

Who Then Can Be Saved?

Impossible with men, but not with God.

Mark 10:13-31

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Happy Mother's Day!

"Never could it be possible for any man to estimate what he owes to a godly mother... the Lord bestowed on me in making me the son of one who prayed for me, and prayed with me." — Charles Spurgeon

¹³ And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, *"Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."* ¹⁵ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." ¹⁶ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. ¹⁷ And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, *"Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone."* ¹⁹ You know the commandments: *'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'*" ²⁰ And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." ²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, *"You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."* ²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, *"How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"* ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, *"Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* ²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, *"With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."* ²⁸ Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." ²⁹ Jesus said, *"Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life."* ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

What would you say about someone who is very wealthy, who is well respected, follows

the law and yet confesses he lacks something in life?
Jesus is going to help us understand.

Here is a man who is called a ruler (Luke 18:18). Perhaps the ruler of a local synagogue. He is extremely rich. He is morally upright. He knows the commandments of God and follows them. He has the good stuff and lives the good life. Yet he lacks something by his own admission. What does this man want?

He wants eternal life. He wants heaven. He wants to be where God is after he dies. Which implies - He does not want to go to eternal fire. He does not want to go where reprobates, the morally degenerate, and the unrighteous go: into damnation. This man is too righteous and better than those kinds of folk. He is above all of them. This man has all the credentials to prove he is better than others. He serves his local synagogue. He is well respected. He knows his boundaries. He is wealthy. And yet there is something that evades him. He can't figure it out. He has a huge blind spot only Jesus can see. Evidently, this man knew something about Jesus. That Jesus was a good teacher. A trustworthy rabbi. So, what does he do?

He ran and knelt before Jesus. This is very uncharacteristic of a rich, respected man in those days. Only the servants, the sick, the poor would kneel before a rabbi. This man is desperate!

And, on his knees, he asks Jesus only one question. "*Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*" The parallel passage in the Gospel of Luke has the same question. But in the Gospel of Matthew, we see a little variation of the question, "*Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?*" Matthew 19:16

This man wants to do something to have eternal life. He surely has the resources to do a good deed. Maybe give to the local community. Feed the poor and sick. Write a check. Good deeds were surely a part of Judaism. It is very likely this man understood the demands of the law of God. He knew what Leviticus 20:26 said, "*You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy.*" God demands *perfection* to have eternal life. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:48, "you must be perfect!" Jesus points him to the commandments to test him.

Verses 18 through 20.

¹⁸ And Jesus said to him, “*Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.*” ¹⁹ *You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’”* ²⁰ And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”

We see two observations and a response.

First observation: Jesus is not saying he is not good. Jesus is the only standard of good. Jesus asks this man if he knew who is good.

Second observation: Jesus tells him what he already knows. The phrase “you know the commandments” is in perfect tense. It should read like this “You *have known* the commandments” of God. You have attended the synagogue. You are the ruler or the manager of the synagogue. You are familiar with the Law. Have you kept the Law?

What was his response?

“*Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.*” Notice he doesn’t say *good* teacher anymore.

- Jesus reminds this man about the ten Commandments beginning with the fifth. He had kept all those from his youth. Youth is simply when he came of age. Age twelve or thirteen.

This man thought that keeping some commandments was enough. Some of them were taught that way: Keeping some commandments meant keeping the whole Law.

He did not keep the most important commandment. Which is what? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul and mind.

He is so blind to his violation of the major commandment.

He doesn’t know that a failure to keep one law is guilty of violating the whole law.

James chapter two tells us:

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. James 2:10-11.

So what does he do?

Psalms 36:2 “For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated”

The law of God is like a finely polished glass mirror. You jab a small portion of the glass what happens? The whole thing shatters. The law cannot save you. The law shows your sin. The law brings wrath.

So Jesus hears the man’s reply. Jesus knows the man’s heart and mind.

Verse 21 through 22.

²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “*You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.*”²² Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Jesus says, “You lack one thing!”

- You can have all the money in the world and not have eternal life.
- You can have the best job in the world and not have eternal life.
- You can have all the respect in the world and not have eternal life.
- You can follow rules, commandments and laws and not have eternal life.
- You can spend your whole life doing good deeds and still not have eternal life.

This man was a Jew. He had the heritage. He has wealth. He followed the commandments of God and yet lacked eternal life.

How do you have eternal life? By faith in Jesus Christ alone!

“*God loved the world in this way: that he sent His Only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*”. John 3:16

Faith in Jesus Christ is *preceded* by repentance, self-denial and *followed* by obedience to Jesus Christ.

This rich man lacked ONE thing. He lacked love for God. His mind knew the commandments of God but his heart was far from God.

Why? Because his love for his wealth was *greater* than his love for God. Your heart is where your treasure is.

How great was his love for his wealth?

His love for his wealth was so great that he could not conceive a life without his wealth.

How do we know?

Because when Jesus told him to Go, Sell, Give, Come and Follow Me, what did he do?

He was sorrowful. He was grieved. He was disheartened.

He turned his back on Jesus and went away!

Why? The thought of giving up his wealth *pained* him.

God loves a cheerful giver. Does giving to your local church sadden you? Do you put conditions before you give?

Jesus taught that you cannot serve God and mammon. *“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”* Matthew 6:24

Paul writes to Timothy *“As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. ¹⁸ They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, ¹⁹ thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.”* ¹ Timothy 6:17-19

So, this man walked away from Jesus with a sad heart. But Jesus has something to teach his disciples.

Verses 22 through 24.

²³ And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, *“How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!”* ²⁴ And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, *“Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”*

The rich man could have paid up if there was a price to eternal life. But no amount of money buy eternal life. Psalm 49:7-8.

Jesus tells the disciples that it is difficult for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God. How difficult? You could have a camel pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man be saved. Someone observed that some evangelical churches have made some very big needles and very small camels. A Gospel that demands no repentance prior to putting faith in Jesus and no obedience after saving faith is no Gospel!

Jesus says it is difficult to enter the kingdom of God.

So, if it is difficult for the rich man to be saved, who followed the commandments, had the resources to do good works, what about those who can do neither?

Look at verse 27.

²⁶ And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, *“Then who can be saved?”* ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, *“With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”*

- The disciples are shocked. They’re so flustered and they asked the inevitable question – “who then can be saved?” Being saved is difficult and impossible. How should we

understand the word *saved*? The word *saved* has at least two parts to it. Saved *from* and saved *into*.

- You are saved *from* the penalty of sin, saved *from* the judgment of God, *from* eternal damnation. Think about unending days of regret, pain, misery and hopelessness. And you are saved *into* eternal life. Think about an eternal state of bliss, sinlessness, an ever increasing joy in the brightness and presence of God. To be saved is to be not condemned. To be saved is to be forgiven.
- You are saved not by self-righteousness but saved by the imputed righteousness of Christ. You are saved *from* the power of sin and saved *into* receiving the power of resurrection. You are saved *from* trying to enter the kingdom of God, by good works, and saved *into* the kingdom of God by grace through faith alone. You are saved *from* the domain of darkness and saved *into* the kingdom of God.
- What follows after being saved? You become an exclusive follower of Jesus Christ!
- So, Jesus tells his disciples - no one can be saved by their own merit. Your good works or your power of volition cannot save you. Jesus makes a very declarative statement. With man it (being saved) is impossible. But with God, all things are possible!

And Peter hears all this and wants some assurance.

Verse 28.

²⁸ Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.”

Peter turns to Jesus and asks, “we have turned to you and have followed you. What about us?”. This is such a great question by Peter.

Do you know why? Because it presupposes who does the calling.

Peter did not follow Jesus by himself. Jesus called Peter first.

Jesus tells his disciples that extraordinary blessings follow self-denial for Jesus and the Gospel.

Verses 29 through 31.

²⁹ Jesus said, “*Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,³⁰ who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.* ³¹ *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*”

Remember Jesus calling Peter, Andrew, James and John in Mark 1?

“Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, “Follow me,

and I will make you become fishers of men.”¹⁸ And immediately they left their nets and followed him.” Mark 1:16-18.

The same Jesus who called Peter lived a sinless life, died and rose again and is seated at the right hand of the father. You and I are called to Christ through the invitation of the Gospel.

Jesus said, *“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.”* Mark 8:35.

Jesus promises much blessing for those who follow him, who give their lives for the sake of Gospel. Along with blessing may come trails, tribulations and even persecution. But in the end eternal life.

Who then can be saved?

Jesus Saves!

“Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it” Mark 10:14

----- Discipleship Questions -----

MESSAGE SUMMARY: Who Then Can Be Saved?. Mark 10:13-31

HEAD: These questions help you examine the truth of God's Word.

1. What was keeping the rich man from being saved, entering the kingdom of God or having eternal life? What part do moral uprightness, good works play prior to being saved?
2. HEART: These questions help you wrestle with what you believe.
 - Why was this man so sad when Jesus told to him to give away his wealth before following Jesus? In what way can your heart and soul be attached to material things?
 - What is God convicting you of and to believe in light of this message?

HANDS/HABITS: These questions help you bring the truth into your everyday life and develop behaviors that change your habits.

3. HEART For personal reflection: How assured are you that you are saved? Did you see the need for repentance prior to trusting Jesus and obedience following faith in Jesus?