

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 18- Luke 18:9-16

287- What Jesus Taught about Justification- Part 1

August 30, 2015

Luke 18:9-16

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they *began* rebuking them.

16 But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

To the Glory of God

Now, the issue that Jesus is dealing with here in this Passage is the issue of Justification- where God forgives and pardon unworthy sinners. And Justification is greatly misunderstood in our day, and as a result- it is distorted and warped and twisted out of proportion by many

in the modern Church. And there are at least four reasons why people misunderstand what Justification really is:

1. They don't understand Who God is
2. They don't understand who they are
3. They don't understand God's Grace
4. They don't understand God's Justice

And what I mean by saying that they don't understand these things- is that they do not have a *biblical* understanding about what God has revealed in Scripture about these issues. And so they are left to either *add* things to these four subjects that God didn't say or else they *take away* some very important aspects of these four subjects that God did give us in the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And the result is that far too many of them are off base about *how* and *why* converts the human soul- or Justification.

And the result is that ancient heresies that the Christian Church confronted and utterly defeated many, many centuries ago- are making a huge comeback in our day. Under the guise of "new revelation" false teaching is being proclaimed from many pulpits to the great delight of many- about the most important subject that anybody could ever know- how lost sinners are made right with God.

For example- it is common today to actually hear church leaders preach and teach a variety of heretical abominations from the pulpit today like:

- ✓ Legalism
- ✓ Antinomianism

... which are the twin evils that attack the Grace of God by either ignoring it or abusing it. Some of the most popular preachers and singing groups espouse the ancient heresy of Modalism- which attacks the Doctrine of the Trinity. And the only reason why Modalism runs so deep and wide today is not because it is true- but because there are so few people who understand what the Doctrine of the Trinity is- to really defend it- or even see why it is important enough to believe.

But, perhaps the most tragic aspect of this glaring lack of biblical truth in the modern Church- is that the ancient heresy of Pelagianism

is more popular than ever today. This false teaching is more popular and is believed by more people today than it was when Pelagius first introduced it over 1700 years ago.

Pelagianism is also known as "Secular Humanism" which distorts and lies about several key Biblical Truths that have to do with how God saves sinners like:

- ✓ The Sovereignty of God
- ✓ The Fall of Man
- ✓ Original Sin
- ✓ The Crucifixion
- ✓ Grace

And Secular Humanism attacks these Biblical Truths by making them completely obsolete and unnecessary. For example- it is common today to hear people talk about God in a way that shows that they believe that while the Almighty God may want to do a lot of things, or while He may desire to do many things in the earth, like heal sick people or bless poor people or save lost people, He can't do any of that unless and until we *allow* Him to by having enough faith. In other words- God waits for us so He can perform His Will in the earth. And if we don't have enough faith- God is stopped cold in His tracks. So in that teaching- both God's Sovereignty and the Fall have been so distorted and twisted that in the minds of many- Man has now been elevated above God because somehow we have risen to the level where we can defeat even God.

Another example of Pelagianism gaining ground in the modern Church is the very popular teaching brought forth by those who *masquerade* as preachers and teachers of the Gospel- but who are, in fact, merely- psychological motivational speakers. These people tell the huge crowds that they draw that human beings have the power to call things into existence with their words and the power of faith. And so to "name it and claim it" has become the rallying cry of many who say they follow Jesus.

And I want to be as gracious as I know how and tell you that this kind of teaching is blasphemy. What these people teach is not only *not* correct- but it goes way beyond being merely off base toward outright heresy. This kind of teaching elevates Man and devalues God worse

than just about anything I am aware of- because teaching like this is *enormously* popular with the masses of lukewarm or unsaved people precisely because it plays upon the fallen desire that all lost people have to be important and to have a power that will cater to every carnal lust we can imagine. And the result is that many people today actually call evil and wicked sins like “covetousness” and a “love of money” and “worldliness”- virtues and signs that God is pleased with you.

But perhaps the greatest destruction of Biblical Christianity in our day is carried out by people who distort or twist how and why God saves the human soul or Justification. Truly, Pelagianism has gained ground in this area more than any other- some of it willful and others in ignorance.

For example- it is very common today to hear and see pagan concepts, unbiblical teachings, and outright heretical blasphemies being taught and preached from the pulpit and sung in songs and talked about in the pews as though these things were in the Bible. And I would guess that most of what is being taught today in evangelizing the lost is pure Humanism- which has absolutely *nothing* to do with what the Scriptures actually teach. Terminology and phrases and statements and logic and teaching that originated with some of the worst enemies of the Christian Church throughout history- people who actually made war against Christianity- is heard today and repeated from the lips of modern Church-goers- as though they were right out of the Bible.

But these things are *not* in the Bible. The Bible doesn't teach these things. The Bible has *never* taught these things. Jesus nor the Apostles ever said them. Really bad people said them. Heretics taught them. Evil men who wanted to destroy the Church invented them. And yet the people of the modern Church today repeat them over and over as they prove that they are almost entirely oblivious to what the Holy Bible teaches at all. And I just have a few questions that I would like to ask the leaders of the churches today:

- ✓ Why do you teach things that heretics invented?
- ✓ Why is the foundational basis of modern evangelism the product of people who didn't believe in the Blood of Jesus?
- ✓ Why do you continue to invent terms and concepts that have more in common with ancient heresies than they do the Scriptures?

- ✓ Why doesn't what you believe and teach about Justification come from the Bible?

Now keep in mind that every false thing, every unbiblical concept, every wrong aspect that the modern Church teaches- doesn't work. And it doesn't work because it isn't true. And if we were dealing with making banana pudding- it wouldn't be that big a deal. But remember- we are dealing with *how* and *why* God saves unworthy sinners. We are dealing with Justification.

And what I am telling you this morning is that what far too many people are teaching today in the modern Church about both *how* and *why* God saves unworthy sinners- is not true- it isn't Biblical. The Bible does not teach it. In fact, many times the Bible teaches just the *opposite* of what these people are teaching. And so what these people are teaching about Justification doesn't work- and therefore- these people are really not being saved, and, therefore, they *remain* in their sins- heading straight into a devil's hell. And I would suggest to you that that matters a lot!

I am also saying that this is *why* you have this vast sea of people out there- who sit in Church every Sunday and who say they are saved and who have been told they are saved and yet who have not truly been justified before God. And that is *why* they have no desire to love and serve God, and *why* they have no power to overcome sin, and *why* they bear little or no fruit, and *why* they have no capacity for prayer or Bible Study or pursuing Holiness on purpose. They have not been born from above, they are not washed in the Blood, they are not redeemed, they are not saved, they are not going to Heaven, and they have not been justified before God.

And what is perhaps the most tragic thing of all- is that there doesn't seem to be a mechanism in place in most of these places whereby these people can ever realize that they are still lost. Because ultimately the only cure for all of this is for the leaders of the Churches to utterly *abandon* all their programs and their methods and begin to once again *re-discover* what the Holy Bible actually teaches about these things by going back to the Scriptures and holding what they teach and preach accountable to the Word of God.

Now many of you were here several years ago as we went on a "journey" together through the greatest Letter that has ever been

written in the history of the world. We spent nine years and nine months together going through every word of every verse of Paul's **Epistle to the Romans**. That Book was the Apostle's masterpiece dealing with the very issues that I have been talking about this morning. So a thorough investigation into what the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans would reveal to *anybody* just *how* wicked sinners are forgiven and made righteous so they can enter into Heaven with Jesus forever- and *why*. You see, **Romans** goes into great detail to explain what Jesus said here in verses 14&16:

14 I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.

16 ...Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Now I would say that a full 65% of all Christian Doctrine is in **Romans**. And going through this Epistle very slowly- for just 3 months short of an entire decade- transformed my life. It changed my mind, it changed my preaching, it changed my teaching, it changed my beliefs, and it changed my theology. I began examining **Romans** as a Pentecostal Minister and ended it as a man fully convinced of The Doctrines of Grace. I began my journey through every single word of every single verse of that Book believing and teaching the very *same* false and unbiblical things that almost everybody else believes and teaches about how God converts the human soul- and I ended that journey more scripturally correct than I had ever been in my life. But even more important than that- I *re-discovered* the Biblical mechanism- the process- that allows for *anybody* in *any* church to become Biblically correct and doctrinally precise about *any* subject- including Justification- and "Sola Scriptura" became more than an historical Latin phrase and became the foundation of how we come into what the Christian Church believes what it believes and teaches what it teaches.

I began my long almost ten year journey through Romans believing that both the revelatory and the signs and wonders gifts of the Spirit were still in force, and I ended that precious Book fully convinced that those particular gifts had ceased in their operation- not because God had changed or because I rejected the Power of the Holy Spirit- but

precisely because I saw how the Bible taught that these wonderful and precious gifts had done their job and had accomplished their assignment.

But even more important than embracing Reformed Theology and understanding the concept of "Sola Scriptura" or becoming a Cessationist- I was rendered absolutely speechless as I came into contact with the Grace of God like I had never seen or known before. The magnificence of the Glory of the Grace of God overwhelmed me and in the words of Jonathan Edwards,

"The avalanche of the Word of God fell in on me and I could do no other."

I became amazed at God's Grace and in His absolute Freedom to bestow that Grace upon whomever He chooses- *regardless* of their sin and *regardless* of how dark their heart has been, and that amazement changed my life. And to this day- I have never been the same. That is why it is so easy for me to travel to Poplarville every other Tuesday evening and to Mandeville every other Wednesday evening and why, beginning this week- I will travel to Hattiesburg every Thursday evening. I am going because people are saying to me what they told Ezra the priest in **Nehemiah 8:1b**:

... bring the Book...

The Grace of God is visiting Poplarville, and people are wanting the Word of God. God's Grace is visiting Mandeville and they sit for hours as they are taught the Book. And I understand now there is another group in Hattiesburg crying out, "*Bring us the Book!*" And so I go to teach and explain and to herald the incomprehensible magnificence of the Doctrines of Grace and how these Biblical Truths impact our minds and hearts and lives!

Now the reason I began to look so closely at **Romans** back in the early part of this Century was because I had read that the **Protestant Reformation**- which is the single greatest revival in the history of the world- began over 500 years ago on the heels of Martin Luther studying that Book. And I also read where the **First Great Awakening**- which saw over 1 million souls won to Christ back in the early 18th Century-

came about as a result of Jonathan Edwards' study of **Romans**. And I wanted to see genuine revival in my *own* heart and in my own family and in my own church and in my city, and so I stood before the Church on that Sunday morning and, not realizing what I was saying, I committed to going through every single word of every single verse of **Romans** to ask and answer three questions:

1. What did God the Holy Spirit actually say in that verse or Passage?
2. What did God mean by what He said?
3. How can we be found obedient to what He said?

Somebody told me one time, "*John Calvin never spent that much time in Romans.*" And my response was, "*But I'm not as smart as John Calvin- so it took me longer.*" And so that "journey" through **Romans** became the Seminary that I had never been privileged to attend.

But that "journey" also taught me something else. It taught me that even though the modern Church talks and sings and even preaches and prays about Salvation probably more than any other subject- I will tell you that- more than any other subject- Salvation is *less* understood and it is so widely *misrepresented* and it is common today for Salvation to be twisted *completely* out of context by a wide range of church leaders. And so after the Christian Church being on the earth for over 2,000 years- we know less and we comprehend less and we are transformed less today about the main subject that distinguishes us from everybody else- how God saves unworthy sinners.

Now one of the reasons why Salvation is so little understood is because of all the terms associated with it. Terms like:

- ✓ Born Again
- ✓ Justification
- ✓ Redeemed
- ✓ Conversion
- ✓ Saved
- ✓ Santification

... are all intertwined and used interchangeably to the point where many people are very confused about how all this works. And in my

"journey" through Romans- we re-discovered the answer to all of this. Paul's **Epistle to the Romans** goes into great detail to explain to us not only *how* converts lost people- but *why* and in *what order* that happens. And that part of **Romans** is called "The Ordo Salutis", which is Latin for "The Order of Salvation". And **Romans** along with the other 65 Books of the Bible- teach that God has no less than thirteen separate and distinct steps that He takes to convert the human soul:

1. Sovereign Election
2. Establishing Righteousness
3. Fulfilling Righteousness
4. Providing Forgiveness
5. Effectual Calling
6. Regeneration
7. Repentance and Faith
8. Justification
9. The Imputation of Righteousness
10. Adoption
11. Sanctification
12. Death
13. Glorification

And all of these steps are included under the larger banner of "Salvation". And so at least *part* of the confusion lies in the fact that we use several of these words *interchangeably*. So, for example, it is common to hear people say, "*I was saved on such and such a date*". Or hear them say, "*I was forgiven on such and such a date*". Or hear them say when they were "*born again*". Or to use the phrase "*born again*" to mean being justified or saved. And what we really are talking about when we say things like that is Justification- the moment when Jesus' Blood washed our sins away and we were forgiven. And while I don't think it is evil to use those words and terms interchangeably- it does lend itself to confusing us.

And to compound the problem even further- the Roman religious system talks about the issue of Justification in an entirely different way than the Bible portrays it. In Roman theology- which should never be confused with the Book of Romans- they teach that we are "being saved"

as though Justification itself is a *process* that begins with infant baptism and extends all the way out into Purgatory.

But the Bible talks about Justification very narrowly as a onetime *Event* within the larger framework of Salvation. So what people are really talking about when they say they “got saved” and what Jesus is talking about here in the Passage that Brother Andy just read to us in **Luke 18**- is the one single event called “Justification”. And that is *why* Jesus said in verse 14:

... I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other...

Now notice that Jesus didn't say that this man was “born again”- even though we know from **John 3** that Jesus absolutely believed in people being born again. And yet Jesus used the term “justified” here- showing that there is a distinction. And so over the next several weeks- we are going to get into that distinction that will help us navigate through all these various terms and words so we can have a Biblical Theology about how and why God converts the human soul.

Now the first six steps in our Salvation are these:

1. Sovereign Election
2. Establishing Righteousness
3. Fulfilling Righteousness
4. Providing Forgiveness
5. Effectual Calling
6. Regeneration

And these are steps that God takes- all by Himself in the tri-unity of His Godhead- either as God the Father or as God the Son or as God the Holy Spirit. And it is important to understand that God takes all these six steps without any assistance or help or cooperation from Man. Man has absolutely no role in any of these first six steps. So let's look at each one of these:

Sovereign Election

This is the free exercise of God's Own Will in choosing who He will save. Please turn with me to read **Ephesians 1**:

Ephesians 1:1-12

- 1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are* faithful in Christ Jesus:**
- 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- 3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,**
- 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love**
- 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,**
- 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**
- 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace**
- 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight**
- 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him**
- 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him**
- 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**
- 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.**

Now it is clear from both the Old and New Testaments that God Sovereignly “elects” (chooses) unworthy sinners to make them His people, and that choosing is entirely *exclusive*.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 10:15

Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day.

Deuteronomy 14:2

For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

And while many people today have absolutely no problem with God electing the Jews to be His people under the Old Covenant- they balk at the notion that God does this under the New Covenant as well. Yet we see that God is immutable and he never changes, and so He elects sinners under the New Covenant under the Grace of Jesus Christ as well.

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 15:16

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

John 17:6-17

6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

7 "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;

8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

9 "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

11 "I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We *are*.

12 "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*.

16 "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Romans 8:29&30

29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

So even though many people today cringe at the notion that God chooses those whom He will save- we have to realize that that is what the Holy Bible teaches. And it is what the Bible has always taught- from cover to cover.

So if we are to be honest at all with Scripture- we must acknowledge that "election" and "predestination" and the notion that God chooses the people that He saves is a Biblical concept. And it isn't some vague unimportant issue of theology that we can take or leave. It is vital to understanding how and why God converts the human soul.

And we see that this "election" and this "predestination" and this "choosing" is "sovereign", meaning that it only involves God. God elects *sovereignly*. God predestines *sovereignly*. God chooses those He will save- *sovereignly*- or all by Himself without any input or cooperation or assistance from Man. God has His Own criteria by which He chooses

those whom He chooses- and it isn't anything like what we would have done.

God's criteria for choosing people for Salvation is not based on anything that we have done- good or bad. It isn't based on whether we are male or female, whether we are educated or uneducated. God's election is not based on how cultured we are or our family connections or political considerations or how much money we have- because the Bible says in **Ephesians 1** that God made this choice way before we were born, way before we did anything good or bad, and way before He made the word.

Ephesians 1:4

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

God's criteria for choosing unworthy sinners for Salvation is vastly different than anybody else's.

Ephesians 1:5&6

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

... which is why the Bible says that it doesn't matter how sinful you have been. Please turn with me to read **1Corinthians 1:26-31**:

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;

27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no man may boast before God.

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

31 so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

So there is *nobody* who has the right to say that their sin has caused them to be beyond the Grace of God. There is *nobody* on earth who can truthfully say that they have "gone too far" and that God will not graciously and mercifully forgive them and save them to the uttermost. Now look again at **Luke 18:13&14:**

13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

For this wicked sinner to suddenly "come to his senses", and for him to be deeply and profoundly convicted by God the Holy Spirit to know that he is lost and to be so overwhelmed by his lostness to the degree that he cannot even look up into Heaven shows that God has already done a great Work in his life. So Jesus is teaching here that God had chosen this wicked man for Salvation, and has sovereignly "Set His Love" upon him from before the foundation of the world, and has now brought this man to this place of repentance and justification that we see him here- regardless of the wickedness of his life.

And so if we are going to be a biblical people- who upholds the Truth of Scripture- we, too, must believe in and teach Sovereign Election, and we must teach it loudly and proudly and not be ashamed of it.

Amen. Let's pray.

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