

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPTS

Series: Be Sure

Part 2

Tim Armstrong, Senior Pastor

Weekend 04.25-26.09

Well, good morning. Good to have you here this morning. We are moving through a series and hopefully you are a part of that process because what we're doing is building on a series of knowledge that pertains to Luke, chapter 10. I want you to take your Bibles and turn to that particular passage. If you don't have a Bible, there is one in the chair back. The page is 869— will get you to Luke 10. We are moving through understanding this passage over a three-week period of time. And every week builds on top of the previous week. Last week, I left you with a bit of a cliffhanger. This week, I'm going to do the same I'm afraid but it's necessary. Last week, we looked at the context. This week, we're going to do a type of Bible study. It's going to be a little bit different from what our normal approach is. We're going to kind of really understand the text and then the following week, next week, we're going to bring it all together because we're answering what I believe is life's most crucial question and that is, how can I be sure of my eternal destiny. That's not something you want to question. That's not something you want to have any doubts about; and you didn't need to have doubts. The text of scripture is very clear. We're going to learn how we can be sure of our eternal destiny.

The problem is I'm not sure if that's the question that plagues modern society today. I don't even know if that is the question that is foremost in many of your minds. Many times, I've noticed our society is far more concerned about today than the future, far more about making...what do I need to do to make my life better now than worrying about what's going to happen after I die. We're concerned about things like, well, how can I be sure of my financial future in uncertain times? How can I have a better relationship with my spouse? How can I have better communication with my teenagers? How can I have a better job? We're really concerned about those things now. And actually if you peruse the local bookstore, especially the Christian bookstore, and the top ten selling books, you would have titles that would really lead you to believe that it's this life we ought to be concerned about. For example, a few titles I just jotted down: Your Best Life Now, a best seller right now; Become a Better You; Repositioning Yourself; Living Without Limits; Start Your New Life Now. And it would seem like the Christians, at the least authors are in many ways, are pandering to the questions of what's going on today. And now I don't want you to think that those aren't important but I wouldn't say that they are the most important. The most important is what scripture tends to deal with and it's the question that is central in the text of Luke 10. Our central figure, a lawyer or scribe, gets it right. He asks just point blank. Let me read the text and then we'll go back through and pick it apart little by little. Verse 25 starts the text: And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test saying, "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" There it is; that's our question. And he said to him, "What is written in the law?" How do you read it? And the man turned and answered: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all of your mind and your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus said to him, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live."

Now if you remember the context of this passage is that Jesus is in about the last year of his life. He's heading towards Jerusalem. He's ministering in and around Galilee calling

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people to be his disciples, to come and follow after him. He's probably in Capernaum which was his home base and probably in the synagogue there because there's a give and take in questions and answers and that was typically done in a synagogue setting. The question is asked by a man that the text identifies as a lawyer. Now we learned last week that this is not necessarily someone who practices civil law or criminal law or even a judicial law but rather this is a man who is an expert in the Mosaic law, in the law of the Decalogue, the scriptures of the first five books of the Bible. Moses wrote and handed down the law as well as the pharisaical or man-made laws that were added on top of that—some six hundred and thirteen laws altogether. This man was an expert in that law. He's called a scribe in other passages and you remember scribes are often accompanied by who? The Pharisees. There's the scribes and the Pharisees. And what did the Pharisees often want to do? The Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus or discredit Jesus by using the law. And so they would use the scribes as their legal representation, their counselors in the law to try to do that. And many scholars are saying that's exactly what's going on here because, look, the text says this lawyer or this scribe stood up to put him to the test, the idea that here he is—he's trying to box Jesus into a corner. But I don't necessarily see it that way. We don't see any Pharisees mentioned here in the text. It doesn't say that they weren't; it doesn't mean that they weren't here. It just doesn't say they were here. But normally we see where the scribes are, the Pharisees are. I think this man went out on his own to ask Jesus a personal question. The word test can be used; the idea to box somebody in, to try to trap them. But it's also a generic word that can just mean he's trying to find out the answer, to see if he answers the way he thought. He asked him a personal question. Notice this was the first person, "I". He says: Teacher, which is the Greek word, the didaskalos, which is a term of respect. He said, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Now we need to pick up the story from here because Jesus turns and he says something interesting to him. He turns to him and he answers the question with a question. He says, "What is written in the Law?" And notice that the law is capitalized. That will become important in a moment. Why do you think he would say that to this man who was an expert in the law. Don't you think this is kind of odd that here is an expert in the law of Judaism and Jesus is asking him, well, what does the law say? He was a Jew; he's living the law. Maybe that's the key. Maybe within that concept lies the key of why Jesus asked this question. Is it possible this man who knew the law so well was starting to doubt whether the law was enough? Remember, he is asking the question, "How do I inherit eternal life?" The law tells you how to inherit eternal life—you keep the law. Perhaps, this man was starting to wonder if the law was enough. Jesus reading into this situation, turns it on him and asks him about the law. You need to understand something about what this man was experiencing and not only what he was experiencing but what many Jews even today experience. Many modern Jews who are very traditional in their beliefs seek to keep the law.

There's really not much of a difference between what Jews lived out two thousand years ago as to what they do today other than the temple no longer exists. But they still are concerned about the Sabbath laws. They're still concerned about ceremonies. They're still

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concerned about rituals. They're still concerned about keeping every aspect of the law even the physical law, the idea of circumcision. They're very concerned about these kinds of aspects today as much as they were two thousand years ago.

In fact, when I was travelling through the Holy Lands, I thought it was interesting we travelled over the Sabbath; in Hebrew, it's called the Shabbot. And we stayed in what was called, Shabbot Hotels. A Shabbot Hotel just means that it was identified that it was sensitive to the Sabbath, it's dietary laws but also other laws. For example, during the Sabbath, we were forced to ride on a Shabbot or Sabbath elevator which basically was an elevator that just controlled itself. You walked on; you didn't have to touch any buttons. In fact, you weren't supposed to touch any buttons. The door closed, it went up to the next level; the door opened, let you off, the door closed and would go on up. You say, where did that come from? Well, in the Old Testament, part of the law for keeping for Sabbath was not to create a fire or to create a spark. That's so they would not be doing any work on that particular day, something that was just inbred into their culture that you take time to rest during the Sabbath and you're not supposed to travel any particular distance. You're not supposed to do certain kind of work. You had to prepare your food beforehand. And so modern day Jews have taken this to mean, well, we can't do anything that would create something that would be similar to a fire or a spark and if we push a button on an elevator that creates an electric spark, thereby, we've broken the Sabbath law. And so they would look for hotels that had Shabbot elevators if they were going to stay in them. They were very concerned about keeping the law. You say, why is it that Jesus was saying, well, "What is written in the Law?" I need to answer for you what the law is because the man is about ready to give a clear answer. I want you to hold your place in Luke; we're going to flip right back to it but I want you to hold your place there and come to the Old Testament to the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy, chapter 6. Here we read, "What is the Law?" You see, when you read about the law in scripture, it can mean one of three things or a combined of three things. It could mean the totality of the law, the idea of the first five books of the Bible. It could mean the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments or it could mean the shama which was the summation of the entire Law. When Jesus said, "What is the Law?", he was asking how do you understand the shama? The shama is found here in Deuteronomy 6:4 and it reads: Here, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One. That's the beginning.

Now here is the compendium of all of God's law. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. Now flip back to Luke. Jesus says, "What is written in the Law?" How do you read it or another way of saying it, how do you recite it? Without a hesitation, without a moment of even having to think about it, rhyme and meter exactly, he answers: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind and, then he adds, Leviticus 18:4: And you should love your neighbor as yourself. He says the Great Commandment. He says, the shama. He reads it; he recites it exactly like he had learned it. He knew that this was the culmination of the law; that if I was to be justified by the law, then I must love the

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Lord my God with all my heart all the time. I must love the Lord my God with all my mind all the time, all my soul all the time, all the strength all the time. I am wondering if Jesus took him here because it would register something in this man's mind of thinking, I can't do that. I can't keep the law as written. I can't keep the Ten Commandments as written. I can't even keep the shama, the Law, as it's displayed in Deuteronomy 6. I can't love the Lord my God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind all the time. And I think he knew that and I think Jesus knew he knew that because every Jew also knows something else about Deuteronomy. It's the idea that you cannot, no matter as much as you would like, would be able to keep the law but they try; they try. In that same passage in Deuteronomy 6, let me just read it for you. Then I'm going to show you some pictures. In Deuteronomy 6 in continuation, he says: And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children; you shall talk of them when you sit in your home and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise. And listen, you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be the frontlets between your eyes. What does that mean?

When I was Jerusalem, I saw some esthetic Jews. These are Jews who kept the Law as much as they could; very traditional Jews. And they would take that passage quite literally. Let me show you some pictures of when we were at the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall as it's described. This is where traditional Jews today go to say their prayers, to say the shama twice a day, to say other prayers and read scriptures. Why do they go to this particular wall as an example? Well, this is the western wall of where the temple used to be. The temple no longer exists. This is as close as they can get to where the Temple Mount used to be. Why do they have to go to the western wall? It's because sixty feet up from this wall is where the Temple was once placed but it was destroyed in 70 A.D. and then taken over by the Muslims and today the church, the Dome of the Rock, is there. It's that big church with the gold-looking dome. That's one of three Muslim holy sites and, if you're Jewish, you cannot go there. And so as close as they can get is to that wall and so they go there and they pray. Now let's go through a couple other pictures. And here...let's switch to the next picture, Phil. Here is a gentleman that I took a shot of. You notice the black leather around his arm. See that little box that's on his head. Do you know what's in that box? Deuteronomy 6:4-9. He's got the leather banding on. Do you know what's on that leather band? Deuteronomy 6:4-9. He's bound it to his arm trying to keep the law. He's put it between his eyes, like frontals on his face, trying to keep the law. Let's show the next shot. Here's another young man. They are steeped in this—young in the faith, they must keep the law, all aspects of the law to appease and to please God. Here's a couple of other shots, just random shots, of many people coming day in and day out. This man here in Luke would have been just as ardent in following the law. And he also would have known something else. In Deuteronomy, chapter 27, he would have known no matter how hard he attempted to keep the law, he couldn't, therefore, he was cursed. Verse 26 said: Cursed be anyone who does not confirm or live by the words of this law by doing them. I think what was going on is somewhere inside of him, he knew the law was not enough and Jesus was bringing him right to that place. He was bringing him to the end of

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himself. It's as if Jesus was turning him to the law, saying, do you want to be justified by the law? You want to be justified before My Father? Have eternal life? Then keep the whole law; keep the shama. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. He would have known that it would have registered in his mind, I can't do that. I can't live up to that standard. Isn't this an interesting way to evangelize somebody? Because, if you think about it? If someone came to you and they said, so what does it mean? How do I have eternal life? Would you take them here? Would you take them to the law? No, we would start by saying, you know, you need to have faith in Jesus Christ and yada, yada. But Jesus is a master of seeing man's heart. And he looks into this man's heart and he sees that this man is trying to justify himself by doing what he thinks the law states.

What's the problem with the law? No matter how much you and I want to keep it, we can't keep it. Right? It's just something in our nature. It's something about the depravity of our nature. We move towards sin rather than obedience. And I have firsthand knowledge of that because I have a four-year old little boy who breaks the law all the time. Just last night, he broke the law. It was clear. He was doing something here at the church that he knows that he wasn't supposed to do. And we've talked about this before. So I got him in my office and I said, "Jack, look at me in the eyes." And so he kind of looked at me; he had his eyes like this the whole time. I said, "Jack, look at me in the eyes." And finally, I said, "Jack, look at me in the eyes!" And so he got his eyes real big and leaned into me, put his forehead against my forehead. Now we're like eye to eye. Now I'm trying not to laugh. But I'm backing out and I say, "Jack, you know the rules." He knows the rules. He knows the rules inside and out. What is human nature? When you tell someone not to do something, what do they do? They go and do it, right? It's in us. So then what is the law? What good is the law? If God knew we couldn't do it and we were going to break it. In fact, if there is something inside us that says we want to break it, then what's the good of the law?

Well, I want to pull out of our story of Luke; I'm going to come back to it. But let me give you a quick primer on the law. I get this question asked just about all the time. In fact, I had a woman come down just last week and stop me and ask, "What's the purpose of the law?" Let me just give you three, very quick things to help you understand the purpose of the law. It's out of actually the New Testament in the Book of Romans. I want to have you turn to Romans, chapter 3 and we're going to discover number one that the law holds me accountable to God. The law, because of the law, because I know the law, it holds me accountable to God. Romans, chapter 3, verse 19. I love the fact that I hear you turn in your Bibles. The folks in the 9:30 service don't bring their Bibles. I don't know if they're saved or not!! But they come...I have to like beg them to bring their Bibles so it's just refreshing to hear you're studying the Word. Alright, don't tell them that, by the way! Romans 3:19: Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped. I'll talk to you about that in a moment. And the whole world may be held accountable to God. Why are we held accountable to God?

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Because of the law; we know the law. The law stops our mouth. What's that mean? It means we could never stand before God and say, yea, but God which is a typical child-thing to do, yea but, yea but God I've been so good through my life. The law stops our mouths. Why? Because the law tells us we haven't been good throughout our lives, that we've broken the law. That there's nothing that we can do to maintain the standard of righteousness that the law sets, therefore, we're now held accountable to God for our actions.

The second thing is that it brings me to the knowledge of my sin. And you don't have to go very far for this. This is just Romans 3:20: For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight since through the law comes the knowledge of sin. Because of the law, you have knowledge of sin. In fact, you might want to write down if you're taking notes, specific knowledge. In other words, you have knowledge of specific sins. Romans, chapter 7, verse 7, Paul says: What then shall we say? That the law is sin; by no means, yet if it had not been for the law, listen, I would not have known sin. I would have not have known. For example, he's saying, what it is to covet if the law had said you shall not covet. And he goes on from there. You see what the law does? The law teaches us about specific sins, what we should and should not do. And so it brings me to the knowledge of my personal sin. But it does something else. It doesn't just leave us hanging there. It brings us to the end of ourselves. It brings us wanting more. It tells us that this can't be the way. There's got to be another way; there's got to be a better way.

Number three: It leads me to salvation through faith in Christ. It leads me to salvation through faith in Christ. I'm going to leave Romans and I going take you to Galatians, chapter 2 to show you this. Galatians, chapter 2, verse 16. Actually, let's just back up and start with verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet, verse 16, we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. Do you hear what it just said? That we are not justified by the works of the law, by keeping the whole law, the Decalogue or the shama. We are not justified by the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ, not by works of the law because by works of the law, no one will be what? Justified. You can't get there from here is what the text is saying. You will not be sure of your eternal life if it is based in the law. Continue on with me to Galatians 3, verse 24. You say, OK, well, then why the law? So then, the law was our guardian or our guide or our tutor or our schoolmaster or our teacher. The law was our guide, our teacher until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith. What does the law do? The law propels you to something other than the law. Because all of us know on the inside, we can't keep the law. So it's propelling us to something else; that something else is faith. Can I just show you something very exciting in Romans, chapter 10. Romans 10, verse 4, if you can't get there fast enough, just listen: For Christ, verse 4, chapter, 10: For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. You say, what does that mean? Listen to me. The law ends at Christ. That's what that means. It means all the requirements of the law are fulfilled in Christ. Now, you and I have our relationship with

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God not based in us keeping the law but in our faith of one who kept the law, Jesus Christ. You see, anything outside of grace, by faith in Jesus Christ, is like the law. So if you add anything to grace, you make it law.

Back to Luke. You know where I think Jesus was taking this man. He was taking him to just this point. The problem is, self-pride rose up and shut down the conversation. Don't let that happen to you. Don't let self-pride rise up to say, yes, but I can be good enough because the law tells us we can't. And no matter how hard we try, it will shut our mouth, hold us accountable to God, make us knowledgeable of our sin and, ultimately, leave us wanting for something more. That more is Christ. And so how can we be sure of our eternal security, of our eternal faith, of our eternal life, how can be sure that we will inherit it with God? It's based in faith. We must be people of faith in Christ. You say, what does that mean? What does it mean to have true faith? I told you I was going to give you another cliffhanger. You've got to come back next week for that. I just had to get you here, you understand?

But before you pack up and stop listening to me. I want you to hear this. This is the last thing. Whatever you do, do not make the mistake that you already know the answer to our question. Don't make the assumption that you know what it means to be a person of faith. Because if you do, you fall into the exact same category as this man in Luke 10 who knew, who thought he had it all sewn up because he could answer rhyme and meter exactly what Jesus wanted to hear. He thought he was right. The last thing you want to do is leave this three-part series thinking I've got the answer at part 2; I don't need part 3. Come back. We are going to discuss what does it truly mean to be a person of faith...next week.