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Luke

Chapter 5 - An Unconventional Intent
A Different Kind of Criteria (27-32)

Luke 5:27-32: After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him. And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

If I were to choose one verse that just really summarizes the intent of Christ, it would be that verse 32 in the passage.

It reads this way,

“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

The intent of Christ. Not like we would think. Everything, as we look at the Book of Luke, is certainly not the way that we would perceive it to be from the birth of Christ, from the very announcement of who He was to now the person Himself and to the point of even John the Baptist going, “I'm really not even sure that You're the guy because You're not fitting into the way that I'm thinking.” Nevertheless, as we come to Scripture, the whole purpose of it is to get us to think His way, not for us to get God to think our way. I think that's where a lot of the confusion arises. When we open up the Bible and we go, “How can I get this to say what I want it to say so I can feel better about the way that I live?” But that's not the goal, is it? The goal is to find out what God says so that we might

truly be healed. I mean, we might have our own way of fixing things, but I have found the more that I go down that way, the more confused and the more frustrated that I get. In many respects, this is what Chapter 5 has been about. Chapter 5 has been demonstrating to us the different ones that Christ is visiting, and He is revealing Himself to them. We're seeing lives changed in living color. When the power of Christ comes upon us, truly there is a change of our way of life. There is a change of our life. There's a change in the way that we think. There's a change in the things that we seek. Everything begins to change, and this chapter begins to demonstrate this in a very unique way.

It starts off with Peter and with the masses of crowds that are clearly listening to Christ and in the process of all of them listening, there Peter is mending his nets. I would say, maybe even minding his own business, taking care of the things that he knows he needs to take care of. But what you're seeing in Peter's life is there's something that's separating him from the relationship with Christ, which is that he's self-reliant. He is, the way that Timothy

would put it is, entangled in the affairs of everyday life. And so many of us are just entangled in the affairs of everyday life that we just really don't even have time for Jesus. I mean, we've got stuff that we have to do. We have bills that we have to pay. We have responsibilities that we have and it's not as much that Peter was thinking negative towards Christ, and I think that's true of a lot of people. They're not necessarily thinking in terms of, "Well, I just really hate that Jesus character," but they're involved in their way of life to such an extent that it overwhelms them and they don't have time for anything else. It's hard for them to think in terms of the eternal. It's almost impossible for them to think in terms of their own mortality. It is the difficulties in our life that shake up our world and begin to reveal these things and how magnificent this particular passage is when Christ came and He goes, "Look, I know you've been fishing all night and nothing's happened." And it really is the frustration that comes into our life that causes us to start at least being open to listening about Christ, to receiving Christ. Now, once again, Peter was not foreign to what Christ had been doing all along, and he had seen the great works,

even his mother-in-law is completely healed. But the point is that we still can be immersed in our own way of life to where we don't surrender all. Coming to Christ actually is a change of everything, and it's one of the things that Luke is wanting to convey. Everything literally changes. So, when Christ tells Peter, "Go out now in the middle of the day after you've been fishing all night, and you haven't caught anything." In the middle of your frustration and realizing your own weakness. I mean, there's got to be a day in your life when you wake up and you go, "You know what I just found out something." "What?" "I don't control the universe." And it's just one of those moments in which you find have this great epiphany and you begin to realize that. Peter goes, "Ok." He goes out and probably reticent in doing it, but he goes out and he casts the net and it's just full. I mean, he can't lift it up. And what does he say? Well, what's key in the passage is what he says and how he responds.

It reads this way,

(Luke 5:8) “But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!””

We go, “Peter, what did you do? You've just been taking care of business. You've been responsible. You've been feeding your family. You're a great guy.” He goes, “No, I'm a horrible guy.” You go, “Why?” And that's the point. The point is the one thing that separates us from God is not the many things that you do bad and which there are a lot of them. But those aren't the things that separate us from God. The thing that separates us from God is you not believing. Romans is full of passages such as this that you have to come to a point where you realize all have sinned, all fall short of the glory of God; you have to come to a point of realizing, as he ultimately comes in Romans 14, that which is not of faith is sin. That's why Hebrews 11:6 will say, without faith it's impossible to please God. You must first believe that He is, and that He rewards those. Once again, why do we come back to it? Because it's a foundational text. It's telling us why you and I are separated from God, because we don't believe Him. We

don't trust Him. That's why we're self-reliant. "If somebody's going to do something, it's got to be me. Nobody else is going to do it." I mean, there's nowhere in Scripture where it tells you to be irresponsible. It says work hard with your hands, but it also says do all that you do to the glory of God. In other words, you and I don't do what we do to sustain ourselves. We do what we do to please God. That's the difference, and we actually believe that God will reward those who diligently seek Him. We walk by faith, not by sight. So, we see throughout Scripture that the sin that separates us, and that's the sin that's focused at in the Gospels, the very sin that separates us is, in Peter's situation, our self-reliance; our being involved in the affairs of everyday life, and "Why should we talk to You? We're too busy. I mean, how are we going to get anything done?" God says, "You have not because you asked not. Have you thought about talking to Me?" "No, I'm not even sure You're interested." "Well, you don't believe what I said. I said I loved you, and I gave My son for you." So, in order for you to actually walk by faith, you have to believe what He says, and then you have to act upon that faith. So, Peter's having to deal with

that and that's why he comes to the point, "I've tried to do this myself." I mean, if in fact you've ever lived a way in which you felt very self-reliant and you got this, I'm sure, if you're old enough, you came to the point where you go, "Wow, this is frustrating. This is disappointing." Ecclesiastes says the race is not always to the swiftest. I mean, you trained, you trained, you trained, and you lost the race. "If I trained and I did everything right, I should always win." And Ecclesiastes says, "It's funny how it doesn't always work that way." Once again, you realize, "I don't control everything that affects my life." So, God begins to shake up and stir up our world. That's the sin, the self-reliance.

In the case of the leper that is also in the passage, the second individual that we run into, what's his problem? Well, we know that the whole leprosy thing was the result of rebellion, especially in the Biblical times. So, after Jesus heals him, He has him go to the priest and He has him perform the rights and the fact of the matter is he needs to humble himself instead of being rebellious and saying, "I'm in charge." He needs to humble himself. He needs to

submit to authority, and he needs to see what God has done and the suffering that he's caused. A rebellious person, one of the reasons why they're rebellious is they're so egotistical. So, it's all about them and they don't care who they hurt. So, the whole process of going to the priests and killing the animals in order to pay for your sins and to see this one bird die and the blood poured out and sprinkled on the other birds so that the other bird can be free is all a wonderful process of this leper growing some kind of conscience about the things that he had done. It is interesting that when he comes to Jesus, he doesn't say, "Forgive me of my sins." He says, "Free me from my uncleanness." And God begins to reveal to him through that, that he has sinned against Him. So, as we see this individual, that is a leper, clearly, we have a person that is rebellious and disobedient in following God. This is why Christ says, "Go to the priest, do the commandments of Moses." Why do the commandments of Moses? What difference does that make? Because he's been rebelling against everything. So, why is it that he didn't believe? Why didn't he put his trust in God? Well, I think a lot of people out there, living

in their rebellious life, they're egotistical. They're thinking about themselves, and they're pursuing their own ways. Peter wasn't that way. He was trying to make ends meet, but he was just immersed in his way, but it's still sin because it's not of faith. So, in each of these cases, we see faith. Now, the last one that we looked at was a paralytic, and he's brought in a stretcher and it's his friends that bring him in, right? And I'm thinking to myself, "Ok, he's a paralytic." Does that mean he can't speak? I don't hear him saying anything. You read the whole passage, not one word. You don't hear him go, "I'd really like to walk." He doesn't say that. It's all the people who brought him, and you realize that in the context his sin was a sense of indecisiveness; His sin was that he became resigned. There are people that go their own way, they find themselves in a mess, they find themselves, we'll use the word paralyzed, and in that process, they almost give up hope in life.

There's an interesting verse in Proverbs 18:14, and it reads this way,

“The spirit of a man can endure his sickness,
But as for a broken spirit who can bear it?”

This is one of the reasons why when they bring this paralytic to Jesus, He doesn't say, “Walk” first, He says, “Your sins are forgiven.” Because what needs to be healed is this man's soul. He had given up. He was resigned and, in his resigning, he does what most people do; they acquiesce to the people around them. They almost because of this are not only indecisive, but they've given over all authority to the people around them. A lot of people have done this in their spiritual walk. They've given up, “I don't know enough. I don't know.” So, they hand it over to somebody else. “My mother says this. She's a saint.” And they allow other people to live their spirituality out in a vicarious way for them. That's what they do. Unfortunately, you didn't make the decision, and in every case what we see is each individual has to make the decision. This is why Jesus turns to him, He goes, “You know that bed you're lying on, not the bed they're carrying, the one you're lying on. Pick it up and walk. Go home.” And he has to pick it up. He has to walk. The same

thing with the guy at the pool of Bethesda as we talked about in the Gospel of John. Christ is going to say, "You're going to have to do something about this." But you find that people, in their life, begin to give over decisions to everybody else. Just like the Pharisees within the passage, they're seeing the things that Jesus is doing and they're discussing among themselves, "What do you think? What do you think?" What does it matter what everybody else thinks? Why don't they come to Christ? Because they're living their life on consensus. And if you listen to the majority, you're never going to get in the ark. So, the bottom line is that the sin is actually giving over my will to other people. In each case, what we're seeing is the sin that's blocking you from Christ.

Now, we come to Levi, and here he is, a tax collector in a tollbooth, and we believe that on the Sea of Galilee, there were tolls that were being taken for the Roman government, in particular of the taxes that would be given. We won't call them tariffs. I don't think they were tariffs. But anyway, kind of get you focused in on with me. But nevertheless, what he was doing was collecting tax

and the fact is he's sitting in the building. Now, I find this remarkable in the sense that he's in Capernaum, and with him being in Capernaum, which is basically where Jesus was living at this time and Peter and some of the other fishermen, and it wasn't that big to where you wouldn't know what's going on, on top of the fact that there were multitudes surrounding Jesus all the time. So, I find it remarkable that he's sitting in the office doing his work, and this is Levi who will be called Matthew later on in another passage. But Levi is his, we believe, name that he was born with and a very Jewish name. Now, Matthew will then make reference to the fact that God has given him a gift, but we come to this name "Levi," and when you go all the way back to the etymology, or more specifically part of the 12 tribes, Levi, if you remember, was the one that joined himself (His name meaning "joined") in a zealous way to God, and the Levites actually became the priests because they were the ones that were willing to slay anybody that wouldn't follow God in the Old Testament. So, God says, "Ok, you're the guys. I want zeal like that." What's amazing is when you come to this passage, you have to ask yourself, here's a guy that's a

Jew, his name is Levi, and he's collecting taxes for traitors, Roman government, "What's a nice guy like you doing in a place like this?" I mean, you just have to think that way, especially when it comes.

So, as we as we pick up in verse 27, it reads this way, (Luke 5:27) "After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi..."

Now, underline the word "notice". It's a very important word. It's actually where we get the English word "theater," and what it makes reference to is not only looking at something, but it has the concept of being very attentive, like if you were watching theater come out, you're looking at something with contemplation and you're very attentive towards it. More specifically, there is a sense of admiration. Otherwise, you wouldn't be there. So, the word here that is used has that connotation. Jesus was very attentive. It's like He walks in, and it's like He zeroes in on Levi, and it's like He knows there's something about this man that He admires. There's something about this man that has drawn His attention. Now, it doesn't say what it was, but I would say if Christ is drawn, there's a

reason; just like with Peter, which He says, "Come follow Me." So, as He's drawn to this individual, we find ourselves in the midst of a place where you shouldn't be, and He just says to him in a very simple way, "Follow Me." That's it. I mean, no explanation. Where has this guy been? I mean, the multitudes have been out there, but he's been in the office. He's been focusing on the responsibilities that he has, and all Jesus says, "Follow Me." Now, what's even more bizarre, is he leaves everything, and goes. What would cause somebody to do that? You begin to see that when God does the work in your life it is so efficacious, effectual, that it's irresistible. You look at this individual and he's in a tax office and there's no hesitation, there's no deliberation. He's not walking around going, "Ok, guys, what do you think? You think I should go with this guy? Do you know Him? Where's your credentials?" None of that. He just goes, and you begin to realize that the power of Christ, when He calls, it's irresistible, and He begins to draw. Now, it's irresistible, and I'm going to emphasize this, to those that are His. "My sheep hear My voice, they come." Not all will do this.

But I was looking at a number of passages that make reference to Christ calling and one of them is found in Luke 9. I don't want to go too much outside of the Gospel of Luke, but in Luke 9:23, you begin to realize the intensity of the calling, and this is why it seems so bizarre that He does it which seems to be on the fly. How powerful this call must be, if in fact he would drop everything at this moment; like with Peter, he goes, "I'm a sinful man," and he drops his net, he drops everything and follows Christ.

(Luke 9:23) "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me."

(Luke 9:24) "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

(Luke 9:25) "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"

That really clarifies this is a pretty major decision. I mean, we're talking about your soul here, and this is one of the reasons why you can't depend on consensus, and you've

got to take your focus off your worldly business and realize maybe there's something more important than this; you've got to stop trying to do things your way, and say, "Whatever you say, God." I mean, if in fact your soul is at stake.

If you look in Luke 9:57, there are other times in which Christ would call people, but they just weren't quite there in the commitment level, and it reads this way,

(Luke 9:57) "As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go.'"

Here again, many a man proclaims his loyalty, but a faithful man who can find, right?

(Luke 9:58) "And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'"

(Luke 9:59) And He said to another, 'Follow Me.' But he said, 'Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.'"

Now, once again, understanding the passage and the Greek tenses, his father hadn't died yet. He just wants to wait till his father does die. He probably might get an

inheritance that might subsidize in some way him going away. This is what's so unusual with both Peter and Levi, is they just drop everything. It says, they leave everything, and they just follow Him. There's not a sense of "Gee, I wonder how I'm going to do this. I'm trying to figure out everything." They just do it, and it just shows how powerful the power of Christ's calling is and the way that He changes your life.

(Luke 9:60) "But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."

(Luke 9:61) Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home."

(Luke 9:62) But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.""

All these passages are making clear reference to the fact that this is a commitment that has to be made, and if in fact it's a real commitment, it's not only immediate; it's so effectual that you just cannot resist it, and you have to be willing. I mean, there's something inside you that goes,

“Nothing else is important. Nothing else is important” and everything else begins to wane. This is the calling that happens.

It says,

(Luke 5:28) “And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

(Luke 5:29) And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors...”

You go, “Why was there such a great crowd of tax gatherers?” Because those are the people he knew. Once again, that's a bizarre thing. I mean, we know that Levi, i.e. Matthew, is son of Alphaeus. It'll say it in other passages. We know that he has a brother named James “the less,” which is one of the 12. So, it's interesting that you have two that are going to end up being disciples of Christ. So, we know that the family has some rapport and knows about Christ, but to leave everything, I wonder if he inspired his brother to do that by virtue of him leaving everything.

Anyway, it says,

(Luke 5:29) “And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.”

What you have is a Jewish guy that finds himself in a place that he never probably thought he would ever be, and that's in a toll booth collecting tax for the Roman government. As a kid, I'm sure he never thought, “You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to grow up to be a tax collector.” Because they were hated and they were despised, and most of them were greedy and manipulative anyway, so they had a name for themselves. What would cause you to want to be involved in it? But something happened to Levi to where he made a wrong decision somewhere along the line. Because he made a wrong decision, he takes a wrong turn and because he takes a wrong turn, he ends up in a wrong path and before long, he finds himself to where he can't get out of this. I mean, look, your reputation is already marred. You are who you are, and what else can you do? Would anybody hire him? Would anybody hire him outside? Why would they do a favor to a tax collector? He's literally

burned all of his bridges and finds himself where he is. It reminds me of another individual. Don't know if you know his name or not, but the guy's name is David. In the Old Testament in particular, we won't go into it because it will take us too long to do this, but as you watch him in particular in 1 Samuel 26,27, and 28, very interesting, because Saul has been chasing him around. He's already been anointed king, but he realizes in his own mind, "There's no way I'm going to be king because Saul's going to kill me." And he actually states that at the beginning of the chapter, he says, "I'm not going to be king. I just resign myself to the way things are, and I'm going to die and I'm going to die not being king." What he finds himself doing is ultimately going over to the other side, and he finds himself fighting for the Philistines, the very ones that he was fighting against with the slingshot as a kid. He finds himself fighting for the enemy, and he finds himself actually, literally begging the enemy, "Why don't you hire me?" and they go, "I don't know if we can trust you." He goes, "I'm really good at this." And you realize behind the scenes that he had made a commitment he would not kill God's anointed, which was Saul, and that

day they were going against Saul and God kept him from that. But you have to ask yourself, how did David get there? And I'm sure in many respects, Levi was feeling the same thing. But the moment that Jesus looks at him and He goes, "Follow Me." I'm sure he thought, "He wants me to follow Him? In a million years, I wouldn't have believed that somebody would have wanted me to come with them." And he goes. That's the power of Christ. No matter where your life has been, no matter what you've gone through, no matter the decisions you make; sometimes it's rebellion, sometimes you've just been immersed in the affairs of everyday life, and sometimes you just have listened to way too many people, and follow the things that they told you to do, but the voice of Christ calls out, and you go, "You know what? I'm coming." And at that day everything changes. This is why this passage is so important, because He actually says what He's calling people to do.

If you go on to the passage, it says that he gave this big reception,

(Luke 5:30) “The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling...”

I would say, if you're listening to other people, you're going to find naysayers saying things like, “You don't want to give your life totally to Christ. That's dangerous.” Of course, it's safe if you trust in the government, but it's very dangerous to follow Christ.

So, they were turning the disciples, and they say, “Look disciples, we don't know why you're with these really bad people, tax gatherers and sinners.” “Sinners” is just really a way of saying “most wicked”; “These are the most wicked people on the face of the earth.”

(Luke 5:31) “And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.”

And He uses the word that is oftentimes used for the word “evil,” “*kakōs*”. That Greek word that He uses in the passage is not only make reference to someone that's evil, but somebody that's miserable. You realize that it's that miserable state that really causes you to listen to Christ. We always thought that being miserable was a bad

thing, but being miserable is one of the best things that ever happened to you, because that's when you listen to God. Of course, in Peter's life, it was just not being able to catch anything when you have bills to pay, and you work all night, and you don't catch a thing, and you're frustrated and disappointed. God goes, "It's the time to hit it." Because this is the time you realize. To the leper, he was unclean. He was miserable in his sin, but more specifically, he was full of pain and shame. How low can you go with somebody crying in the street? And he had to by law, he had to cry in the street, "I'm unclean." I mean, how shameful could your life be? How powerless could you be? You have to have someone carry you around everywhere as the paralytic. In every case, you begin to see the necessity of Christ; those who are miserable, those who are sick. You read about David and those that followed him and it says everybody that owed bills and everybody that was miserable and discontent were the army of David. Yet, they turn out to be some of the most loyal guys that you could have ever imagined.

And then He ends with this wonderful verse,

(Luke 5:32) “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners...”

Now, you can't end there, because He's not just calling sinners; He's calling “sinners to repentance”. The point of the matter is that the righteous perceive that everything's ok. So, they don't want anything to be fixed. They're fixed on the way they think, and they don't want to change. We think we've handled it pretty well up to this point. But it's not until you repent, that is to say, you think differently about. “Repentance” literally is the word, “*metanoia*,” to think differently, to change the way of thinking. It's not until your way of thinking changes that you've truly been saved. Well, if a sinner comes to Christ, realizing just how horrific his life is and coming into the consequences of the things that he's done, he goes, “I want change.” A person where everything seems to be going ok up to this point is saying, “I don't want anything to change. I like the way things are.” So, it's the difficulties that bring us to the point of what? Wanting change, and that's what repentance is all about, and that's why He calls sinners, because they're going, “I want to change.” This is why

Jesus will say in Matthew 11, “Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Why isn't He calling people that don't need rest? Because they're not seeking Him.

There's a passage in Luke 18, if you'll turn there with me. We read this passage from time to time just because it's so clear. So, if you're ever confused about, “Well, why doesn't He call the righteous?” Well, maybe this might give you a good answer.

(Luke 18:9) “And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt.”

“I wonder why those other people can't be as wonderful as I am?”

(Luke 18:10) “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

(Luke 18:11) The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself...”

Which seems to convey that he wasn't praying to God.

“... ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

(Luke 18:12) ‘I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’

(Luke 18:13) “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!’

(Luke 18:14) “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.”

Now, it is in the same text that you read the story of the certain ruler,

(Luke 18:18) “A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

(Luke 18:19) And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

(Luke 18:20) “You know the commandments, ‘DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’”

(Luke 18:21) And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

(Luke 18:22) When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

(Luke 18:23) But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.”

The passage is giving us these two these individuals, as He gives us these parables of these situations and He begins to reveal to us not only is the calling of God something that is miraculous and life changing, but it is life changing to such a degree that when it grabs you and when you receive it, “To many who has received Him, to them, He gave the power to become children of God.” What is that power? It's the power to think different. That's how you know that you're really redeemed, because you say to

yourself, "I'm not thinking the way I used to think. The very things that I pursued, I don't even care about them anymore." Paul will say in Philippians 3, "Everything that was gain for me, I count as a hindrance to the gospel. It's like dung to me." You go, "That's change." And the miraculous work of Christ within this passage.

There's a different kind of criteria that comes into play within this particular passage, because when you think about being a part of the kingdom of God, you just naturally think in terms of, "Well, I've got to have something to offer" and God goes, "That's not the criteria. The criteria to enter into the kingdom of God is you have to be a sinner." That just doesn't seem right. You have to admit that you are. See, that's the criteria. Unless you humble yourself, you can't come into the kingdom of God, and it's not about your education. It's not about your genealogy. It's not about your prominence. It's not even about any kind of position or perceived goodness. "You know, I'm a pretty good person." It has nothing to do with that. Absolutely nothing. Until you say, "I'm a sinner," and let me just remind you, even Peter said it, "I am a sinner. I

can't believe that You would even talk to me," you can't enter the kingdom of heaven. That's where the change of thinking begins, and from there on, you just want to follow Him with everything that you do.

There are so many passages that I could quote. One of the passages I oftentimes think about is Ephesians 5 where it says, "Therefore be imitators of God, and walk in love just like Christ." And from then on, you just begin to follow in the footsteps of Christ, don't you?

I mean, the end of Matthew 5 says, "Therefore you're to be perfect like your Heavenly Father is perfect." In other words, you're supposed to be like your Dad, and you have the Spirit of Christ within you that says, "I just want to do what He does. I want to be like He is."

Paul will state this in 1 Corinthians 12, "Therefore, be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." It's a different way of thinking. You go, "Well, I'm kind of working my way into it." You know what? I don't think that's the way it works. I see the power of salvation is so powerful that you drop it and you go, "I'm following." Now, you're not perfect on that day; it won't be till we see Him face to face. But your

resolve is different, your “want to” is different, your desires, what you seek. You're seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Your treasures are not here; they're in heaven. Everything begins to change, and how miraculous that is.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we ask You to change our hearts, Lord. We read about these things, and we see individuals and the miracle of Your voice calling them, the work in their lives, how You take us out of the mundane of life, of the involvement in the affairs of everyday life, and You bring us into a different purpose, a different call. We're not just fishing for fish anymore, we're fishing for men; souls, something eternal, something that is lasting. You're not just cleansing us; You're totally healing us from the rebelliousness of our souls and our thoughts. You're taking us away from that

sense of dependency upon others, and we begin to feel that sense of, "It's You and me, isn't it, God?" How wonderful it is that You would call us at our lowest state and our lowest time, when we thought we were least worthy, in the midst of our doing something that we never thought we would ever do and wish we had never compromised on, and You would call us. Lord, we hear Your voice as the voice of a Good Shepherd, as a voice that knows His sheep, and You know we didn't want to be there, but there we are. You know that we've fallen in so many ways, but all we have to do is admit it.

With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, that's all you have to do, and the power of God will come into your life. Things will change.