

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

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke** **Chapter 16- Luke 16:1-14**

269- You Cannot Serve God and Wealth- Part 1

March 8, 2015

Luke 16:1-14

1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, "**There was a rich man who had a manager, and this *manager* was reported to him as squandering his possessions.**

2 "And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.'

3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg.

4 'I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.'

5 "And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he *began* saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?'

6 "And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.'

7 "Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

8 "And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

9 "And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

10 "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

11 "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of* unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true *riches* to you?

12 "And if you have not been faithful in *the use of* that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?

13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

To the Glory of God

It is good to return to our "journey" through the Gospel of Luke this morning. We took a short "vacation" from Luke to begin this New Year by examining the Protestant Reformation. If you need a copy of those Messages- you can get them from the Church website.

So, we are picking right back where we left off last December, and we are beginning a new Chapter- Chapter 16. Now as I told you before- even though we still have 9 more Chapters left in Luke- we are actually only talking about a few months left in the earthly Ministry of Jesus- in terms of chronology. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the whole world, and so the bulk of what is left us in Luke- besides the arrest, trial, Death, and Resurrection- is basically teaching.

So we are going to learn quite a bit of perfect Teaching from the only perfect Preacher that has ever lived. So we will move through these Chapters slowly- so we can grasp all that Jesus is telling us and get the Theological and Doctrinal Truth from our Lord that should help us all to become more Biblical and more godly as we struggle against the world and the flesh and the devil in the age of the 21st Century.

Now last Sunday Evening- we gathered over at Grace Fellowship Church in Lyman where Joe Tolin is the Pastor for Questions and Answers. And during that event- we got into a very important discussion of how God sanctifies us after we are saved- how God makes disciples out of converts. And I am grateful that Brother Corey video taped that discussion and it is now posted on YouTube- and I encourage you to watch it.

During our careful investigation into what God has revealed in Scripture over the years- through our "journeys" through **Jude**, and **1John**, and **Hebrews**, and **Romans**, and now **Luke**- we have come to realize that God the Father *sovereignly* chose to set His Love upon us

from before the foundation of the world; *before* we were born and *before* we did anything Good or bad. We also know that Jesus came to this earth to *secure* the Salvation of God's elect by living a sinless life, and by dying with all of the sins of all of God's elect on Him, and then rising the third day- without sin- in the very same Body in which He died.

We have also found out that God the Holy Spirit then goes out into the world to sovereignly "draw" or "drag" or "call" all of God's elect to Jesus, and we have also found out that by virtue of God "setting His Love upon us"- God the Holy Spirit *sovereignly* goes *inside* of us- *before* we are saved, and *before* we pray, and *before* we ask for it or even want it- and He *forcefully* and *effectively* and *sovereignly* "regenerates" us, or He sovereignly "gives us spiritual life", or we are "born again" by Him *sovereignly* giving us eyes to see, and giving us ears to hear, and He takes out of us a stony heart and gives us a heart of flesh.

And with those new eyes- we see Truth, and with those new ears- we hear the Gospel as it is preached, and with that new heart we come to understand that we are lost and that we have offended God horribly with our sin and that we deserve nothing from God- but eternal damnation.

And because we have been born again- the reality of our lostness *shocks* us, and that reality *frightens* us, and that reality *grieves* us, and we are supernatural empowered to come to a place of utter despair over our lostness and our great guilt before God- and we are then supernaturally empowered to repent of our sins and to cry out to God for a Forgiveness and a Mercy that we do not deserve and are not entitled to and that God is not obligated to give.

And all that leads all of God's elect to then turn away from sin and to put all of our hope and all of our trust in Jesus Personally and in His finished Work as our only refuge and deliverance from the horror of the unrelenting Wrath of God that is against us because of our great sins. And at that point- we are Justified- we have been brought to a place of making Peace with God and all of our sins are forgiven and we are then adopted into the Family of God.

And we then begin the single most amazing and fascinating "journey" that anybody could ever engage in. Rather than take us all to Heaven at that point- God leaves us here- a saved soul- entombed in fallen flesh, living in a broken world that is dominated by satan. And now that we are Justified- all of God's Power and all of God's Energy

and all of God's Thoughts and Will is now directed in this process of "forming" us and "molding" us and "shaping" us and "changing" us into the very Image of our Lord Jesus through the process called "Sanctification", or better yet- more accurately it should be called our "Holification" where we are being made fit to partake of God's Own Personal Holiness forever in Heaven with Him.

And so we discussed last Sunday Evening that the primary "means" of that Sanctification- or the primary "way" that God has chosen to change justified souls, and the primary "tool" that God has chosen to mold saved people and form them into the Image of our Lord Jesus is through the ongoing, systematic, line upon line and precept upon precept preaching and teaching and reading and studying and learning and understanding of the Word of the living God.

You see, the Holy Bible teaches us that there are four things that all of us desperately need that God has sovereignly ordained that will assist us in this ongoing process of Sanctification:

1. Times of Effectual and Fervent Prayer
2. Times of Deep and Life Altering Bible Study
3. Times of Meaningful and Serious Fellowship
4. Times of Partaking of the Lord's Supper

You see, we are making decisions every day. We are consciously choosing to be a part of this and not that. We are accepting this- but not that. We are engaged in trusting in this- and not that. We are setting our love and affections on this- and not that. And all of that together works toward the *fashioning* of our lives to be either a glory to God or a reproach to the Gospel.

So when we- who live in a fallen and broken world, who war against the wiles of the devil every day, and who struggle against the lusts of our flesh on an ongoing basis- when we come in contact with the Owner and the Creator of the Universe through prayer and through Bible Study, and being reminded of what this is all about through the Lord's Supper and through engaging in real and serious and meaningful fellowship with other covenant brothers and sisters- who are also engaged in the other three things- and as we all see the *benefit* of sacrificing whatever it is we need to in order to gather together to sit and hear the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of the living God

broken down into small bits that we can eat and chew on and digest and take nourishment from- and when we do all of that on an ongoing consistent basis- then we find that the gravity of this world that holds us to the terrestrial gives way, and we begin to rise and soar into the celestial, and we find that temptation- while not ceasing completely- loses its power over us, and we find that our flesh comes under subjection to the Spirit of God, and we find that our decisions are more godly, our choices are more Biblical, our way of life honors Jesus better, our witness to the unbelievers is more true, our hope becomes rock solid, our fears are abated, our words carry weight, our soul sings out, our feeble knees are converted, our heavy hands that hung down are raised, our eyes are lifted unto the hills from where our help comes from, conviction about sin is elevated, we watch and pray, we become wise concerning the devices of the enemy, our step is true, our walk has purpose, our path is straight and narrow, out of our belly flows rivers of living water, we hunger and thirst after Righteousness, our hope is secure, our mind is on heavenly things, the things of this earth have grown strangely dim, our communication is laced with Divine Truth, sin is reduced, transgressions go way down, a holy fire burns within that cannot be quenched, we love not our lives unto the death, and our collective testimony is that we are but strangers and pilgrims just passing through this life and this world is not our home because we earnestly look and we joyfully seek after a city- whose Builder and Maker is God!

And Jesus becomes the sweetest Name we know. And being in His Presence, and seeing Him High and Lifted up, and loving Him and Serving Him and obeying Him and following Him and pleasing Him is the only thing that matters; it is the only thing that allows our heart to beat, and it is where we find the fullness of our joy and the height of our contentment and the best expression of our dreams and ambitions.

And so we will fight any foe, resist any temptation, reject any teaching, embrace any suffering, endure any heartache that will allow us to be near to the Lamb of God- the Beautiful Rose of Sharon, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lilly of our Valley, the Darling of the Trinity, and the fairest of ten thousand to our soul!

And the result of all this is that we will become enamored with the brilliance of Christ's Glory. And we will become consumed with the Value and the Worth of our Master and Savior, and King we will

actually begin to live as though we really believe that Jesus is Lord- and so we will hear Jesus, and we will obey Jesus about where to live and what to eat and what to wear and who to befriend and where to work and who to marry and how to raise our children and how to walk in this world and what to love and what to hate; what to be a part of, what to run from, and whether we live or die.

But it isn't our fault. We can't help it. We are saved and that is how saved people act. And that is how saved people have *always* acted. But they can't take any credit for it- all of this is *not* the result of some internal drive or some humanly engineered exercise of the will; this is not the result of human prerogative or human choice. We don't rub the two sticks of human self-determination and will power together to produce this kind of fruit.

No, this is a sovereign, glorious miraculous, supernatural Work of the Almighty. This is what happens when the Spirit of the living God comes into contact with elected sinners. And it is called "Revival". Another term you could use is "Salvation" or "being Biblical"- it's all the same thing. You could call it "walking in the Spirit" or you could call it "bearing godly fruit". It is "normal Christianity"; it is how you define "serving God" or "pleasing the Lord".

And that is why I push you as hard as I can to get you to see the value of Prayer Meetings and Bible Studies and godly fellowship. Are you going to go to hell if you miss a prayer meeting? Of course, not. Do I think you have lost your Salvation if you hang out of Bible Study? No. Do I think you will miss Heaven if you don't fellowship with your brothers and sisters? I do not believe that and I have never said that.

But see, I know that you are already making decisions everyday anyway. And I know that you have a much greater opportunity to make godly decisions if your mind is girded about with Truth than you do if your mind is filled with Romance novels. I know that you will have much more success over the lusts of your flesh if your heart is enamored with Jesus than you will if your heart is captured by the things of this world. And I know that your walk will be more pleasing to the Lord and your level of obedience will be higher if you have been illumined by God the Holy Spirit and been inspired by the victorious testimonies of your brothers and sisters who have waged war with their flesh than it will if you have been feeding off the diet that the pagan world has to offer you.

And that is why I designed the Bible Reading Plan, and encourage you to read the Puritans, and go through the Catechism during your Family Devotions. Am I trying to make you all academics? Am I trying to simply force intellectual information into your mind? No.

If all you get out of what I teach is that you need to simply show up and punch the clock and go through the motions and check off the box while your heart and mind are a thousand miles away- then you have missed the whole point. But if you are not in Prayer Meetings and you are not in Bible Studies and if you are not in godly fellowship and if you are not in the Bible reading Plan and if you are not going through the Catechism and if you are not reading the Puritans, and then if you are not assembling on the Lord's Day- you are completely and utterly cut off from your brothers and sisters, and you are isolated, and you have no connection to the Body, how is that a good thing?

So what I believe (and I absolutely believe this with all my heart) and what I have said in the past and what I will say again right now is that when you labor very hard and struggle unendingly to fashion your entire life around prayer and the Bible and godly fellowship- your eyes will be opened and your ears will be alert and your heart will be guarded, and you will see and hear and sense danger a mile off, and you will turn this way and that way, and you will do this and do that, and you will draw near and push away to make sure that your feet stay on the path of Life.

But if you see no value in getting this close to Jesus, and if you see no worth in being on the straight and narrow path, and if you see nothing in Jesus that you are willing to sacrifice for or suffer for or die for- then you will find yourself with the millions of lukewarm or unsaved masses of "pew-sitters" in the modern Church who- after 2,000 consecutive years of being exposed to the Holy Bible- teach that actually pursuing Biblical Holiness on purpose is "legalism" and an amazing waste of time.

But three things will happen to you when you are overtaken with the Majesty of the infinite Value of Jesus Christ:

- A. You will be faithful to the Call of God
- B. You will be fruitful for the Father's Glory
- C. You will be busy in the Work of the Lord

And the by-product of this kind of life that runs counter-intuitive to the devices of mere men and desires of fallen flesh that Dr. Luke talks about in this Passage here in **Luke 16** is that God will so utterly change you that you will no longer love Money. And that means that financial decisions will be made based upon what honors and glorifies God, and not always what benefits you personally.

And the imprint of God the Holy Spirit will be upon you to such an extent that you will no longer serve Wealth. And we will be delivered from loving this world, and we will escape the lusts of the flesh, and we will be delivered from the lusts of the eye and the boastful pride of life, and we will have both the desire and the power to refuse to place our affections and desires on the things that are passing away, and we will not find the fullness of our joy on created things but in the Creator Himself.

Now in **Luke 16**- Jesus gives us a very strange Parable. And if you are not careful- as you read it- you will come to the *wrong* conclusion that Jesus was praising being shrewd more than He was praising being godly. Both John Calvin and Matthew Henry cautioned us that we must not put more emphasis on the details of this Parable so that we can see the main point. And the main point is found in verse 13 that says:

No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Now Money consumes us. We are either working hard to earn it, trying hard to spend it, struggling to save and invest it, seeking to give it, or we are talking, thinking, and planning to do one of those things. Money is a very important part of this life. Those who have money, by and large, live differently than those who do not. The effect that money brings upon us is so great that those who even think that they might have money at some point in the future live differently than those who have no hope. So money dominates our lives. Pastor/Teacher John MacArthur has said,

“If you are 80 years old today- you have spent about 50 of those years dealing with money.”

... so, Money is an important part of our lives. We need Money to eat, money to live, money to drive, and money to get ahead. We need money to stay warm and to be cold, and to bathe and to dress. We need money to stay healthy, and we need money to get healthy when we are sick. When you work for somebody else- most of the time- you expect them to pay you with money and not with chickens- and those who do tasks for you expect you to pay them with money and not pigs. It took money for you to be here today. And so since it is true that Money is very important to us- there are some bedrock Biblical Principles about Money that we need to understand.

First of all- earning and obtaining and accumulating money is a gracious gift of God- Who owns all things and provides everything that we need for both life in this world and godliness. And like all gifts- God distributes the gift of making and obtaining and accumulating money- as He wills and for His Own Glory. The Bible says in **Deuteronomy 8:18**:

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

... so not everybody comes into wealth and not everybody has been graced with the knowledge and he know-how to thrive in this life. God blesses those whom He chooses- and so our blessings- whether they are large or small- come from the Good and Kind Hand of God, and *not* simply through hard work and *not* simply through shrewd planning and *not* simply through discipline.

Now when we deal with the issue of Money- we must remember that- like everything else- we are all unworthy sinners and so we do not *deserve* our blessings and we are not *entitled* to any wealth and prosperity from God. Which is why they are called a "blessing" and not a "payment"- precisely because we are *not* entitled to it and we do *not* deserve it. And we must also keep in mind that God is never obligated to bless us, and God is never *forced* to bless us due to something that we have done or said or become. All blessings from God come forth from the Kind and Good Nature of our Heavenly Father based on nothing that we have done or said, and all blessings are predicated on the Love and Mercy of God which is always entirely "free".

Now it is very common today to hear people, who are well meaning, say that they need to “do the right thing” because by “doing the right thing”- God is, therefore, obligated to bless them or deliver them or to go before them and do or create something that they think will be helpful or beneficial to themselves. But that real bad theology would mean that by doing that right thing- two things have occurred:

1. We have come into a position of being deserving or being entitled to that blessing.
2. God has been placed into a position of being obligated to bless us.

... neither of which are true. The Bible simply does *not* teach that by us participating in some scheme or that by using some formula that we can arrange ourselves to be more *deserving* of God’s blessing, and that we have moved God into a position of being more *obligated* to bless us. That is simply *not* true and that kind of false theology- that dominates the modern Church- dishonors God by belittling Him and causes countless untold millions of believers to feel cheated or to go into total despair when the promised blessing doesn’t arrive.

We who are saved find peace and the fullness of joy and complete satisfaction in living our lives to the Glory of God. Period. And so we “do the right thing” for no other reason other than it will honor God and it will exalt that great Name of Jesus- not because there is a carrot on a stick in front of us promising a blessing. And here is why this is very important.

As you do the right thing- the result may very well be- that you may *suffer* because of it. You may actually be physically or financially or materially *worse off* by doing God’s Will. Your position and status in this life may get *harder* and measurably *worse* by obeying Jesus Christ, you may suffer personal *harm* by following Jesus, you may lose material goods, you may lose your freedom, and you may even lose your life.

Many, many very powerful believers all throughout time and even as we speak today- who were very strong in faith- suffered great personal harm and were robbed of financial blessings and their material goods and their freedom and even their lives were taken away from them- precisely because they “did the right thing”- and what they did- absolutely glorified Jesus Christ. And not only did they *not* receive a

financial or material blessing for doing the right thing- they actually paid a very harsh price.

So why would anybody in their right mind ever serve God- if by serving Him- we risk suffering personal harm? Because Jesus is the sweetest Name we know. Because we have judged Jesus as being worthy of whatever we must face- just to have the honor and the privilege of exalting His glorious Name. And I would suggest to you that only saved people think like that.

Now we learned through our study of the Protestant Reformation that one of the keys to becoming and remaining Biblical is to follow the concept of "Sola Scriptura"- where everything we believe and teach comes from the Bible, and from the Bible alone. And one of the hallmarks of actually putting this concept into practice is that we are to interpret the Bible with the Bible and by the Bible. In other words- we are to seek to understand what one Passage of the Bible says by using another part of the Bible to help us do that. So in order for us to understand what Jesus is teaching here in **Luke 16**- I want you to turn with me to a very important Passage that we covered here a number of years ago as we were "journeying" through the **Epistle to the Hebrews**- so please turn with me to **Hebrews 10** and we may not be able to get through all this today- but I want you to read with me one of the greatest and most important Passages in the entire Bible about this very subject that is rarely even talked about- much less taught and preached. And let us look over the shoulder of the unknown writer of **Hebrews 10** and read what he was moved on by the God the Holy Spirit in verse 32:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,

33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

35 Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

36 For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY.

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Now look up just a few verses and read **Hebrews 10:23-25**. Here- the Holy Bible teaches exactly what I have been talking about here today- that truly born again Christians do whatever we need to do to make sure that we are not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together- so look up the page a little and read that Passage with me:

Hebrews 10:23-25

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

So here the writer teaches us that we are to hold fast or remain faithful or to be steadfast in the hope of eternal life and in the Promise of the Coming of the Lord by “**considering how**” we are to “**stimulate one another to love and to good deeds**”. And in so doing- the Bible says that we will “**hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering**” and we will remain faithful to this Calling. And notice that the “way” or the “means” by which the Holy Spirit said that we are to do that is through a regular and consistent “assembling” of ourselves together. And so by humble obedience to the Will of God here- this will produce in us an encouragement and a stirring up. And this will keep us from drifting toward apathy about the things of God and worldly comfort and financial security- which is the definition of loving money and serving wealth. So absent this ongoing stimulation to treasure Jesus Christ above Wealth- we will all drift toward compromising with God and we will fall into a love for the world and a love for money and possessions and those things that are passing away.

Yet in a fallen world like ours- “love and good deeds” will be very costly. Rest assured, believers, that Biblical Love and Biblical action to

do God's Will in the earth will interrupt our material comforts and jeopardize our worldly security and demand the end of apathy in our lives. So we should know that Love for Jesus is not cheap. And good deeds are often unsafe and costly. So we must never say, *"What will happen to me if I trust in God and obey Him"*. We must say, *"What will happen to the Cause of Jesus and my love for Jesus- if I do not obey Him"*.

So when we read about 85,000 missing Rwandan Hutu refugees, mostly women and children, who are feared slaughtered or marched to death, and when we read about fanatical Muslims cutting the heads off of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and when we look out and we see disease and depression and pain and loneliness in the richest nation on earth- and we see this kind of broken and upside-down world- a crucial question comes to our minds: *Does God sovereignly rule over these things?* And our answer to that is must be an unshakable, *"Yes! Absolutely! Because the Bible makes it abundantly clear that God sovereignly rules over all things."*

Exodus 4:11b

... Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?

Mark 4:41

They became very much afraid and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?"

So this world- as wicked as it is- does *not* operate independently of God's absolute Control. After Job had been humbled and lost everything, and after he had seen the Purpose of God in his life through his *own* sanctification- he came to understand in **Job 42:2:**

I know that You can do all things, And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

And that must be our answer: *"Yes! - floods and refugees and beheadings and cancer - God sovereignly rules over all these things! God is in charge! Our God reigns!"*

But that is not the only crucial question. Here's another one: *How do we become a kind of people who break out of apathy, and throw off*

the need for ease and wealth, and be willing to risk our possessions and risk our lives in the Cause of God's Love and good deeds? How do we stir each other up to be people like the Bible describes? How do we escape the love of money? How do we place our affections on God and not love wealth? That is what is needed in a world of misery like ours. And that is what our text in **Hebrews 10** and **Luke 16** is all about this morning.

You see, Christian friends, whenever God does a thing- He has more than one Purpose in doing it. If I were interviewed, like some have been, and asked, *"Is a Hurricane the Wrath of God?"* I would say, *"It is both Judgment and Mercy, as always – It is Mercy for those who will have it as Mercy, and it is Judgment for those who won't."*

You see, beloved, unlike us- God is not simple. Our great God is highly complex. He does *many things* at the same time. God has unique and differing purposes for millions of people- all working together without compromise or contradiction and without jeopardizing His Own good Pleasure. God has ten thousands of thousands of Plans for how today's events will bear fruit 50 years from now in the lives of people who aren't even born yet- so take heed to yourself that you do not judge the Purposes of God prematurely.

If God shows His Power and Justice, on the one side, to bring flood or disease or war or suffering or death- He shows His Power and Mercy, on the other side- not only by waking people up to their great need for Him, but also by stirring people up to escape the tyrannical service that worldly wealth demands and to sovereignly deliver us into this kind of love and good works. And so our question this morning is just *how* does God do that? And *how* we may join Him in it? So this sermon is an effort to join God in what He does.

Now in **Hebrews 10:32&33**, the writer describes a very painful and tragic situation of persecution and imprisonment in the life of this small little Church in what is today- Asia Minor during the last third of the 1st Century. And this "hard time" had happened some time ago in this Church that he is writing to, and he wants the people who are in the Church on that day- to look back and remember it. So let's look at this hard time by reading **Hebrews 10:32&33** again together, and I think we will begin to see what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 16**:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings,
33 partly by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated.

Now these two verses are describing a time of great persecution that had occurred at some point in the past- *before* the writer wrote this Epistle. Notice here that there are two ways in which they suffered. The people of this Church in modern day Turkey suffered directly- the writer says in verse 32, **“you endured a great conflict of sufferings”** – So obviously this was *some* kind of terrible persecution that had come upon them at that time.

And the other way that these people had suffered was by voluntarily choosing to share in the sufferings of others discussed at the end of verse 33- **“by becoming sharers with those who were so treated”**

So the key question that I am interested in here is just *how* did these younger Christians become the kind of people who would *voluntarily* leave the comfort and safety and security that wealth had afforded them and to *voluntarily choose* to be **“sharers”** of those who were being persecuted? *Why* did these believers *voluntarily* suffer with those who were being persecuted back then when so many in our day today would never in a million years choose to do this?

And the answer is given to us in verse 34:

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

So the reason that the writer gives as to *why* the people of that Church were *willing* to align themselves with those who were being persecuted was because:

For you showed sympathy to the prisoners...

Now this shows what the persecution and suffering *involved* and *how* the people of this small little Church became *willing* to be **“sharers”** with the sufferings of others. Some were literally imprisoned, while others broke out of the prison of apathy and walked away from their

comfort and security, and risked everything they owned in this life- *including their wealth*, and even their own lives so that they could be identified with the prisoners. Now *that* is love! *That* is zeal! *That* is compassion! And *that* is true Christianity in motion!

Now what was the result of this great love and compassion as these people left the security of their own lives that wealth had brought to them in order to stand with their brothers in prison? Was it a glorious experience? Did they get a blessing for “doing the right thing”? No, it was even more persecution. Their property, verse 34 says, was “**seized**”. And some translations render the word that was translated here as “seized” as “**plundered**”.

Now this “seizure” may have been an official act of the Roman Government. Or it may have been an unofficial act of violence by Jews or even the unsaved Gentiles- who both despised Christianity, in general, and Christians, in particular. In any case, these Hebrew believers lost *some* or *all* of their worldly possessions and wealth- precisely *because* they were stirred up to love and good works.

Now as you read this and ponder your own life today, please keep in mind that this is what verses **Hebrews 10:23-25** tell us the Church of Jesus Christ is all about. We are to assemble together so that we may stimulate one another to “love and good deeds”. And **Hebrews 10:32-34** is a perfect illustration of what this love and good deeds look like- it is the willingness to *abandon* worldly possessions for the Cause of Jesus Christ- and to do so *joyfully*. So from this we see that in the Christian Church, when some suffer- others leave the comfort and security of their *own* lives and they take great risks and they share in the lives of the hurting- even to the point of being associated with those who suffer and which causes them to share in their persecutions. This is what the Bible means when it talks about love and good works.

So the question for us this morning is this: Just *how* did they become that kind of people? And what can *we* do to stir each other up to be that kind of people? And the last part of verse 34 gives us the answer. The writer says here at the end of verse 34 that the *reason* that these people were willing to leave the comfort and security of their own world, and the *reason* that they were willing to publicly stand beside those who were being persecuted, and the *reason* that they were willing to do these things even to the point of losing their own

possessions was because they had escaped the service that worldly wealth demands, and they did that based on:

... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

First of all, notice that choosing to love like this and choosing to suffer like this was not a morose, gloomy, miserable duty for them that they did because Christians are simply "supposed" to act like this. No, verse 34 tells us very clearly that they did this *joyfully*- that they *joyfully* accepted the unfair and unjust seizure of their property because they knew that they had in Heaven a better and a far more lasting possession! Now this is New Testament Christianity in action!

It's as if you were to carry food and clothing to hurricane victims and then go home and find spray-painted all over your house, "*Christians get out!*", and your windows broken and all your cabinets and drawers rifled. And instead of being angry and discouraged- you resisted the temptation to get off by yourself and sulk and feel sorry for yourself, and instead you gathered around your brothers and sisters and you prayed and you sang a song of joy and you began to see what God's Word says about this. And you found out that instead of being moved by your carnal feelings and feeling forsaken by God, instead of listening to what lost and unsaved people had to tell you- you found out that God had counted you worthy to suffer for His Names sake!

And this is what the people of this small little Church did- according to verse 34. They joyfully accepted the seizure of their property. But *how* did they become people like this? This is utterly against the way humans are by nature. We love safety and comfort and ease and fun and lots of possessions and money and wealth and free time to do what we want to do. And if we get those things- we're happy and we rejoice, and if we don't- we complain. But, here are people who are actually rejoicing when they *lose* possessions, and then they *share* in sufferings. So somehow there appears to be a powerful and supernatural joy that transcends the kind of joy that we are all familiar with. And it also appears that this powerful and miraculous joy seems to be one of the keys to love and good deeds. And I suggest to you that the key is found in the almost universally neglected statement at the end of verse 34 that explains to us the *source* of this supernatural, love-producing joy:

... knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.

So, the key to the kind of joy that produces love and good works, and the key that will help us escape the ugly and vicious demands that worldly wealth brings upon us, and the key that will make us able to joyfully endure the loss of material wealth and possessions and to endure persecution with joy is **knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and a lasting one.**

You see, dear friends, when you *know* that you have a better and a lasting possession in Heaven- you will not be paralyzed by a loss here on earth. If that "better possession" is great enough in your heart and mind- the Bible says that you will even be able to rejoice in a loss!

Well, just what is this "*better and lasting possession*"? It's all the good news that we have been pondering for many years as we have "journeyed" together through the Scriptures together. And just in Hebrews- we saw the triumph of Jesus over death in **Hebrews 2:15**. It is the final rest for the saints that is yet to come that we learned about in **Hebrews 4:9**. It is the subduing of all our enemies that we read about in **Hebrews 10:13**. It is the perfect purification of our conscience that we discovered in **Hebrews 9:14**, and the removal and forgetting of all our sins in **Hebrews 8:12**- all of which is aimed at the ultimate and greatest reward of all, namely, that we shall be "near to God" (**Hebrews 7:19, 25**), and that we will know God (**Hebrews 8:11**), and that God will be our God forever (**Hebrews 8:10**).

In other words, "the better and lasting possession" is not a "thing" after all. It is a Person, and His Name is Jesus, and it is a great Salvation; It is the great relationship of acceptance with God and fellowship with God and enjoyment of God forever!

Now notice the two adjectives: "better" and "lasting" in verse 34. This possession, this Jesus, this Salvation, this relationship to God, this knowledge of God, this love for God is "better" than anything this world can offer. And it is more "lasting" than anything this world can offer. This is exactly the same double perfection described in **Psalms 16:11** when David said:

You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Notice that David says the very same thing in this Psalm as does the writer of Hebrews.

You will make known to me the path of life; in Your Presence is fullness of joy [= "better possession"]; **in Your right Hand there are pleasures forever.** [= "lasting possession"]."

So **Hebrews 10:34** is saying that the key to the kind of supernatural joy that releases love and good deeds, and that *embraces* suffering with those who suffer- and to do all of this with joy- is *knowing* that you have this better and enduring substance. "Knowing!" There's the key! You must have this confidence- you must come to "know". Not just believe- not hope- you must know. And it's this deep confidence about your future that is unshakeable and unmovable that frees you from the fear and greed that kills love, and makes you nothing but a cookie-cutter human who has to have security and safety and ease and comfort and prosperity in order to have joy.

So where does this "knowing" come from? From where do we get this kind of confidence? The answer to that is what this whole Book, called the Holy Bible, is written to supply. And there are no shortcuts- the more you stick your face into this Book, the more the inspired, inerrant, infallible Words of this Book you get off the pages and get into your eyes and heart and mind- the greater you will see Jesus and the greeter you see Jesus- the greater your confidence will grow until it gets so great that you will be able to rejoice at the loss of all this world's goods.

You see, our confidence does not come from our economy. Our confidence does not come from our physical health. Our confidence does not come from our investments or our military or our ability to work and earn money. Our confidence comes from Jesus Christ - what He did perfectly on the Cross and at the Resurrection, and what He is doing right now for us in Heaven, and what He will do for us at the second coming and throughout all eternity.

We have already seen in **Hebrews 2:15** that Christ is the One who destroyed the power of death. We have already seen in **Hebrews 4:15&16** that Christ is the High Priest Who opens the way for us to go to the Throne of Grace. We have already seen in **Hebrews 7:25** that Christ

is the One Who ever lives to make intercession for us. We have seen in **Hebrews 9:14** that Christ is the One Whose Blood cleanse our consciences. We have already seen in **Hebrews 9:12** that Christ is the One Who obtained an eternal redemption for us.

Hebrews 10:14 says that Christ's death is the single sacrifice that perfects us for all time. **Hebrews 10:13** says that Christ will make all His enemies a footstool for His Feet. And **Hebrews 8:6-11** says that Christ will come again a second time to save all who are eagerly waiting for Him, and that Christ is the Mediator of a new and *better* Covenant based upon better Promises that has a better Priesthood, and a better Sacrifice than anything that the Old Covenant had, and that insures the forgiveness of our sins, and the writing of the law on our hearts, and the Presence of God in our midst forever and ever!

All that we ever hope for is because of Jesus. And we receive Him into our hearts by faith- not by earning Him or meriting Him- but by banking on Him- by trusting in Him; by believing and confessing Him. If we love Jesus above all that earth offers- He is ours.

So when verse 34 says that the key to this supernatural joy in the face of suffering and earthly loss is "knowing that we have a **better and a lasting possession**"- we know this because of Jesus Christ. Christ Himself is the Seal and the Guarantee of our hope in all the Promises of God.

So what then are the practical implications of this for stirring up one another to love and good deeds in the face of great suffering? Two very simple and yet great things:

1. We must remind each other *continually* of how terrible is the price of throwing away our confidence.
2. We must remind each other *continually* how great the reward is of cherishing the Promises of God above all earthly things.

You see each of these in the next verses. Look at verses 38&39:

38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM.

39 But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

In other words, our continual and faithful perseverance *proves* our Salvation. Those who are supernaturally transformed and born from above by the miracle of the Divine Nature- persevere. All of them do. They *go on* with Jesus- regardless of the cost. They get hurt- sure- but they don't *stay* hurt. They get discouraged- yes- but they don't *stay* discouraged. They get weak- all the time- but they don't *stay* weak. They sin- yes- but they do not *remain* in sin. They fall down- but they get back up. They *want* to quit- but they *don't* quit because they *can't* quit because the seed of Christ remains in them, and Jesus has changed them and washed them and saved them and they have nowhere else to go- because Jesus has the Words of eternal life.

These born again believers don't look at the *temporary* cost of love and shrink back from confidence in God's infinitely *superior* Promises. When people do that- when the temporary cost causes people to back off their confidence in God's eternal Promises- not only will they lose out on the Promises- but they will ultimately be destroyed. Hell is at stake here, dear friends- not just the loss of a few extra rewards. Because if you do not persevere in Jesus Christ, regardless of the cost- you are proving beyond any doubt that you were never saved to begin with.

And that is why we assemble together- to warn each other: *"Don't drift away. Don't love the world. Don't start thinking nothing huge is at stake here. Fear the terrible prospect of not cherishing the Promises of God forever more than you fear missing out on the pleasures of sin for a season."*

But, as we gather- we mainly focus on the preciousness of the Promises and help each other value above all things how great the reward is that Christ has purchased for us. So we must constantly say to each other what **Hebrews 10:35** says:

... do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

Jesus said in **Luke 16:13** that we *cannot* serve God and wealth. Notice that He didn't say that we "should not" or that we "ought not" serve God and wealth- but that we "cannot". So we do not have the power or the ability to divide our love and affection and devotion between God and material possessions. God made us in such a way that we must make a conscious decision to either love wealth and serve

and devote ourselves to it, or we must love God and serve and obey Him- but we cannot do both.

So to do this- we must assemble together and help each other see the *greatness* of the Reward! And I am convinced that this is the main task of preaching and the main purpose of Church- to help people see the greatness of what Christ has purchased for all who will value it above all that the world has to offer. Helping people see it and savor it, so that God's *superior* Worth shines in their complete satisfaction of Him and the sacrifices that come from it. And then we will be like the people here in **Hebrews 10**.

We need to ponder the *superiority* of God as our great Reward over all that the world has to offer. And if we don't, we will love the world like everyone else loves the world, and we will serve wealth just like everybody else serves wealth, and we will live just like everyone else lives. So take the things that drive the world and ponder how much better and how much more abiding God is; take money or sex or material possessions or power or popularity, and think about these things. First, think about them in relation to death. Death will take away all of them anyway- and you are guaranteed to die. So if that is what you live for, dear friend- you won't get much of it in this life, and what you do get- you will absolutely lose at your death. But the Promise of Scripture is that God's treasure is "lasting". It lasts. It goes beyond death. It is eternal.

Everything the world has to offer, God is infinitely "better", and He is infinitely more "lasting". There is no comparison. God wins - every time. So the question this morning is this: will we have Jesus Christ? Will we take Jesus as being "better" and more "lasting" than anything that wealth can provide for us? Him? Will we wake up from the trance and the hypnosis that this world places upon us and see and believe and rejoice and love and suffer?

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.