last in God's evaluation, due to their pride, due to their compromises, and due to their grasping the things of the world so tightly and looking to the rewards of men even more than the rewards of God. But dear ones, hear the Word of Christ, "and the last shall be first." Here is a promise to all you, dear saints of the Lord Jesus Christ, who do not have the conspicuous gifts and abilities as others, who do not have the accomplishments or the positions of others, but who are growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, who are suffering the loss of relationships and possessions for your faithfulness to Christ and His truth, who may not be Preachers and Teachers, but who are faithfully praying for the preaching and teaching of God's Word and are carefully listening, cherishing, and applying God's Word to your life. It is you who will be first in God's kingdom. God does not see as man sees by way of mere outward appearances, but God looks upon the heart. If we work for the earthly rewards that come from our bosses, our teachers, and our parents, how much more, dear ones, we ought to work for the gracious

rewards that come from the Lord for faithfulness to Christ in speech, conduct, and truth. We have the promise of the Lord, regardless of what we have to forsake for Christ, the Lord will not forget our work, tears, our sacrifices, and labor of love for Him.

“For God *is* not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister” (Hebrews 6:10).

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