

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*Inheriting Eternal Life.*"

On Sunday mornings we're working our way through Luke's Gospel verse-by-verse and we find ourselves at **Luke 10:25**. Go ahead and take a look...

Luke 10:25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

I didn't have much of an introduction for you, b/c there's no background for this exchange! More than likely Jesus was teaching in a public setting and this lawyer spoke up and asked this question.

This account has a few similarities w/ the Rich Young Ruler...

Mark 10:17 [The Rich Young Ruler] ran up and knelt before [Jesus] and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The similarity between the lawyer and the Rich Young Ruler is they both asked the same, very good question: "**What must I do to inherit eternal life?**"

The difference between them is they had completely different motives:

- For any of the Rich Young Ruler's faults, it said he **knelt before** Jesus. He asked humbly and sincerely. He wanted to learn.
- The lawyer – on the other hand – asked very insincerely. The verse says he wanted to **put [Jesus] to the test**. He wanted to trap Him. He wanted to make Him look bad in front of everyone present.

If you have a study bible it probably says **lawyers** were scribes. That's true, but lawyers were more than that, which is why some people are identified as scribes and others are identified as lawyers:

- Scribes copied the Law. Not to minimize that, but they didn't necessarily study the Law.
- Lawyers studied the Law for a living. Even priests and Levites didn't know the Law as well as them, b/c they had to spend most of their time performing sacrifices and caring for the temple.

The reason I emphasize this is if there's anyone who could contend w/ Jesus in a debate, it would be a **lawyer**.

But as we'll see Jesus responded as brilliantly and effortlessly to the lawyer as He did w/ everyone else...

Luke 10:26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"

If anyone would know the answer to this question it would be a lawyer!

Notice Jesus could've responded by presenting His own thoughts - and those thoughts would've been a truthful answer - but instead, He pointed to Scripture.

This sets a good example for us and brings us to Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: RESPOND TO PEOPLE BY DIRECTING THEM TO SCRIPTURE.

When people ask you questions, I would encourage you to respond by following the same two steps Jesus took:

1. First, ask people what God's Word says. Most people probably won't have the Bible memorized like this man, so it's good if you have a Bible w/ you and you can open it and ask the person to read a few verses.
2. Then, ask the person what they think the verses are saying.

There are three reasons I think this is such a great approach...

First, it's the approach Jesus took. If this was the only reason it would be good enough. You can't improve on what Jesus did.

Second, this prevents you from saying, "I think..." or "I believe..." If you begin w/ these words, what is the other person going to say?

- "Well, I believe..."
- Or "That's just your opinion."

Then it becomes a debate between personal opinions and speculations.

The third reason I appreciate this approach is it can save a LOT of time, energy, and frustration...

Titus 3:9 Avoid foolish controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Jesus obeyed this verse!

At the outset He eliminated fruitless arguments and debates that could've developed if it sounded like He was simply presenting His own opinions and speculations.

Let me give you some examples of how this could work...

The sinfulness of homosexuality is debated by many people. Tragically, it's even debated by some people who call themselves Christians. If you meet people who defend homosexuality:

1. First, ask them to read the second half of Romans 1.
2. Then say, "What do you think these verses are saying about homosexuality?"

If people can look at those verses and say, "I don't think God's Word forbids homosexuality," what could you possibly say that would cause the person to think otherwise? It's clear they rejected God's Word. If that isn't authoritative enough for them, do you really think your opinion is going to convince them?

Here's another example...

Let's say someone is considering going into debt. You ask them to read:

- **Pro 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.**
- **Rom 13:8a Owe no one anything, except to love each other.**

Then you say, "Do you think God's Word permits debt?" If people read these verses and feel comfortable going into debt, what are you going to be able to say to make them think otherwise?

Not much!

We can also apply this to our parenting...

Let's say your child gets in a fight w/ another child...imagine that!

- You tell your child, "You need to forgive!"
- But your child says, "I don't want to forgive...and I don't need to!"

At this point, you can:

- Argue w/ your child about how they need to forgive.
- Or have your child read the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant in **Matt 18**, so they become convicted...and start sobbing over the ugliness of their heart...and you sob w/ them b/c you know your heart is just as ugly.

The last person you need to respond to w/ Scripture is...yourself!

Paul Tripp said, *"No one is more influential in your life than you are, because no one talks to you as much as you talk to yourself."*

Think about David. He had full on conversations w/ himself!

Psa 42:5, 42:11, and 43:5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation 6 and my God.

So...

- If you start to tell yourself, "God doesn't love me." You respond w/ **Rom 8:38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.**
- If you start to tell yourself, "I can't handle this temptation." You respond w/ **1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.**
- If you start to tell yourself, "I don't know if I'm forgiven." You respond w/ **Psa 103:12 As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.**

Let me conclude this lesson by saying this...

You can't respond with Scripture to others, your children, or yourself, if...you don't know Scripture!

Now the **lawyer** knew the Law better than anyone else, so he responded quickly and correctly...

Luke 10:27 And he answered, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind** (this is a quote of **Deut 6:5**), and **your neighbor as yourself** (this is a quote of **Lev 19:18**).”

Every faithful Jew would quote **Deut 6:5** twice per day.

Notice the repetition of the word **all**: **all your heart...all your soul...all your strength...all your mind**:

- The idea is you love God w/ every part of your being.
- It's surprising the lawyer could quote this and think he obeyed it. It shows how prideful he was...and how prideful we can be.

The lawyer's answer is a summary of the Law, b/c if you obey these two commands you obey the whole Law. Listen to Jesus make this point...

Matt 22:37 [Jesus] said, “**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS DEPEND ALL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.**”

If you obey these two commands then you obey the whole Law, b/c every command hangs from these two.

If you think of the Ten Commandments, if you love God perfectly you'll obey the first four:

1. You won't have any other gods.
2. You won't make any idols.
3. You won't take God's name in vain.
4. You'll keep the Sabbath rest...which just as a note we keep through resting in Christ.

If you love your neighbor perfectly you'll obey commands 5 through 10:

5. You'll honor your father and mother.
6. You won't murder.
7. You won't commit adultery.
8. You won't steal.
9. You won't give false testimony against your neighbor.
10. You won't covet.

BUT...

We know we can't inherit eternal life by following the Law – or keeping the Ten Commandments – and so that's why in response, Jesus is going to say:

- *Wrong!*
- *Nice try...but no!*
- *Guess again!*

Prepare to be surprised by Jesus' response...

Luke 10:28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

We wouldn't expect Jesus to say this! We would expect Him to say, “No, you must repent and believe in Me to inherit eternal life.”

Earlier I mentioned the Rich Young Ruler and Jesus responded the same way to him...

Matt 19:17 [Jesus] said, “If you would enter life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS.”

So the question is, why did Jesus respond this way to them?

The truth is, He was simply answering their question!

- **Luke 10:25** The lawyer asked, “Teacher, what SHALL I DO to inherit eternal life?”
- **Mark 10:17** The Rich Young Ruler asked, “What MUST I DO to inherit eternal life?”

Since:

- They thought people were saved by doing, they simply wanted to know what exactly to do.
- They thought people were saved by works, so they wanted to know what those works are.

If they would've asked “**HOW can I inherit eternal life?**” versus “**What MUST I DO to inherit eternal life?**” maybe Jesus would've answered differently.

The important word is **do**. They asked what to DO to **inherit eternal life** and Jesus told them!

Now the next obvious question is...

Even if Jesus was simply answering their question:

- Why would He answer them this way?
- How could He tell them they're saved by works, or by doing?

It's almost like Jesus forget the Gospel?

Jesus doesn't lie. He told them the truth...and His response shows us we can be saved by works...and this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE BY EITHER (PART I) OBEYING THE LAW PERFECTLY.

Some years ago I was in a conversation with Dave Zumstein, and he made the point that the Law reveals God's righteous standard. If you keep it perfectly, you will have the righteousness necessary to enter heaven. Initially I was skeptical – like I am w/ most things Dave says – but since then I've noticed places in Scripture supporting what he said. These verses are one of those instances.

Jesus is making the point that if you obey the Law perfectly, you will inherit eternal life. The lawyer insisted on getting to heaven on the basis of works – or on the basis of doing – and this is the way to do it: obey the Law perfectly.

While you probably know the lawyer quoted the Law when he answered Jesus, you might not know that Jesus also quoted the Law when He responded to the lawyer. In other words:

- When the lawyer said, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, mind, and your neighbor as yourself”** he was quoting the Law.
- When Jesus said, **“Do this, and you will live”** He was also quoting the Law back to the lawyer.

The words, **“You will live,”** were frequently attached to OT verses associated w/ obeying God's commands. Here are three examples:

1. **Deut 4:1a O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, THAT YOU MAY LIVE.**
2. **Neh 9:29b If a person [obeys your commandments], HE SHALL LIVE BY THEM.**
3. **Eze 18:9 [Whoever] walks in my statutes, and keeps My rules by acting faithfully—he is righteous; HE SHALL SURELY LIVE.**

So the Law said if you obeyed God's commands you'd live, which is to say, you'd inherit eternal life...and so that's what Jesus said to the lawyer.

But I want to show you something else the Law said. Please turn to **Gal 3:10**. You can mark **Luke 10**, b/c we'll come back to it at the end...Romans, Corinthians, Galatians...

Gal 3:10a For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse;

Go ahead and pause right here.

This means **all who rely on the law** to inherit eternal life, **are under a curse**.

Unfortunately, when we hear the word **curse**, we think of something a witch casts on people so bad things happen to them. As a result, we've lost the biblical meaning. Being **under a curse**, means being accursed, or under God's divine wrath. It means damned to hell. There's nothing more serious.

Look at the rest of the verse to see why everyone who tries to keep the law to be saved is accursed...

Gal 3:10b For it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by (or obey) ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, and do them.”

This is a quote of **Deut 27:26**, which means the same Law people try to keep to be saved ALSO says they’re cursed if they don’t keep it perfectly.

If you want to keep the Law to be saved you must keep **all** of it. But none of us can do that, which is why we’re all cursed.

Look at **verse 11...**

Gal 3:11a Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law,

Let’s pause right here...

Justified isn’t a word we commonly use, but it’s one of the most important words in Scripture...so let’s make sure we understand it!

It means, “declared righteous,” and Paul says **it is evident that no one is justified** – or declared righteous – **by the law**, b/c nobody keeps the Law.

So at this point, I know what you’re asking...

You’re asking...

“If I can’t be declared righteous by the Law, is there another way I can be justified, or declared righteous?”

As your pastor it blesses me that you’re asking this...

Since we can’t be justified – or declared righteous – by the Law, God has graciously provided another way for us to be declared righteous, and that is by grace through faith in Christ...and this brings us to the next part of Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE BY EITHER (PART II) JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

Since we can’t be declared righteous by the Law, God had to provide another way apart from the law:

- **Rom 3:21 The righteousness of God has been manifested APART FROM THE LAW...22b through faith in Jesus Christ.**
- **Rom 3:28 For we hold that one is justified by faith APART FROM WORKS OF THE LAW.**

The Gospel is that God takes sinful, wretched people – like us – and justifies us – or declares us righteous – by grace through faith in His Son.

So follow me for a moment...

Jesus told the lawyer, **“Do THIS and you will live.”**

- What is **“this”**?
- The two commands the lawyer quoted: **love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.**

So this is one of the ways you can live: by obeying these verses perfectly!

Who wants to do this? Raise your hand!

The other way you can live is shown in the rest of **verse 11...**

Gal 3:11b for “The righteous shall live by faith.”

This is a quote of **Hab 2:4**, and it shows the other way to live: by grace through faith.

Look at the next verse...

Gal 3:12a But the law is not of faith,

Regarding salvation, **law** and **faith**, are mutually exclusive:

- You’re either justified by faith.
- Or you’re trying to be justified by the law...and I have to say “trying” b/c you can’t do it

And if you want to try to be justified by the Law look what Paul says in the rest of **verse 12...**

Gal 3:12b rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”

This is a quote of **Lev 18:5**.

“Them” refers to **all things written in the Law** from **verse 10**.

- Paul said the same thing in **Rom 10:5** **Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments SHALL LIVE BY THEM.**
- In other words, if you want to be justified by the Law, you have to **live by** it, b/c you have to obey it perfectly!

And this is what Jesus said to the lawyer...

If you write in your Bible, you can circle the words **live by them** words and write, **“Luke 10:28.”**
This is the same thing Jesus told the lawyer: **“Do this and you will live.”**

This still leaves us w/ a problem...

We saw earlier that if you disobey the Law you're **under a curse**. So the question is:

- *What about that curse?*
- *How can we be justified by faith, AND cursed?*
- *Is there any way to have the curse removed?*

Look at **verse 13**...

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”—

This is a quote of **Deut 21:23**.

The same law that said there's a curse on anyone who doesn't obey the Law perfectly, also says people are cursed if they hang on a tree.

This is wonderful, and I hope you don't miss the significance of it...

This was written 1,500 years before Jesus was born, looking forward to His crucifixion when He would take the curse that's on us b/c we're Lawbreakers.

Sadly, many Jews reject Jesus b/c of this verse:

- They say, *“How could our Messiah be cursed by God?”*
- They SHOULD say, *“I have disobeyed the Law and am **under a curse**. How can I have it removed?”*
- Then they could look to Christ in faith!

Now turn back to **Luke 10**, b/c now we have the understanding necessary to interpret Jesus' words correctly...

Luke 10:28 And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

Was Jesus really telling this man – or anyone for that matter – to keep the Law to be saved?

No!

If you write in your bible, circle the words **do this, and you will live** and write, *“Devastating.”*

- This was not an encouraging, inspiring, hopeful statement from Jesus.
- This was devastating b/c Jesus was saying if you want to inherit eternal life by works, you have to obey the Law perfectly.

Rom 3:20 By works of the law no human being will be justified (or declared righteous) in [God's] sight, since THROUGH THE LAW COMES KNOWLEDGE OF SIN.

This reveals the point of the Law:

- It's not meant as a way to be saved.
- But it is meant to show us our sinfulness and need for a Savior.

When we look at the Law and see the standard it sets, we see how far short we fall.

This is why when everyone looks at the Law falls into one of two categories...

One category is reasonable people who – if they have even a hint of humility – say:

- *“Whoa, I'm not even close to doing that. I can't keep the Law to be saved.”*
- Then they fall on their face and call out to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.
- They seek to be justified – or declared righteous – by grace through faith.

The second category of people are unreasonable and prideful. They look at the Law and say, *“Okay, I can do that. I can be justified by obeying it.”*

Do you want to see someone in this category? Look at **verse 29**...

Luke 10:29 But he, **DESIRING TO JUSTIFY HIMSELF**, said to Jesus, **“And who is my neighbor?”**

To be fair, I think the lawyer knew he couldn't keep the standard the Law set...which makes him look humble. But then, instead of submitting to that standard, he became argumentative...which reveals his pride:

- He tried to lower the bar.
- He tried to make it more manageable by limiting who his neighbor might be.

We'll focus on that in our next sermon.

For now, I want you to notice the words **desiring to justify himself**...and this brings us to Lesson 3...

LESSON 3: YOU'RE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, OR YOU MUST JUSTIFY SELF.

If you won't submit to God's plan for justification by faith then you must justify self.

The lawyer might be the best picture of this in all of Scripture, b/c it actually says he **desired to justify himself!**

There are two ways to read this man's words...

There's the surface, physical reading that he wanted to justify himself in the sense of arguing w/ Jesus...and that's true!

But there's also the deeper, spiritual reading that he wanted to justify himself by works:

- He thought he was a good person.
- And he thought he was going to convince Jesus of that fact.

The problem w/ justification by works is it's an impossibility.

Listen to this verse...

Matt 5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness EXCEEDS THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why did Jesus say this?

The religious leaders were the picture of self-imposed righteousness:

- Everyone knew they couldn't be more righteous than them.
- When Jesus said this everyone would've said, "There's no way we can **exceed the righteousness** of these men."

This is why it's necessary to follow the example of – all people – a tax collector...

Luke 18:13 The tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'

Then listen to what Jesus said...

Luke 18:14a I tell you, THIS MAN WENT DOWN TO HIS HOUSE JUSTIFIED, rather than the other.

This is how to be **justified** – or declared righteous – in God's sight. Confess your sins and cry out to God for mercy.

If you have any questions about anything I've shared this morning, Pastor Doug and I will be up front after service and we would consider it a privilege to have the opportunity to speak w/ you.

Let's pray.