

DISCIPLESHIP LESSONS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

Foreword by D. W. Krow

Both the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter was very explicit that before the close of this present evil age false teachers would contradict and secretly introduce false teaching by denying the plain teachings of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (See 2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 6:3-4).

I don't know how many times I have heard Christians try to explain away Jesus words by extreme dispensationalism, saying he was under the law, or placing his words under the Old Covenant, etc. Such thinking has damaged the Christian witness, the Christian faith, and brought endless error and falsehood to the people of God. "If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing (1 Timothy 6:3-4, NASV). With this in mind I feel compelled to bring people back to the foundation of the Christian faith – the Person, words, and works of our Lord Jesus.

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READ EACH LESSON, DISCUSS EACH VERSE AND TRANSLATION ALONG WITH THE “ADDITIONAL INFORMATION” AND “QUESTIONS.”

(Additional Translations may be read also, use them as you would a commentary to help gain understanding).

Lesson 1

JESUS COMMISSIONS PAUL TO PREACH

ACTS 26:9-20

ACTS CHAPTER 26

VERSES 9-12

(PAUL SPEAKING TO KING AGRIPPA): **[9] I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. [10] Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. [11] And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities. [12] Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, (KJV)**

[9] I once thought that I should do everything I could to oppose Jesus from Nazareth. **[10]** And that is what I did in Jerusalem. The leading priests gave me the power to put many of God's people in jail, and when they were being killed, I agreed it was a good thing. **[11]** Many times I had them whipped in the synagogues to try to get them to curse Christ and give up their faith. I was so violently opposed to them that I even hounded them in distant cities of foreign lands. **[12]** On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. (CEV, NCV, NLT, NIV)

Additional Information: Paul gives three accounts of his conversion (Acts 9:1-18; Acts 22:3-16; Acts 26:9-20).

1. In what ways did Saul oppose Jesus from Nazareth? Look at verses 10 & 11.

ACTS CHAPTER 26

VERSES 13-15

(PAUL SPEAKING TO KING AGRIPPA) **[13] At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. [14] And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, (JESUS SPEAKING TO SAUL, LATER CALLED PAUL) Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. [15] And I (PAUL) said, Who art thou, Lord? And he (JESUS) said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. (KJV)**

[13] Right in the middle of the day a blaze of light, light outshining the sun, poured out of the sky on me and my companions. Oh, King (Agrippa), it was so bright! **[14]** We all fell to the ground. Then I heard a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew language, saying 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? You are only hurting yourself by fighting me.' (*The King James Version says, "It is hard for thee to kick*

against the pricks," actually a goad, a stick with a pointed end for driving cattle). [15] I said, "Tell me, Lord, who you are"; and the Lord replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." (TM, NCV, NEB)

2. What 3 things happened to Saul in verses 13 & 14?
3. The Lord was revealed to Saul as being _____. v.15

ACTS CHAPTER 26 VERSES 16-18

(JESUS SPEAKING TO PAUL) **[16] But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; [17] Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, [18] To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (KJV)**

[16] "Now stand up! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and my witness. You are to tell the world about this experience and about other times I will appear to you." **[17]** The Lord also said, "I will protect you from the Jews and from the Gentiles that I am sending you to. **[18]** You are to open their eyes to the truth, so they may turn from living in Satan's darkness to living in God's Light, and so they may turn from allowing Satan to rule their lives to allowing God to rule. They must do this in order to receive forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance that will be theirs together with all others who are made holy by believing in Me." (NLT, CEV, LD)

4. Jesus clearly sets out the conditions for receiving His new life. What are these conditions? (verse 18)

Lesson 1 (continued)

PAUL INTERPRETS JESUS COMMISSION AS A MESSAGE OF REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD AND FAITH TOWARD OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS CHAPTER 26 VERSES 19-20

(PAUL SPEAKING TO KING AGRIPPA) **[19] Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: [20] But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (KJV)**

[19] "King Agrippa, after I had this vision from heaven, I obeyed it. **[20]** First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." (NCV, NIV)

Additional Information: Repentance means changing one's mind, so that one's views, values, goals, and ways are changed, and one's whole life is lived differently. The call to repent was part of Jesus' summary of the gospel that was to be taken to all the world (Luke 24:47). Repentance is always set forth as the path to remission of sins and restoration to God's favor, while impenitence is the road to ruin (Luke 13:1-8). The idea that there can be saving faith without repentance, and that one can be justified by embracing Christ as Savior while refusing Him as Lord, is a dangerous error. True faith acknowledges Christ as what He is, our God-appointed king as well as our Savior (New Geneva Study Bible, p. 1756).

5. Paul preached that people must _____. (See verse 20).

ACTS CHAPTER 20 VERSES 20-21

(PAUL SPEAKING) **[20] And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shown you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, [21] Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. (KJV)**

[20] You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. **[21]** I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus. (NIV)

Additional Information: These verses along with several others in the book of Acts (as well as those in the teachings of Jesus – Lk. 13:1-5) make it clear that repentance was an essential ingredient in the preaching of the gospel. Paul makes it clear that part of his essential message to both Jews and Greeks was that they repent and believe. Ironside (*Except Ye Repent*) emphasizes that one must repent in his overall attitude toward God in order to have genuine saving faith in Christ. Therefore, both repentance and faith are essential to salvation and inseparable from salvation (Liberty Bible Com., p. 317).

6. Share your insights from Acts 20:20-21 with each other. (Use the translations provided and any other translations of your choice).

Lesson 2 JESUS TAUGHT MEN TO AVOID FUTURE JUDGMENT LUKE 16:19-31

LUKE CHAPTER 16 VERSES 19-21

(JESUS SPEAKING) **[19] There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: [20] And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, [21] And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (KJV)**

[19] There was once a rich man, who habitually dressed in the finest and most expensive clothes of that day, he joyfully lived in luxury and wealth every day, [*it was the American dream fulfilled!*]: **[20]** A poor man who was reduced to begging, named Lazarus, was placed at his gate uncertain about the results. He was diseased and

covered with sores. **[21]** He longed to be fed with the scraps or left over's which was discarded from the rich man's table: besides this the dogs came and licked his sores. (SKJVP)

7. There was once a rich man that daily: a. wore the finest clothes that money could buy. b. ate the best food. c. lived in luxury. d. lived the American dream of wealth and prosperity. e. all of the above. (See verse 19)

8. There was a poor man who was reduced to begging that was named Lazarus: a. he was placed at the rich man's gate so he could beg for food. b. he was in perfect health. c. he was diseased, that is, covered with sores. (See verse 20)

9. Lazarus the beggar was: a. longing for some food. b. hoping for some scraps to eat from the table of the rich man. c. sick with sores. d. all of the above. (See verse 21)

10. Share your thoughts and comments with one another.

LUKE CHAPTER 16 VERSE 22

[22] And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; (KJV)

[22] Finally the beggar died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham in the place of the righteous dead. The rich man also died and was buried. (NLT)

Additional Information: Probably the rich man was glad to get rid of this poor beggar that sat at his gate. He was an eye sore to him and his other rich guest that he partied with. Later the rich man himself died.

The Jewish people thought that heaven would be a banquet that God would give for them. Abraham would be the most important person there, and the guest of honor would sit next to him. (CEV Bible)

11. When the poor beggar died angels came and lifted him from his body to a place of comfort beside Abraham. True or False.

LUKE CHAPTER 16 VERSE 23

The rich man also died, and was buried; [23] And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (KJV)

The rich man also died and was buried, **[23]** and his soul went into hell. There, in torment, he saw Lazarus in the far distance with Abraham. (LB)

12. The rich man had died, his body including his eyes were buried in the ground. Beyond the grave in the spiritual realm the rich man could see (and he didn't need glasses). True or False

13. The rich man had died, his body was buried in the ground. Beyond the grave in the spiritual realm he could feel (he was suffering in torment). True or False

LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 24

[24] And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (KJV)

[24] He called out, 'Father Abraham, mercy! Have mercy! Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water to cool my tongue. I'm in agony in this fire.' (TM)

14. The rich man had died, his body was buried in the ground. Beyond the grave in the spiritual realm he could talk. True or False

15. On the other side of the grave, the rich man cried out for mercy but found none. True or False

LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 25

[25] But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (KJV)

[25] "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that in your lifetime you got the good things and Lazarus the bad things. It's not like that here. Here he's consoled and you're tormented. (TM)

16. The rich man had died, his body was buried in the ground, but he could remember the events of life on earth. True or False

LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 26

[26] And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. (KJV)

[26] Besides, there is a big pit between you and us, so no one can cross over to you, and no one can leave there and come here. (NCV)

17. Abraham said, There is a great gulf separating us. People are stopped at its edge; no one can cross over from you to us, even if he wanted to. True or False

LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSES 27-28

[27] Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: [28] For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. (KJV)

[27] "Please, Father *Abraham*, I beg you," the formerly rich man continued, "send Lazarus to my father's house. **[28]** I have five brothers there, *and they're on the same path I was on*. If Lazarus warns them, they'll choose another path and won't end up here in torment." (TV)

18. The dead rich man had a request for the living on earth. 'Warn my brothers, they are on the same path I was, they must choose another path.' True or False

**LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 29**

[29] Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. (KJV)

[29] "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses' Teachings and the Prophets. Your brothers should listen to them!' (GWT)

19. If people would heed to the Word of God they could avoid the rich mans fate. True or False

**LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 30**

[30] And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. (KJV)

[30] "No, Father Abraham," he said, "*they're already ignoring the law and the prophets.* But if someone came back from the dead, then they'd listen for sure; then they'd change their way of life." (TM)

20. According to verse 30, people could avoid this place of torment if they would only: a. attend church. b. give money to charity. c. repent.

**LUKE CHAPTER 16
VERSE 31**

[31] And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (KJV)

[31] 'If they won't listen to Moses and the prophets,' Abraham replied, 'neither will they listen and be persuaded to change even if someone came back from the dead to warn them.' (LD)

21. People must believe and take heed to the instruction of Scripture. Their life depends on it. True or False

22. Share your thoughts and comments with one another.

Lesson 3
**JESUS TAUGHT - WE ARE ON ONE
OF TWO ROADS**

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 7
VERSES 13-14**

[13] Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: [14] Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (KJV)

[13] "Enter through the narrow gate. The gate is wide and the road is wide that leads to hell, and many people enter through that gate. **[14]** But the gate is small and the road is narrow that leads to true life. Only a few people find that road." (NCV)

23. In Jesus' teaching he speaks of a broad road. It is marked with the highway signs of "all roads lead to God," "Whatever is truth for you is truth," etc. But Jesus says, the true road, the true gate, the true passage is narrow and must be sought after to be found. True or False

24. The word "narrow" in this passage means so narrow that you must enter alone. You will bring no baggage, you will not go in groups, you must enter alone, for this is a decision that must be made by only one individual at a time. True or False

25. In the language that the New Testament was originally written the word ENTER is in the aorist imperative tense. This means that Jesus is asking for a definite and specific action upon those hearing his words. It is a COMMAND, ENTER the strait gate. Jesus is not asking people to admire the gate, or ponder and think about the gate, but to ENTER IT. True or False

26. Jesus' command to ENTER the strait gate is a metaphor that symbolizes Jesus as the only way to God, the only way to forgiveness of your sins. Look up John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 and then discuss.

27. The word "saved" means to make whole, to rescue from the penalties of divine judgment caused by sin. How does Romans 5:9 state this?

28. Jesus said, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction and MANY there be which go in thereat." The word "many" means "a large indefinite number of persons; the masses" while "few" indicates "a very small number." Stop and discuss this statement.

Lesson 4
**JESUS TAUGHT AGAINST
AN EMPTY PROFESSION
Matthew 7:21-23**

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 7
VERSE 21**

[21] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (KJV)

[21] Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven. *Simply calling Me "Lord" when you reach heaven will not be enough. Only those who do the will of My Father who is in heaven will join Me in heaven.* (TV)

29. Some of the people Jesus is talking about are true believers, but not everyone. The words, "Lord, Lord" was a common Jewish substitute title for Jehovah and a profession of faith in Him. For some the claim of "Lord" will be legitimate, for "many" (vv. 22-23) however it will be false. Their lives do not support the claim of their lips. True or False (See Lk. 6:46)

30. Doing the will of the Father is a work, not the works of law, but the works of faith (the evidence of repentance & faith). True or False See Romans 2:7; Acts 26:19-20; James 2:14-26.

31. Entering into the kingdom of heaven, is salvation. True or False See Mark 10:17, 23-30.

32. Jesus is not teaching perfection, but a new direction (doing the will of my Father). This is another way to describe "repentance." A change of mind that leads one to move in a completely new direction (the will of the Father). True or False

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 7
VERSE 22**

[22] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (KJV)

[22] I can see it now — at the Final Judgment thousands strutting up to me and saying, 'Master, we preached the Message, we bashed the demons, our God-sponsored projects (or miracles) had everyone talking.' (TM)

33. The word “many” means “multitudes” will offer their charismatic gifts and public accomplishments for acceptance before God. Will it prevail? Yes or No

**MATTHEW CHAPTER 7
VERSE 23**

[23] And then will I (Jesus) profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (KJV)

[23] “Then I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get out of My presence, you who insist on living as you please instead of obeying God!’ (LD)

[23] And then I will say to them openly (publicly), I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands]. [Ps 6:8.] (AMP)

[23] And do you know what I am going to say? 'You missed the boat. All you did was use me to make yourselves important. You don't impress me one bit. You're out of here.' (TM)

34. It is plain to see why this multitude of people did not enter the kingdom of heaven. They practiced “lawlessness, iniquity.” They bypassed the first foundation of the doctrine of Christ (Heb. 6:1) which is repentance. True or False

35. Share your thoughts and comments with one another.

Lesson 5
JESUS CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP
Luke 14:25-33

**LUKE CHAPTER 14
VERSES 25-26**

[25] And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, [26] If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. (KJV)

[25] A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, **[26]** “if you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison – your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. (NLT)

[25] Many people were traveling with Jesus. He said to them, **[26]** "If you come to me but will not leave your family, you cannot be my follower. You must love me more

than your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, and sisters—even more than your own life! (ETRV)

[25] At this time great crowds of people were traveling along with Jesus. And one day He turned around and said to them, **[26]** “No one can come to me and be my follower unless he cares nothing about his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters. And beside all this, he must care nothing about himself or his own life. (NTIEAE)

36. Jesus messages appealed to the crowds and religious leaders of his day. True or False
Jesus aim was not to gather crowds, but to make true disciples. He never adapted His messages to majority preferences. His messages often seemed designed to discourage the half-hearted. And He himself had stated that the way is narrow (Mt. 7:14). Despite the difficulties of Christ’s messages, the outcasts of society were drawn to Him, while the religious leaders grew more and more upset.

37. (Verse 26) The word “come” means to go, accompany or follow Jesus. The requirement was “hate.” It means nothing less than *to hate, detest, abhor*. Terms that express emotions are sometimes comparative and this must be the case in this instance. In a clash of claims Jesus must be first and everything and everyone else have a lesser claim. In comparison to our love for Jesus, everything else must appear to be hated. True or False

38. Take your concordance and look up the word “Christian(s)” and then look up the word “disciple(s).” You are in for a shock! The word “disciple(s)” is used a total of 273 times, the word “Christian(s)” is used only 3 times (Acts 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16; Acts 11:26). Jesus called was always to make disciples, not Christians (as people use the word in loose terms). True or False (See Matt. 28:19)

40. A unique aspect of New Testament discipleship is that Jesus teaching has force only when there is first a commitment to his person. Following Jesus as a disciple means the unconditional sacrifice of one’s whole life, for the whole of life. In every case readiness to put the claims of Jesus first, whatever the cost. Jesus said to his disciples that they were to teach those who believe “to obey everything” he had commanded them. Likeness, not simply knowledge, was the goal of Jewish discipleship. True or False (See Matt. 28:20; Luke 6:40)

41. The real objection (to the Scriptures that emphasize discipleship) is that to be a Christian requires no effort (it is by grace). To be a “disciple” requires real sacrifice and commitment. The truth is, that the redemption of Christ required no effort on our part, it is perfect and requires no effort from us. But Christ’s call is for our whole and absolute life. He did not call some to be Christians and some to be disciples, they were to be the same. Jesus saves us by his blood, but his rights over us are absolute ... He is King, Lord and Savior. True or False (See Acts 11:26)

LUKE CHAPTER 14 VERSE 27

[27] And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. (KJV)

[23] And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. (LK. 9:23, KJV)

[27] Whoever will not carry the cross that is given to them when they follow me cannot be my follower. (ETRV)

[27] If you don’t carry your own cross *as if to your own execution* as you follow Me, you can’t be part of My movement. (TV)

42. It has been estimated that perhaps 30,000 crucifixions had occurred under Roman authority during Jesus lifetime. When Jesus spoke this, people immediately pictured someone raising up and beginning to carry the cross to his own death march. Jesus is saying, "To follow Me you must be willing to endure shame, embarrassment, reproach, rejection, persecution and even possible death." The "cross" represents willingness to suffer because of our relationship to Christ. Christ offers us a life of ease? True or False

43. To follow Christ and become His disciples we must deny ourselves. True or False (See Lk. 9:23) The word "deny" means "to lose sight of one's own (selfish) desires and interest, to reject something offered, to say no, to do things God's way instead of our own selfish way."

LUKE CHAPTER 14 VERSES 28-30

[28] For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? [29] Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, [30] Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. (KJV)

[28] "But don't begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first getting estimates and then checking to see if he has enough money to pay the bills? **[29]** Otherwise he might complete only the foundation before running out of funds. And then how everyone would laugh!" (LB)

44. Should people count the cost or just go half-heartily into the motions of Christianity? See Mk. 10:17, 21-24, Col. 3:5, 1 Th. 1:9; Acts 8:36-37.

LUKE CHAPTER 14 VERSES 31-32

[31] Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? [32] Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. (KJV)

[31] "Or what king would ever dream of going to war without first sitting down with his counselors and discussing whether his army of 10,000 is strong enough to defeat the 20,000 men who are marching against him? **[32]** "If the decision is negative, then while the enemy troops are still far away, he will send a truce team to discuss terms of peace. (LB)

45. The two parables just read (vv. 28-29) (vv. 31-32) are similar but they make slightly different points. In the first parable Jesus says, "Sit down and reckon whether you can afford to follow me." In the second he says, "Sit down and reckon whether you can afford to not follow me." If one chooses not to follow Jesus, what will his end be?

LUKE CHAPTER 14 VERSE 33

[33] So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. (KJV)

[33] In the same way, if you want to be My disciple, it will cost you everything. *Don't underestimate that cost!* (TV)

46. Jesus always called for the whole of our life for all of our life. The free gift that accompanied His call was eternal life, provided by redemption, the provision of His sacrifice, forgiveness as an act of pure grace. But as stated before, Jesus call was for the whole of our life for all of our life. The price of discipleship is the same for all, everything we are and have. True or False.

Lesson 6

JESUS TELLS WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE END OF THE WORLD.

Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-51

MATTHEW CHAPTER 13 VERSES 24-30, 36-43

[24] Jesus then told them this story: The kingdom of heaven is like what happened when a farmer scattered good seed in a field. **[25]** But while everyone was sleeping, an enemy came and scattered weed seeds in the field and then left. **[26]** When the plants came up and began to ripen, the farmer's servants could see the weeds. **[27]** The servants came and asked, "Sir, didn't you scatter good seed in your field? Where did these weeds come from?" **[28]** "An enemy did this," he replied. His servants then asked, "Do you want us to go out and pull up the weeds?" **[29]** "No!" he answered. "You might also pull up the wheat. **[30]** Leave the weeds alone until harvest time. Then I'll tell my workers to gather the weeds and tie them up and burn them. But I'll have them store the wheat in my barn." (CEV) **[36]** Following this Jesus sent the crowds away and went into a house. His followers then came to Him and said, "Please tell us what You meant in the parable about weeds in the wheat field." **[37]** "I, the Son of Man, am the One planting the good seed," He replied. **[38]** "The field is the world, the good seeds are the people who belong to the Kingdom of God, the weed seeds are Satan's followers. **[39]** "The enemy who planted weeds among the wheat is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are the angels. **[40]** "Just as the weeds are to be gathered up and burned, that's what will happen at the end of the age. **[41]** "The Son of Man will send out His angels to sort out of His Kingdom all persons who tempt others to sin, and all who practice sin. **[42]** "Then they will throw them into the blazing furnace, where they will weep and wail in awful anguish and regret, and gnash their teeth in pain. **[43]** "Then those who have lived pure and honorable lives will shine as brilliantly as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father. Let those who have been given ears for the purpose of hearing, listen! (LDNT)

47. What do the good seeds and the weed seeds represent? (verse 38)

48. At the end of this age, what will happen to those who practice sin and lawlessness? (the weed seeds) (verses 41-42)

49. At the end of this age, what will happen to the righteous? (the good seed) (verse 43)

MATTHEW CHAPTER 13 VERSES 47-51

[47] "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet cast into the sea, and gathering fish of every kind; **[48]** and when it was filled, they drew it up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good fish into containers, but the bad they threw away. **[49]** "So

it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, [50] and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [51] "Have you understood all these things?" They said to Him, "Yes." (NASV)

50. At the end of this age angels will come and separate the wicked from among the righteous. The wicked will be thrown into fire. True or False (verses 49-50)

Lesson 7

THREE OUT OF FOUR PEOPLE THAT HEAR GOD'S WORD – WILL NEVER BECOME A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

Mt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:1-20; Lk. 8:4-15

In 1979 Howard O. Pittman suffered physical death. His spirit was lifted from his body and he was taken where he saw many startling things. One of the things he saw was that only 50 out of 2000 people who died on earth went to heaven, that is, only 2.5% of the population goes to heaven. 97.5% did not make it. Howard offers this parable as proof that 3 out of every 4 people that hear God's Word do not retain it. That's 75%. Take that 75% and add it to those who make no pretense of hearing the truth and you have the overwhelming 97.5% of the population today that are not ready to meet God.

MARK CHAPTER 4 VERSES 1-9, 13-20

[1] Again Jesus began teaching by the lake. A great crowd gathered around him, so he sat down in a boat near the shore. All the people stayed on the shore close to the water. [2] Jesus taught them many things, using stories. He said, [3] "Listen! A farmer went out to plant his seed. [4] While he was planting, some seed fell by the road, and the birds came and ate it up. [5] Some seed fell on rocky ground where there wasn't much dirt. That seed grew very fast, because the ground was not deep. [6] But when the sun rose, the plants dried up because they did not have deep roots. [7] Some other seed fell among thorny weeds, which grew and choked the good plants. So those plants did not produce a crop. [8] Some other seed fell on good ground and began to grow. It got taller and produced a crop. Some plants made thirty times more, some made sixty times more, and some made a hundred times more." [9] Then Jesus said, "You people who can hear me, listen!"

JESUS EXPLAINS THE STORY

[13] Then Jesus said to his followers, "Don't you understand this story? If you don't, how will you understand any story? [14] The farmer is like a person who plants God's message in people. [15] Sometimes the teaching falls on the road. This is like the people who hear the teaching of God, but Satan quickly comes and takes away the teaching that was planted in them.

Additional Information: Jesus said there are four kinds of people, that is, four kinds of hearts. The "heart" is the most central part of man. It includes the mind, will, emotions, and affections. It makes up the character and determines what one really is. In describing the four kinds of people, this teaching of Jesus is recorded in Mt. 13:1-23; Mk. 4:1-20; and Luke 8:4-15. The first kind of person that Jesus describes is the person who doesn't really believe His claims. He is following his own philosophies. He may be an agnostic or atheistic, a believer in Eastern philosophies, or gurus. His philosophy of God may be a god of his own making. This person may believe that Jesus was a good man or teacher just like

other prophets – Mohammed, Buddha, Confucius, etc. – But they have never come to realize that Jesus was what He claimed to be, “the only way to God the Father” (Jn. 14:6), or else He was the greatest deceiver the world has ever known. If He wasn’t what He claimed to be, then to follow Him would be to follow a liar. This first kind of person, Jesus says, never comes to believe His claims (Luke. 8:12).

51. According to Luke 8:11, the seed that was sown was what? a. the Word of God. b. the preachers sermon.

52. According to Luke 8:12, those by the way side (the hard ground) are those that hear, & then what happens? a. they are very glad for the message. b. the devil takes the Word out of their heart.

53. What are the results of God’s Word being taken? These people don’t believe and they are not saved.

[16] Others are like the seed planted on rocky ground. They hear the teaching and quickly accept it with joy. **[17]** But since they don’t allow the teaching to go deep into their lives, they keep it only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the teaching they accepted, they quickly give up.

Additional Information: The second kind of person described by Jesus Christ is a person who hears the Word of God and responds with some kind of belief. They may have responded at a church camp, walked the aisle of a church, said a little prayer, etc. Jesus said they “believe for a while” (Luke 8:13), but then when times get rough (peer pressure from their friends, family, etc.), they fall away. In other words, their belief lacked one major ingredient, COMMITMENT. A committed faith is that which perseveres, will never give up, and will follow Christ no matter the cost. This “faith” can be described as “faithfulness.” The apostle Paul described a faith that does not continue to follow Christ as a faith that is “vain” (See 1 Cor. 15:2). “Vain” means “not yielding the desired outcome; unsuccessful.”

54. How does Mark 4:16-17 describe this second kind of person? a. As a person who rejects God’s Word. b. As a person that receives God’s Word with gladness but when persecution comes he is offended.

55. How does Luke 8:13 describe this person? a. As a person who rejects God. b. As a person who believes for awhile but when tempted falls away.

56. What can we say about this person’s faith and commitment? a. Its temporal and non-saving. b. It really doesn’t matter.

[18] Others are like the seed planted among the thorny weeds. They hear the teaching, **[19]** but the worries of this life, the temptation of wealth, and many other evil desires keep the teaching from growing and producing fruit in their lives.

Additional Information: The third type of person that Jesus describes is a person who has received God’s Word but other things take priority. Cares of this life (getting ahead, making money, etc.) are the real priorities of their lives. Riches, money, having fun, pleasures of life are the focal point of this person’s heart. According to Jesus this person’s priorities have kept them from becoming a real disciple of His (Luke 14:26).

57. What happens to the third kind of person according to Mark 4:18-19? a. He quits going to church. b. Cares, riches & desire for other things choke the Word.

58. What happens to the third kind of person according to Luke 8:14? a. They still attend church. b. They are choked with cares, riches & pleasures of this life (no fruit).

[20] Others are like the seed planted in the good ground. They hear the teaching and accept it. Then they grow and produce fruit — sometimes thirty times more, sometimes sixty times more, and sometimes a hundred times more." (NCV)

Additional Information: The fourth type of person that Jesus describes is a person with an honest and good heart, that is, a heart that has been softened by repentance, a heart that has a right attitude toward God. This person will not swerve from their purpose (Luke 8:15). They have received God's Word and God's forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ. They have turned from the kingdom of darkness unto the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13-14). They follow Jesus Christ and will continue to do so. Do they make mistakes? Yes. Are they perfect? No. But they have had a CHANGE OF DIRECTION, A CHANGE OF HEART that led to a COMMITMENT to the one who loves them and died to take away their sins.

59. What happened to the fourth kind of person according to Matthew 13:23? a. They heard the Word, understood the Word & bore fruit. b. They stayed in church.

60. What happened to the fourth kind of person according to Luke 8:15? a. Out of a good heart they received God's Word, kept it (retained it), and brought forth fruit with endurance. b. They had more Bible studies.

61. Can you see that 3 out of 4 kinds of people that Jesus described, failed to keep God's Word (failed to retain it). What lessons do we learn thru this?

Lesson 8 JESUS INVITATION "FOLLOW ME!"

[27] And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. [28] And he left all, rose up, and followed him. (Lk. 5:27-28, KJV)

[27] After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, **[28]** and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. (Lk. 5:27-28, NIV)

[27] After this he went out and saw a man named Levi at his work collecting taxes. Jesus said, "Come along with me." **[28]** And he did — walked away from everything and went with him. (Lk. 5:27-28, TM)

Additional Information: The word "follow" means "to come or go after; to accept the guidance or leadership of; to be governed by." It is used 77 times in the Gospels, of following Christ, metaphorically of discipleship (Vine's Lexicon).

Levi is referred to as Matthew. Levi was a tax collector who worked for the Roman government, and was no doubt well off financially. Upon Jesus' call of "Follow Me!", Levi left all. He didn't say, "Well, I'm coming Lord – but, hey, I could finance this whole operation if You'd just let me grab these bags!" He turned his back on it all, forsaking everything he had. He no doubt lost his job as a result. His commitment to Christ was complete and final. Levi was the writer of our first Gospel, Matthew (Liberty Bible Commentary, p. 157).

62. Matthew must have been a man under conviction. Deep down in his heart he must have longed to be free from his life of sin, and that must have been why he virtually ran to join Christ. He would never have followed Jesus on a whim; he would have given up too much. He surely knew what he was getting into. Jesus had ministered publicly all over that area; everyone in the vicinity of Capernaum knew who He was and what He taught. They saw His miracles, signs, and wonders. Matthew was familiar with Jesus' rigorous demands for discipleship (Matt. 8:18-22). He knew what he was signing up for. He had counted the cost and was prepared to obey. True or False. (The Gospel According to Jesus, p. 63).

Lesson 9
THE DISHONEST MANAGER
LUKE 16:1-9

[1] One Day Jesus said to His followers, “There was once a rich man who was told that his business manager was squandering his money. **[2]** “So he called him in and said, ‘What’s this I hear about you? Get all the accounts in order and give me a full report, because if what I hear is true, you’re fired!’ **[3]** “The manager thought to himself, ‘What can I do now? I’ve lost my job! I can’t do any physical work, and I’d be ashamed to beg. **[4]** ‘I know what I’ll do, so that when I lose my job here, I’ll have friends who will take me in.’ **[5]** “So one by one he called in the people who were in debt to his employer. ‘How much do you owe my boss?’ he asked the first one. **[6]** ‘800 gallons of olive oil,’ he replied. ‘Yes, here’s your contract. Tear it up and sit down here quickly,’ the manager said, ‘and write up and sign a new contract for 400.’ **[7]** “To the next one he said, ‘And how much do you owe?’ ‘1,000 bushels of wheat,’ he replied. ‘Tear up your bill,’ he told him, ‘and write up a new one here for 800.’ **[8]** “His employer had to admit that this crooked manager certainly knew how to make plans that might improve his own future. Ironically, those who live only for this life prepare more effectively for their brief and uncertain future here, than those who have seen the light regarding eternal life. **[9]** “So I challenge you: Make eternal friends for yourselves in Heaven by means of the eternal investments you can make with the right use of the untrustworthy and precarious riches of this world. Then, when you die, they will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home in Heaven. (The Last Days NT)

Additional Information: All the various riches you have can cause you to rely on them and make them your god. A wrong use of your riches can injure you and those you love.

Yes, wealth is precarious (dangerously insecure), because there is no assurance that any of the riches you have will be yours tomorrow. You can lose your money, your health, even your talents. But as you use them now in the best and wisest way possible for God’s glory, you can be assured that you are investing them for eternity. In other words, by serving God and others with what you are and have, you are also wisely preparing for your own future.

Some believe the *they* in v. 9 means that Jesus, the angels, and others in Heaven will be there to welcome you into your everlasting home. Yes, that’s true, but this implies that the riches of this life that you sent on ahead will also be there to welcome you. Jesus commanded you to *Lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven*. Matthew 6:19-21. So if they are being laid up there, they will be there to welcome you. In other words, they will be there credited to your account. (The Last Days NT note, p. 141).

63. Compare Luke 16:9 with Luke 18:22, then discuss.

Lesson 10
JESUS AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER
Matt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-22;
Lk. 18:18-30. Cf. Lk. 10:25

MARK CHAPTER 10
VERSES 17-30

MK 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, **Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?** **[18]** And Jesus said unto him, **Why callest thou me good? there is**

none good but one, that is, God. [19] Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. [20] And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. [21] Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. [22] And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

MK 10:23 And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! [24] And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! [25] It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. [26] And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? [27] And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible.

MK 10:28 Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. [29] And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, [30] But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life. (KJV)

64. What was this man asking? (verse 17)

65. Why did Jesus tell this man to keep the law? (verse 19-21)

66. Was this man serving a false god? (verse 21)

67. What was this man trusting in? (verse 24)

68. Did this man get saved? (verse 22)

69. Jesus used the words, "eternal life," "entering into the Kingdom of God," and "saved," as synonyms. True or False.

70. Did the disciples of Jesus leave everything to follow Jesus? (verse 28)

71. What did the disciples receive for such a commitment? (verses 29-30)

Additional Information and commentary by John F. MacArthur, Jr. (The Gospel According to Jesus, pgs. 77-88). Many years ago, in the early days of my ministry, I was on a cross-country flight. The man seated next to me noticed I was reading the Bible. He introduced himself, then surprised me by asking, "Excuse me, you wouldn't know how I could have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, would you?"

Of course, hot prospects like that do not approach me very often, so I did not want to lose this one! I said, "Well yes, you simply believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as your Savior." I

explained that Jesus died and rose again so that we might have eternal life. I told him all he needed to do was receive Christ as his personal Savior.

"I'd like to do that," he said. So I led him in a prayer, and he asked the Lord to be his Savior. Later that month I baptized him. I was very excited about what had happened and was eager to follow him up in discipleship. After a short time, however, he broke off contact with me. I recently discovered he had no continuing interest in the things of Christ.

What happened? Why is this such a common experience? Most people who witness for Christ regularly would admit that it is relatively easy to get people to profess faith. Getting them to follow the Lord is a much more frustrating experience. All of us have known "converts" who seem momentarily to embrace the idea of salvation enthusiastically, but never follow the Lord. Why?

I really did not understand the reasons myself until I studied the account of the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. There we read of a young man who asks in the clearest possible terms how he can lay hold of eternal life. If there was ever a place to look for a straightforward presentation of the gospel according to Jesus, we would expect it here. What we find is a startling discourse:

Matthew 19:16-22 (NASV) 16 And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" 17 And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." 18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; 19 Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself. " 20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" 21 Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.

At first sight, we might wonder what kind of message Jesus was trying to give this man. A close look reveals what it was. If we could condense the truth of this entire passage into a single statement, it would be Luke 14:33: *"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."*

Our Lord gave this young man a test. He had to choose between his possessions and Jesus Christ. He failed the test. No matter what he believed, since he was unwilling to forsake all, he could not be a disciple of Christ. Salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything.

And the issue here was clearly this man's salvation, not some higher level of discipleship subsequent to conversion. his question was about how to obtain eternal life.

The term "eternal life" is used about fifty times in Scripture. It always refers to conversion, evangelism, the new birth – the entire salvation experience. In fact, the most familiar gospel verse of all, John 3:16, uses the expression: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Most of our work in evangelism is to get people to the point where they sense their need for salvation. This young man had come to that point before he ever asked Jesus the question. He was the perfect evangelistic target. He was ready to sign the card, raise his hand, walk the aisle, or whatever. He passed over the whole process of normal pre-evangelism. There was no need to explain to him how we know God exists, why we can trust the Bible, or why he should be concerned about eternity. Like that young man who approached me on the airplane, he appeared ready. To the human eye, he looked like the hottest evangelistic prospect the Lord had encountered so far. He was ripe. He was eager. There was no way he would get away without receiving eternal life.

But he did. He left not because he heard the wrong message, not even because he didn't believe, but because he was unwilling to forsake all that he had and commit himself to obedience. Jesus set up an insurmountable barrier for the man. Instead of taking him from where he was and getting him to make a "decision," Jesus laid out terms to which he was unwilling to submit. In a sense, Jesus chased him off.

What kind of evangelism is this? Jesus would have failed personal evangelism class in almost every Bible college or seminary I know! He gave a message of works, and at this point did not even mention faith or the facts of redemption. Nor did He challenge the man to believe. He failed to get closure. He failed to draw the net. He failed to sign the young man up. After all, when a person comes along saying he wants eternal life, you can't let him get away, right?

Wrong. Our ideas of evangelism cannot indict Jesus; rather, He must judge contemporary methods of evangelism. Modern evangelism is preoccupied with decisions, statistics, aisle-walking, gimmicks, prefabricated presentations, pitches, emotional manipulation, and even intimidation. Its message is a cacophony of easy-believism and simplistic appeals. Unbelievers are told that if they invite Jesus into their hearts, accept Him as personal Savior, or believe the facts of the gospel, that's all there is to it. The aftermath is appalling failure, as seen in the lives of multitudes who have professed faith in Christ with no consequent impact on their behavior. Who knows how many people are deluded into believing they are saved when they are not?

What went wrong with this young man? He seemed to start so well, yet turned away from Christ grieved, without receiving eternal life. He seemed to have the right motive and the right attitude; he came to the right source; and he asked the right question. But he went away unredeemed.

This man came seeking eternal life. He knew what he wanted, and he knew he didn't have it. He had just about everything else, but not eternal life.

Nothing was wrong with his motivation. It is good to desire eternal life. Certainly, the man realized that spiritual life was far more important than all his wealth. Jesus said, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33).

This man was young (Mt. 19:20) and rich (v. 22). In Luke 18:18 we learn that he was also a ruler. This most likely means that he was a ruler of the synagogue. Thus it appears he was a Jewish religious leader – devout, honest, young, wealthy, prominent, highly respected, and influential. He had everything. The phrase "and behold" in verse 16 is an exclamation indicating wonder and amazement. He indicates Matthew must have been astonished that this man would seek out Jesus and admit he needed eternal life.

Here was a man undoubtedly in turmoil. All his religion and wealth had not given him confidence, peace, joy, or settled hope. There was a restlessness in his soul, and he felt the absence of assurance in his heart. He came on the basis of a deeply felt need. He identified what he felt he lacked: eternal life.

Biblically, eternal life speaks not only of the promise of life in the age to come, but also of the quality that is characteristic of people who live in that age. It signifies quality as much as duration (Jn. 17:3). It is not just living forever; eternal life is being alive to the realm where God dwells. It is walking with the living God in an unending communion.

This seems to be what the rich young ruler wanted. Apparently he perceived the need to walk with God, to commune with God. Perhaps he sensed his inability to respond to God fully. He wasn't experiencing God's love, rest, peace, hope, joy, or security. At any rate, he knew he did not possess spiritual life or the assurance that he belonged eternally to God.

In this he was very perceptive. Spiritually, he went far beyond the Pharisees, who were content with their own musings. He was not. He knew he was missing eternal life, and he wanted to have it. No one can fault his motivation in approaching Christ.

Not only was his motivation correct, but his attitude was commendable as well. He was not haughty or presumptuous; he seemed to feel his need deeply. There are many people who know they don't have eternal life but don't feel any need for it. They realize they don't sense the divine dimension, but this lack of interest does not bother them. Not his young man. He was desperate. One can feel the urgency in his question, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I might have eternal life?" Without any prologue or warm up, he just blurted it out.

Mark 10:17 says he came running. He also came publicly. Unlike Nicodemus, who came by night, this man came in broad daylight and in front of other people. Mark says the Lord was on the road, having just set out on a journey. No doubt there was the usual crowd around Him. This fellow ran right through the crowd, unhampered by the fact that the people knew who he was. He was bold enough to confess publicly and openly that he did not possess eternal life. For a man in his position to ask such a question took tremendous courage. He had a lot to lose by openly admitting his need for eternal life.

Mark also tells us that this rich young ruler knelt at Jesus' feet. In a position of humility before the Lord, he acknowledged the undesirable situation he was in. He had the integrity not to hide it. He wanted eternal life so badly that he risked losing face with those who looked to him as a spiritual giant already. Nevertheless, in frustration over his inability to find peace, he asks, "What am I still lacking?" We sense his anxiety, lack of fulfillment, and great consternation. Religious all his life, he knew something was missing. This is the cry of a heart in deep need.

What are we to make of his claim that he had kept all of the law? Of course he exaggerated, but apparently he did live an exemplary life outwardly. He was a moral man, and not a gross sinner. He

conformed to the strict standards of his religion. But he felt a deep void, and he approached Jesus seeking to fill that void. If someone had approached him and asked, “How would you like peace, joy, happiness, and love?” he would certainly have responded. Had he been in an evangelistic service, there would have been no need to sing additional verses of “Just As I Am” for this man. He was ready. He was enthusiastic in his pursuit of eternal life, and it certainly seems he had the right attitude.

What an opportunity! This fellow was eager, seeking, a “can’t miss” convert. He was young, rich, intelligent, and influential. Think what he could do if he came to Christ! He could give his testimony, write a book, and be a large donor to the Christian cause. No evangelist worth his salt would muff an opportunity like this.

But the young ruler had not come to just an evangelist – this was the Source of eternal life Himself. It was the right place to pursue what he wanted. People look in the most bizarre places for eternal life. Satan is a master counterfeiter when it comes to false assurance, and he makes sure that most people never find eternal life while they spend their entire lives looking in the wrong places. 1 John 5:11 says, “The witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” Verse 20 says of Jesus, “This is the true God and eternal life.” Not only is Jesus the source of eternal life, he is eternal life. The rich young ruler was looking in the right place.

No doubt this man had heard about the power of Jesus. He addressed the Lord as “master,” or “teacher.” With that title, he acknowledged that Jesus was a teacher of divine truth. Mark and Luke tell us he called Him “good,” using the word *agathos*, which implies that he saw the Lord as good in nature and in essence. He would have used the word *kalos* to denote strictly external goodness or good form. So in saying “good teacher,” he wasn’t just calling Jesus a capable teacher – he affirmed that he believed in the Lord’s essential goodness.

That is not to say he believed Jesus was God. He probably did not realize that Jesus was the Messiah, let alone God in human flesh. It is likely that he was captivated by the authority of Jesus’ teaching and the power of His virtuous life. He wanted to get this teacher’s guidance on the issue of eternal life, because he believed Jesus had it. It seems that Jesus’ reply, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? there is only One who is good” (v. 17), was meant to prod him into realizing who He really was.

Nevertheless, though he didn’t acknowledge that Christ was Messiah or God in the flesh, he certainly had come to the right place. “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Many readers of this Matthew 19 passage have taken the young man to task for his question. They say his mistake was in asking “What good thing shall I do?” In other words, he had a works-oriented mindset. It is true that he was attuned to a religion based on works. He was raised in a Pharisaic tradition. His training had taught him to think of religion as a system to earn divine favor. But with all that in his background, he asked a fair question. It was not a calculated bid to trap Jesus into condoning self-righteousness. It was a simple, honest question, asked by one in search of the truth: “What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”

After all, this is something we have to do to inherit eternal life: we have to believe. This man’s question was not much different from the question of the multitudes in John 6:28: “What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered those people with a simple and straightforward reply: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him who He has sent” (v. 29).

But this is where the story takes an extraordinary turn. Jesus’ answer to this young man seems preposterous: “If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt. 19:17). Our Lord revealed nothing of Himself or the facts of the gospel. He did not invite the man to believe. He did not ask him for a decision. Instead, Jesus erected a wall in front of him, which drew the inquirer to a sudden stop.

Strictly speaking, the answer was correct. If a person could keep the law all his life and never violate a single jot or tittle, he would be perfect, sinless. But no one except the Savior alone is like that; men are born in sin (Ps. 51:5). To suggest that the law is a means to eternal life clouds the issue of faith. So why in the world would Jesus tell him that? If he came with the right motive and the right attitude to the right source with the right question, why was it that Jesus did not simply tell him the way of salvation?

In spite of all the young man had going for him, he was missing an important quality. Jesus knew he was utterly lacking a sense of his own sinfulness. His desire for salvation was based on an emptiness in his soul, perhaps with a desire to rid himself of anxiety and frustration, and to attain joy, love, peace, and hope. Good desires – but they do not constitute a complete reason for committing oneself to Christ.

Much of contemporary evangelism is woefully deficient in confronting people with the reality of their sin. Preachers offer people happiness, joy, fulfillment, and all things positive. Present-day Christians are taught that all they have to do is find a person's psychological needs, then offer Jesus as a panacea for whatever the problem is. It is very easy to get a response because people are looking for quick solutions to their felt needs. But if that's all we do, it is not legitimate evangelism.

Our Lord offered no relief for the rich young ruler's felt need. Instead, his answer confronted him with the fact that he was a living offense to God. It was imperative that he perceive his sinfulness. Recognition of personal sin is a necessary element in understanding the truth of salvation. One cannot come to Jesus Christ for salvation only on the basis of psychological needs, anxieties, lack of peace, a sense of hopelessness, an absence of joy, or a yearning for happiness. Salvation is for people who hate their sin and want to turn away from the things of this life. It is for individuals who understand that they have lived in rebellion against a holy God. It is for those who want to turn around, to live for God's glory. Salvation is not a mere psychological phenomenon.

Jesus' answer took the focus off the young man's felt need and put it back on God: "There is only One who is good." Then He slammed him up against the divine standard, not because keeping the law would merit eternal life, but so that he would see how far he fell short: "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." But the young man ignored and rejected the point. He was utterly unwilling to confess his own sinfulness.

As I think back to my conversation with the man on the airplane, I realize that this is where I failed. Too hastily, I offered him Christ for his psychological needs, without compelling him to acknowledge his sinfulness. The salvation I described to him had a manward focus, rather than a Godward focus.

Evangelism must take the sinner and measure him against the perfect law of God so he can see his deficiency. A gospel that deals only with human need, only with human feelings, only with human problems, lacks the true balance. That is why churches are full of people whose lives are essentially unchanged after their supposed conversion. Most of these people, I am convinced, are unregenerate and grievously misled.

The pattern of divine revelation confirms the importance of comprehending one's sinfulness. In Romans, Paul spends three full chapters declaring the sinfulness of man before even discussing the way of salvation. John 1:17 says, "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." Law always precedes grace: it is the tutor that leads us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Without the law and its effect on us that God designs, grace is meaningless. And without an understanding of the reality and gravity of sin, there can be no redemption.

We need to adjust our presentation of the gospel. We cannot dismiss the fact that God hates sin and punishes sinners with eternal torment. How can we begin a gospel presentation by telling people on their way to hell that God has a wonderful plan for their lives? Scripture says, "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. 7:11). A righteous, holy, pure God cannot tolerate evil. He will not save those who try to come to Him harboring sin.

The rich young ruler asked Jesus which commandments he should keep. The Lord responded by giving him the second half of the Ten Commandments: "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother." And then He adds, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 19:18-19). We have no way of knowing why the Lord chose those particular commandments to highlight; maybe He knew the young man wasn't honoring his parents. But the significant thing to note is that Jesus preached law to him.

We have no business preaching grace to people who do not understand the implications of God's law. It is meaningless to expound on grace to someone who does not know the divine demand for righteousness. Mercy cannot be understood without a corresponding understanding of one's own guilt. A gospel of grace cannot be preached to someone who has not heard that God requires obedience and punishes disobedience. Jesus' words should have awakened a realization within the rich young ruler that he fell short. That was the whole point. But he rejected it entirely.

Scripture says, "The young man said to Him, 'All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?'" (Matt. 19:20). This indicates how he perceived the law. Maybe he had never murdered anyone. Maybe he had never committed adultery. Surely he did not steal or lie. He seems to have really thought he had honored his father and his mother. It is quite possible that on the surface he had done all those things. But the emphasis in Jesus' teaching from the beginning had been to define all the law in such a way that

no one – even those who adhered strictly to the law’s external requirements – could look at the commandments and feel justified (cf. Matt. 5:20-48; Rom. 3:20).

The man could not escape the demands of the divine standard. The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself had an inescapable internal application. In no way could he honestly say he always kept the law. He could not have been telling the truth – if he was not lying, he was certainly self-deceived.

The Pharisees were accustomed to externalizing the law, being very alert to the external of ritual and conduct but never dealing with the heart. Jesus, on the other hand, dealt with the heart by teaching that hatred was the moral equivalent of murder, that lust was tantamount to adultery, and that hating an enemy was as wrong as hating a neighbor (Matt. 5:21). The young man had missed the significance of Jesus’ teaching. Boldly before a crowd of people, he claimed he had kept the law. He must have felt they would affirm he was indeed a righteous man because, as far as they know, he was. Externally, he had kept the law.

This confirms the truth that what he wanted was something to fill the emptiness in his heart. He acknowledged no sense of having violated God. He was saying, in effect, “I don’t have any real sin. I’ve kept all the law. I look at myself and I don’t see any transgression.” Self-righteous religion is deceiving. This man actually believed that he was righteous, that he had obeyed the law. He thought he had kept the code and had no idea he had fallen short.

There was no way this man could be saved while he clung to his self-righteous attitude. Salvation is not for people who want an emotional lift, but for sinners who come to God for forgiveness. Unless a person is ashamed of his sin, there is no salvation.

At this point, Mark 10:21 tells us, “And looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him.” That statement paints a pathetic picture. This young man was sincere. His spiritual quest was genuine. He was an honestly religious person. And Jesus loved him. Our Lord was about to die for the sins of this man. He was not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Yet that was one thing this man would not do. The Lord Jesus does not take sinners on their own terms. As much as He loved the young man, He nevertheless did not grant him eternal life upon request.

Finally, Jesus gave him the ultimate test: “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matt. 19:21). This challenged his claim to having kept the law. In effect, Christ told the young man, “You say you love your neighbor as yourself. OK, give him everything you’ve got. If you really love him as much as you love yourself, that should be no problem.”

Here is the ultimate test: will this man obey the Lord? Jesus is not teaching salvation by philanthropy. He is not saying it is possible to buy eternal life with charity. But He is saying, “Are you going to do what I want you to do? Who will run your life, you or I? The Lord put His finger on the very nerve of this man’s existence. Knowing where his heart was, He said, “Unless I can be the highest authority in your life, there’s no salvation for you.” By placing Himself alongside the man’s wealth and demanding he make the choice, our Lord revealed the true state of the young man’s heart.

Do we literally have to give away everything we own to become Christians? No, but we do have to be willing to forsake all (Lk. 14:33), meaning we cling to nothing that takes precedence over Christ. We must be eager to do whatever he asks. Jesus’ request of this man was simply meant to establish whether he was willing to submit to the sovereignty of Jesus over his life. Scripture never records another demand that anyone else sell everything and give it away. The Lord made a frontal attack on the man’s weakness – the sin of covetousness, indulgence, and materialism. He was indifferent to the poor. He loved his possessions. The Lord challenged that.

The rich young ruler failed the test. He was not willing to acknowledge Jesus as sovereign Lord over his life. Matthew 19:22 says, “When the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.” His possessions were more important to him than Christ, and he could not come to Jesus if it meant giving them up. It is interesting that he went away grieved. He really did want eternal life; but he was unwilling to come the way Jesus specified, the way of confessing his sin and surrendering to Jesus’ lordship.

Contrast this man’s response with that of Zaccheus in Luke 19. Zaccheus had a deep sense of sorrow for his sin. He was willing to do anything – including getting rid of all his wealth – to come to Jesus Christ on His terms. And Jesus’ message to Zaccheus was, “Today salvation has come to this house...For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:9-10). The rich young ruler also came for eternal life, but he left without it. This is a tragic, heartbreaking story. Proverbs

13:7 says, "There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; another pretends to be poor, but has great wealth." This young man thought he was rich, but he walked away from Jesus with absolutely nothing.

Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). That is the consistent and unambiguous teaching of Scripture. But people with genuine faith do not refuse to acknowledge their sinfulness. They sense that they have offended the holiness of God, and do not reject the lordship of Christ. They do not cling to the things of this world. Real faith lacks none of these attributes. Saving faith is a commitment to leave sin and follow Jesus Christ at all costs. Jesus takes no one unwilling to come on those terms.

I do not believe, and have never taught, that a person coming to Christ must understand fully all the implications of sin, repentance, or the lordship of Christ. Even after growing in his understanding for years as a Christian, he will not know all of these in their full depth. But there must be a willingness to obey. Furthermore, repentance and submission are no more human works than faith itself. They are every bit the work of God – not elements added to faith, but essential aspects of God's work of faith in a human heart.

A message that offers mere psychological relief but does not require a turning from sin and an affirmation of the lordship of Christ is a false gospel that will not save. To come to Jesus Christ a person must say yes to Him. That means He takes first priority and becomes the supreme Lord of our lives.

If we learn anything from the account of the rich young ruler, it is the truth that although salvation is a blessed gift from God, Christ will not give it to one whose hands are filled with other things. A person not willing to turn from sin, possessions, false religion, or selfishness will find he cannot turn to Christ in faith.

Lesson 11

SALVATION BY GRACE THRU FAITH

JESUS TAUGHT – SALVATION BY GRACE

Grace (*charis*) favorable regard; the friendly disposition from which a kindly act proceeds. (Vine's Lexicon)

Example: [10] Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" [11] "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (Jn. 8:10-11, NIV)

Example: [13] "The tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even look up to heaven. But he beat on his chest because he was so sad. He said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' [14] I tell you, when this man went home, he was right with God, but the Pharisee was not. All who make themselves great will be made humble, but all who make themselves humble will be made great." (Lk. 18:13-14, NCV)

Example: [39] One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" [40] But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? [41] We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." [42] Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43] Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (Lk. 23:39-43, NIV)

Example: [24] Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 3:24, NASV)

GRACE ALSO MEANS:

Grace (*charis*) The divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life. (Strong's lexicon)

Example: [10] But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. (1 Cor. 15:10, NLT)

72. Discuss the nature of grace.

JESUS TAUGHT – SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Faith (*pistis*) The main elements in faith in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from faith in man, are especially brought out in the use of this noun *pistis* and the corresponding verb, *pisteuo*; they are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth, 2 Th. 2:11-12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, Jn. 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor. 5:7. Prominence is given to one or other of these elements according to the context. All this stands in contrast to belief in its purely natural exercise, which consists of an opinion held in good faith without necessary reference to its proof. (Vine's lexicon)

Faith (*pistis*) from *peitho* (obey), to persuade. Being persuaded, faith, belief. In general it implies such a knowledge of, assent to, and confidence in certain divine truths, especially those of the gospel, as produces good works (Mt. 8:10; 15:28; Acts 3:16; Rom. 1:17; 3:22, 25, 28; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 11:1). Sometimes, however, simply a knowledge and assent to religious truths without good works and therefore, false faith (James 2:14, 17, 18, 24, 26) (Lexical Aids to the N.T.).

Obey and Believe. *Peitho* (obey) and *pisteuo* (believe) to trust, are closely related etymologically; the difference in meaning is that the former implies the obedience that is produced by the latter, compare Hebrews 3:18-19, where the disobedience of the Israelites is said to be the evidence of their unbelief. Faith is of the heart, invisible to men; obedience is of the conduct and may be observed. When a man obeys God he gives the only possible evidence that in his heart he believes God. (Vine's lexicon).

Example: [8] By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. (Heb. 11:8, KJV)

Example: [7] By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. (Heb. 11:7, KJV)

Example: [17] By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. (Heb. 11:17, KJV)

Example: [9] Then, having arrived at the full stature of his maturity and having been announced by God as high priest in the order of Melchizedek, [10] he became the source of eternal salvation to all who believingly obey him. (Heb. 5:9-10, TM)

Example: [36] "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (Jn. 3:36, NASV)

Example: Faith & Unbelief [6] God "will give to each person according to what he has done." [7] To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. [8] But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. [9] There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; [10] but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. [11] For God does not show favoritism. (Rom. 2:6-11, NIV)

73. Discuss the nature of faith.

TRANSLATIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Special thanks to the translators & their translations in the preparing of this work.

KJV King James Version
CEV Contemporary English Version
NCV New Century Version
NLT New Living Translation
NIV New International Version
TM The Message
NEB New English Bible
LD The Last Days New Testament
SKJVP Simplified King James Version Paraphrased
GNT Good News Translation
AMP Amplified New Testament
ETRV Easy-to-Read-Version
NTIEAE New Testament in Everyday American English
LB Living Bible
NASV New American Standard Version

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