

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**

Chapter 18- Luke 18:18-27

291- The War of Wealth and the Grace of God-Part 1

September 27, 2015

Luke 18:18-27

18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 And Jesus said to him, "**Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.**"

20 "**You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'**"

21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from *my* youth."

22 When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, "**One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.**"

23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "**How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!**"

25 "**For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.**"

26 They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

27 But He said, "**The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.**"

To the Glory of God

Now this Passage is one of the most important Passages in the whole Bible that deals with the subject of Salvation. And there are two statements made by Jesus that illustrate just how amazing Salvation

really is. The first one is a statement of great comfort made by Jesus at the end of verse 27 where He said:

... The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.

... and the second one is a statement Jesus made at the end of verse 24 including verse 25 that should make every single one of us tremble:

24 ... How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!
25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

So from those two statements-we get two points that we should understand:

1. Salvation is impossible with Man
2. Financial Wealth wars against Salvation

Now, Dr. Luke tells us in verse 18 that the man at the center of this issue was a **“ruler”**. And this ruler asked Jesus how he might “inherit” eternal life. Now the word that Luke used here to describe this man means that he was *not* a Pharisee. This Greek word has to do with nobility, authority, wealth, power and prestige. In fact- he really didn’t even have to be a Jew. He could have been a Roman or some other Gentile. But the fact that he understood the Righteous Requirement of the Law gives us an indication that he was schooled in Old Testament Truth and was probably a Jew.

But he was a Jew “of means” – as they say. And that is why in other English translations- this word “ruler” has been translated as “rich ruler”. **Mark 10:22** says that this man **“owned much property”**. He is called “young” because in the sister passage over in **Matthew 19:20**- the Apostle Levi refers to this ruler as being a **“young man”**. So it is very possible that there was some degree of arrogance and a lack of compassion and mercy in this man because that is common with young people who are raised in wealth.

But in any event- this man was raised in wealth and understood all the trappings associated with having money. You see, people with money- especially people who are raised in families that have long

standing wealth- think differently than other people. They think in completely different terms, and that comes out at the end of verse 18 as he asked Jesus how he might “inherit” eternal life.

The fact that he uses the word “**inherit**” here shows us that he had inherited his *own* wealth and naturally assumed that eternal life would come to him in the same way as all his other earthly prosperity had come. Now in **Matthew 19**- Levi records him using the word “**obtain**”, but it is the very same Greek word as “**inherit**”. So this would be this man “obtaining” something as result of “inheriting” it.

Now I’m not certain that this man was being self-righteous here. He might well have been- but there is nothing in the text that would make us think that. He was simply using the terminology that a man of his financial status was used to- not necessarily trying to “put on airs”.

Now I also want you to notice that this ruler addressed Jesus as “**Good Teacher**” in verse 18. And this was a title of great respect and admiration that was common in the Middle East of that day. But the way that Jesus answered this man’s seemingly innocent and even respectful greeting in verse 19 shows us that Jesus knew his heart and answered him according to what He knew to be his real problem.

Now we need to try to put this entire conversation in context. The overwhelming amount of contact that Jesus had with people other than His disciples and Apostles was hostile. There were some healings and some miracles manifested to a few people- but the overwhelming contact that Jesus had with anyone on the outside of His immediate group of followers was very tense. Everything they said or asked Jesus was designed to try to trap Him into saying or doing something that would allow them to accuse Jesus of breaking God’s Law so they could discredit Jesus and eventually kill Him.

And yet, here a man who walks up to Jesus asking Him how he might inherit eternal life. So he wasn’t trying to trap Jesus. He wasn’t asking Jesus for temporal blessings like food or healing. He didn’t ask Jesus for a miracle and was not accusing Jesus of anything. He was simply asking the Savior of the world how he could be saved. So this rich young ruler understood eternal life the way the Jews understood eternal life. And they understood it as a kind of life, a quality of life. And a better way to say it would be, *“I want to inherit that kind of life that lasts forever.”*

And in the midst of all the hostility and anger that surrounded Jesus all the time- that had to be a refreshing change- especially for those who were all around Jesus. And so it would be perfectly natural for all those men who followed Jesus to have a glimmer of hope that Jesus' Message of Salvation was perhaps beginning to resonate with the people and maybe this man was the first step to a full fledged revival breaking out. So it would seem that there was great hope and gladness and joy in the disciples and Apostles as they heard this man asking Jesus such a wonderful question.

So this young man is at a point where we would love to see everybody that we witness to come. This is where we want to get everybody if we could- for them to ask us, *"What shall I do to inherit that kind of life that lasts forever?"* And inherent in that question, in the Jewish way of thinking, was the kind of life that is characteristic of God Himself. So it is the kind of Life that God possesses and that God gives. So this man was asking Jesus, *"How may I obtain the Life of God?"*

Now in the modern Church's concept of Evangelism- this is a perfect situation. This guy looks like the perfect "seeker". Nobody has to explain to this young man the existence of God. Nobody has to get him to affirm the Character of God. He already understands this. He already believes there is a God, and that God is the God revealed in OT Scripture.

Nobody has to prove to this man that Scripture is true and accurate. Nobody has to warn him about the coming Judgment. And nobody has to explain to him about Heaven, or about the pleasures and blessings that await all of the redeemed in Heaven. In fact- this man already believes more things that are true than most people who are already members of the average Church in America- and yet he was lost! And the amazing thing about this- is that even *after* this encounter with Jesus- this man *stayed* lost!

And this tells us volumes about the condition of the modern Church where the average member of the average Church knows less about God and Divine Truth than this rich young ruler- who was lost and heading for hell. In fact, as you examine the glaring lack of fruit and holiness that is missing in the overwhelming majority of church attendees today- you must think back to what James wrote in his Epistle when he said:

James 2:19

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

My dear friends, we must understand that while it is absolutely true that we are saved by what we believe and *not* by what we do- it is also equally true that how we live our lives after our conversion determines whether our conversion was real or not. True Salvation *always* and in *all cases* results in a transformed nature that has new Divine loves and new Divine desires and new Divine power.

And so those new loves and new desires and new power *always*, and in *all cases*, results in a transformed life where we honestly and consistently fear God, we honor God, we have an overwhelming and burning desire to please God and bring Him Glory, and to not sin against Him. And that inward disposition changes the way we live our daily lives.

Here James says that the belief that demons have in God is so powerful that it causes them to shudder. And that word “**shudder**” comes from a Greek word that means *to tremble with fear*. And so if your belief in God does *not* cause you to shudder- if your belief in God does *not* afford you a changed life with a burning desire to run away from sin and of bringing God glory- then may I suggest that you acquire at least the same level of belief in God as the demons have.

So as far as the modern Church is concerned- this man is ready. All he needs now is to pray the prayer or raise his hand or sign the card or walk the aisle and he's home free. And so by the modern definition of a “seeker” this unsaved rich young ruler is the perfect example.

All you ever hear about today in the modern evangelistic world from all the Church growth gurus is that we need “seekers”. We want to minister to “seekers” and we want to meet “seekers”. We even define non-believers who come to church as “seekers”.

Well here's a seeker. Here's a seeker that we would assume by everything the modern Church teaches that this man is the perfect, ideal seeker. But it turns out that he is a sham. He is superficial and false and illegitimate, and really isn't seeking God at all. And so this rich young ruler is the perfect example of what the Apostle Paul said in **Romans 3:11** that no lost person truly seeks after God. Not one.

The Bible teaches clearly and repeatedly that lost people do not seek after God. They do not miss God; they do not long for God. They do not love God, nor do they desire to please God. They have no capacity to do any of these things because the Bible says that all lost people are spiritually dead and morally unable. Now it is true that lost people don't want to suffer and they don't want to be unhappy and they don't want to go to jail or get sick or lose their family or die- but they do not seek after God.

What lost people want to do is to continue to rebel against God and sin. Jesus said in **John 3:19** that all lost people love darkness rather than light. So the natural and normal inclination and natural disposition from the Fall is for unsaved people to rebel against God and to love sin and self.

But, lost people want to sin without having to pay any *penalty* for their sin. So they want to sin without having any guilt. They want to sin and still have a clean conscience. They want to sin without having to suffer any consequences. And so the motivation of lost people is to use Science and Technology and Medicine and Government and Education, and their own reasoning and creative capabilities to manufacture new and innovative ways to sin that *minimizes* the negative side- effects of their sin.

So, absent a sovereign intervention of God the Holy Spirit- when lost people say they want to "make a change" in their lives- what they are really talking about is that they want to *continue* to sin- but be "rescued" or "delivered" or "saved" from the *consequences* of their sin. They are being negatively affected by the temporary consequences of their sins, and so because they love themselves- they seek relief from *that*- not from sinning against God- but of paying a price for their sins.

But that is not true Holy Spirit Conviction, and, therefore, it isn't true repentance, and so it cannot forgive a single sin or save a single soul. And yet the modern Church teaches that people like that are "seekers"- who are seeking God. And the Church is now filled with these unsaved people.

So you've got to be very careful when you think you've identified a seeker. Because if somebody is truly being convicted by God the Holy Spirit- he will come to Jesus. And if he comes to Jesus it is because he is broken over his sins- he is devastated that he has offended God- he is ashamed that he has transgressed against God and has been brought to

the place by God the Holy Spirit where he knows that there is no good thing in himself- not simply because his life is difficult because of his sins. And if a person is truly being brought under conviction by God the Holy Spirit- his only cry to God is,

Luke 18:13b

... God, be merciful to me, the sinner!

So for any unsaved person to be brought to this place of broken humility is a sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit, and is *not* the result of being emotionally moved along or psychologically manipulated into making a "choice" or a "decision".

Now on the surface- it would seem that there's no way this young man could miss eternal life. First of all, he appears to be ready and secondly, he's talking to Jesus- Who knows *exactly* how to answer his question. So there is no way Jesus would lose this prospect. No way Jesus would miss getting closure here and nail him down.

Yet this man grew very sad at the Words of Jesus and he walked away from Jesus *without* eternal life. How did that happen? Why didn't Jesus close the deal? Why didn't the Savior lead this man in a quick prayer? Why didn't Jesus get this man to shake His Hand? Why didn't Jesus find an area of commonality to move this hot prospect right into raising his hand or signing a card? Because that is what the modern Church teaches. That is what the Church growth gurus all write in their books. That is what the seminars tell you on how to get your Church to grow bigger. And yet Jesus didn't do any of that, did He?

If anything, Jesus ignored all of this man's supposed external appeal and made it even *harder* for him to be saved. In fact- Jesus made it *impossible*. And so every time this man checked off the right box- Jesus added another one. Just about the time you think Jesus is ready to ask this man if he is ready to accept Him into his heart- Jesus brings up something that no human on earth could accomplish. Now why in the world would Jesus do that? Didn't Jesus want this man to be saved? Was Jesus opposed to Salvation?

Now before we get too deep into this- I want to make a few statements that are very, very simple, but very profound:

- ✓ Jesus is more interested in saving souls than anybody else is.

- ✓ Jesus's Own Actions and Words illustrate Evangelism differently than the modern Church.
- ✓ Jesus is God.
- ✓ Therefore the modern Church's concept of Evangelism is wrong and unbiblical.

Now there is no doubt in my mind that if Jesus would have waited to be born until the 20th Century- that what He said and what He did would have been so opposed by so many in the modern Church- especially about how lost people are saved- that the leaders of the modern Church would have gathered together to try to see if they could maybe "shepherd" Jesus and change His Mind. And rather than bow before Him and confess that their way is wrong and sinful- some of the most popular preachers and teachers of our day would do their very best to try to convince Jesus to not say some of the things He said, and not do some of the things He did, and they would have done their best to try to get Jesus to go along with their man-made techniques and their own false formulas and their wrong methods of how to win souls.

Let me say this another way. If the Pharisees wouldn't have done what they did in opposing Jesus at every turn back in the first century- some of the most popular religious leaders of our day would have. Because what these people teach and what they do and how they go about to grow the Church today is in direct *opposition* to the way that Jesus said to conduct Evangelism.

And since Jesus is God Almighty in human flesh- that means that He was right and these people are wrong, and it means that by promoting their own man-made philosophy about Salvation- they are actually fighting *against* God and *against* God's Will, and that they are teaching and putting forth "another gospel" that cannot forgive a single sin or save a single soul. And so, as far as true, genuine, Biblical Salvation goes- there isn't a dimes worth of difference between the most conservative Baptist- who is wrong about Salvation, or the most supposedly Spirit-filled Pentecostal you can think of- who is wrong about Salvation, and a man who has been deceived by the false teachings of Rome- who is also wrong about Salvation. They are all teaching a way of Evangelism and Salvation that is patently unbiblical and untrue. And that means that these false teachers, these Judas goats, are leading the sheep to slaughter.

Now to the shock and dismay of even the disciples and Apostles- instead of capitalizing on some area of commonality as Rick Warren teaches, instead and conducting "relationship evangelism" as so many teach today, instead of emotionally manipulating this man to "make a decision for Christ"- Jesus did the opposite.

Instead of finding terms *acceptable* to this rich young ruler- Jesus introduced terms that were absolutely *unacceptable* to him. Instead of *lowering* any remaining barriers that might appear- Jesus *raised* the barriers even higher. Instead of going out of His way so as not to offend this man and run him off- Jesus did everything He could to offend this man and He ran him off. Instead of making it *easier* for this man to believe and be saved- Jesus made it totally *impossible* for him to be saved- so much so that the people who were listening to this conversation cried out in utter agony- "*Who then can be saved?*" And by Jesus' Own Personal admission- He replied,

It is impossible for men...

So Salvation is not *hard*, dear friends. Salvation is not *difficult*- Jesus said that Salvation is totally and completely *impossible* for any human being to accomplish in, by, and through his own power, or by implementing any man-made method or program or technique. And so we are left with one of two conclusions:

- A. The Son of God was wrong about Salvation and He should repent
- B. We have been wrong about Salvation and we should repent

Now this event is in the same general context of everything that Jesus has been saying and doing since Chapter 17:20. Now as we have discovered, the Chapter and verses divisions in your Bible were put in the Bible well after the writers gave us these Divinely inspired Words. And so the various chapter and verse divisions were put there to help us read and study the Bible. But these divisions are *not* inspired, and so many times- a Chapter or a verse ends when it shouldn't, and so we have to either back up or go forward to try to get the correct context.

So the correct context here is that Jesus is working His way toward Jerusalem to die for the sins of all the elect, and as He works His way toward His agonizing Death- He is teaching. And the subject

that Jesus is teaching from **Luke 17:20** until now is the Kingdom of God and *who* is going to be in that Kingdom- and *how* they are going to be in that Kingdom and *why*.

So the issue at stake here is Salvation. The issue is how unworthy sinners are going to be able to pass through God's Judgment on their lives. So this fits in with the general discussion about what kind of people get into God's Kingdom. That they must be broken and sorrowful for transgressing against God. They have to be trusting and dependent as a child. They have to not think that they possess anything in and of themselves that makes them attractive to God. They must know that they cannot do *anything* to earn God's Favor.

And we saw that the tax collector goes home justified because he confesses his sinfulness- because he submits himself to God. And the Pharisee goes back down from the temple *unjustified* because he does *not* recognize his own lostness- because he is self-righteous.

So all that Jesus is teaching is about the kind of people who are in the Kingdom and how they got into God's Kingdom and the kind of people who are *not* in the Kingdom- and how they got to be like that. It is about the kind of people who are entering the Kingdom and the kind who are *prevented* from entering the Kingdom- and how they got to be like that.

Now *unlike* the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee- this is a real account. This is a true account of an actual person who came to Jesus. And like the incident of the parents bringing their babies was a genuine account- this one occurs perhaps close to the account of the children because they are back to back in all three synoptic Gospels of **Matthew, Mark, and Luke**.

Now by some people's measurement today- Jesus proved here that His Way to save lost sinners was an abject failure. Because, if you can't win a man like *this*- then it must be because you have really got an inadequate method of Evangelism.

I mean, I can understand not being able to convince somebody to repent who doesn't believe in God at all, somebody who doesn't believe the Bible is true, somebody who doesn't believe in the Cross, or somebody who doesn't believe in the Resurrection. But *this* guy? He *did* believe in all these things.

And to make matters worse- Jesus didn't preach Grace here- at least not directly. He preached Law. Jesus never even mentions Faith

here. But instead He goes to great length to emphasize obedience. So to the man that most people would consider a cinch to be saved- Jesus preaches Law and obedience, rather than Faith and Grace. He never challenged this man to believe in *anything*. He didn't give him any historical facts to trust in

So, does that mean that Jesus was wrong about Salvation? Or does this mean that Jesus believed in Salvation through obedience rather than Salvation by Grace through Faith alone? So do *our* ideas of Evangelism indict Jesus? Do the Gospels *contradict* the Epistles about Salvation? Do the Words of Jesus put forth a different way for lost people to be saved than the words of Paul? Was Paul's Teaching about Justification by Grace through Faith alone at odds with Jesus's Words here to this man? This is really serious, folks, because by today's standards- Jesus would not only be thought to be wrong about Salvation- but His Words and the way He treats this man here would be routinely condemned by many within the modern Evangelical Church as actually being sinful.

But that is the main reason why I have been laboring in our journey through the **Gospel of Luke** for so long. In three weeks- we will enter our eighth year in our "journey" through **Luke**. This is the 291st Sermon in **Luke**, and the reason why we have been in this amazing Record of Jesus' Life and Ministry so long is because Jesus is God.

And that means that we can't get any closer to the Truth of God than we can by listening to Jesus. We can't get a more perfect example of how to live and how to love and how to serve and how to obey and how to speak and what to believe than by watching how Jesus did all those things. Jesus is the only Man Who ever lived Who loved God with all His Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength. He is the only Man Who ever lived Who loved His neighbor as Himself. And Jesus is the only Man Who ever lived Who had no other gods before Him.

And so we don't judge Jesus- Jesus judges us. We don't indict Jesus' Words- He indicts ours. We don't criticize Jesus' method of winning souls- we bow our knees to what Jesus did and what Jesus said. And so we do not expect Jesus to meet up with our Evangelistic strategies- Jesus expects us to meet up with His. And when we find out that our strategies to win souls is wrong or out of whack with His- then Jesus expects us to repent and to throw *away* our methods and our logic and our techniques and obey *His*.

Jesus judges our decisions, our statistics, our aisle walking, our gimmicks, our prefabricated presentations, our pitches, our marketing strategies, our emotional manipulations, and our intimidations. Jesus judges all the methods of "easy believism" and simplistic appeals.

Jesus judges us every time we told someone with an inadequate understanding of sin and sovereignty to "invite Jesus into their hearts", or "accept Jesus as their personal Savior", or "believe the facts of the Gospel", and that's all they needed to do and all that Jesus would ever require of them. Jesus judges all that.

Because the fruit of that kind of false and man-made evangelism is a literal sea of human beings who are just as lost as this man was but who sit in Church and have been told that they are saved. And when these people begin to doubt their own conversion because they know good and well that nothing eternally has happened- they are fed blatant lies and psychological gimmicks to keep them deceived. Not only is this ministerial malpractice- it is immoral.

It is common today to actually hear sermons teaching people that pursuing holiness after Salvation on purpose and striving to obey God is legalism and is actually an affront to the Gospel. No wonder that we have millions of people who profess faith in Christ who have little or no noticeable transformation in their thoughts, beliefs, or their behavior. But what is really sad is that the people of our day come to Jesus unsaved and they leave unsaved- but they think they're redeemed. This rich young ruler went away unsaved, too- but at least he knew it.

Now the way that this ruler uses the word "**eternal life**" in verse 18, and the way that Jesus used the phrase "**The Kingdom of God**" in verses 24&25, and the way the disciples used the word "**saved**" in verse 26 show us that "inheriting eternal life" and "entering the Kingdom of God" and "being saved" are all the same thing. So now we know "being saved" means having "eternal life" and entering "the kingdom of God". And so these are all synonyms for the same thing.

So we are "saved" or "rescued" or "delivered" from the Wrath of God against our sins by what God Himself has done for us in Jesus Christ. And God gives us of His Own eternal Life and then places us into the Kingdom of God. And so the opposite of that would be "eternal death" and "being lost" and "eternal separation" from God- a place and a condition which Jesus more than anyone else in the Bible calls "Hell," a place of great torment and Divine Punishment.

Now Jesus had a habit of turning people inside out. *Nobody* ever spoke like this Man. And so as this young ruler addresses Jesus as “**Good Teacher**” Jesus immediately says something that puts this entire setting in perspective:

Luke 18:19b

... Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

So by Jesus saying this- He was once again equating Himself as being God. And that had to impact this man. Now by this time- the Apostles and even many of the disciples had heard Jesus say things like this often. And the Apostles knew and they believed that Jesus was, in fact, God Almighty in human flesh. And so every time they heard Jesus tell somebody else this- they looked with great anticipation and eagerness to see how the person would either believe that or not. And so as Jesus says this- all eyes are on this man's reaction.

Now the most striking thing in this entire Passage is that Jesus tells us here that the conversion that leads to Salvation is humanly *impossible*. And this is all the more striking because the question Jesus answers from this rich young ruler *could* have been answered *without* bringing up the issue of the utter impossibility of conversion. Now let's look again at this exchange between Jesus and the rich young ruler:

Luke 18:18-22

18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

20 "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from *my* youth."

22 When Jesus heard *this*, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Now the other sister Passage in **Mark 10:17** tells us that this man “**ran up to Jesus**”. And then John Mark tells us that he also knelt before

Jesus. So this ruler is not coming to Jesus in a nonchalant way- to protect his reputation in front of all these people. No, he comes running full speed and tears through the crowd and comes right up to Jesus and hits his knees and cries out,

Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

So all the pretense he might have had is gone. So, on the surface- this seems to be the real deal. I mean this is a much more emotional and dramatic scene then it was with Peter or Andrew or John or James. This man couldn't care less about anyone's expectation of him. No wonder John Mark said,

Mark 10:21a

Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him...

But isn't that an odd way of saying that? I mean Mark didn't say "Jesus loved him", which is what you would normally say. Instead he said "**Jesus felt a love for him**", which isn't the same thing. So John Mark was very careful to let us know that there was a "kind" of love- a "type" of love that Jesus felt for this man that was different and unique from the love that would have saved him.

You see, the Bible says that "God is Love". So it isn't only that God *loves* or that God is *loving*- but that part of the very Character and Nature of God is that He *is* Love. But even with God- there are *degrees* of His Love.

You see, every single thing that God gives to unworthy sinners, and everything that God brings into our lives, and everything that God does for us- besides damning us all to hell immediately- is a manifestation of His Love for us. So, for example- long life, and happy moments, and good food, and sunny days, and green grass, and laughter and music, and love between people are all manifestations of the Love of God. And so, in *that* sense- it is true to say that God loves *everybody*. But the kind of love that God shows these people is a "Common Love".

And yet we must realize that many of those people who are the recipients of that ongoing manifestation of "Common Love" will burn in hell forever. Therefore- we must understand that *this* "kind" of General Love from God doesn't bring conviction of sin to their hearts, it doesn't

grant repentance, and it doesn't change their nature. And so, these people die in their sins- even after having lived underneath the Love of God for years.

And that is God's Prerogative because He doesn't *owe* Salvation to anyone. God is not *obligated* to save a single soul. And so, we must realize that the entire time that these people received this kind of love from God- they sinned against Him. And they sinned *repeatedly* and they sinned because they *enjoyed* their rebellion against the Almighty. And so, at the end- these people- whom God felt some degree of love for- received the wages of their sins- eternal death.

Now it is important to realize that none of those people received any injustice from God at all. They were graciously given many various manifestations of God's Love the entire time that they lived on earth, and now they are all paid the "wages" for their sins. They received from God what they worked so hard to get. And God treated them with perfect Justice and perfect Fairness.

Yet the Bible declares that there is *another* "kind" of love that God gives to *other* unworthy sinners. And this Love is a "Saving Love". The Bible says that God "sets His Love" upon *some* of the unworthy sinners to not only give them some or all of those other manifestations of His Love- but he sets His Love upon some to *save* them. And so God goes way past the other kind of "Common Love" and He loves these elected sinners enough to *interfere* with their plans. He loves them enough to *impose* Himself upon them to change them, to *insert* Himself into their minds and hearts to *stop* what they are doing, to *violate* their will, and to *force* His Divine Nature upon them.

This kind of Saving Love gives these sinners new eyes and new ears and a new heart. This manifestation of Love causes them to love Him and it writes His Law upon their hearts so they will desire to keep His Commandments. So this Love is a "Saving Love", and it is given to every single human being who is chosen by God from before the foundation of the world- regardless of how evil they have been and regardless of how long they have been evil.

And the distinction between who receives Common Love and who receives Saving Love is not something inherent in the individual. *All* human beings are sinners, *all* are unworthy, nobody earns God's Saving Love, *nobody* is worthy of receiving it, and God is *never* obligated to give it. In fact- in human terms- those who receive God's Saving Love may

actually be *worse* sinners than those who only receive God's Common Love. So every facet of God's Love is distributed to unworthy sinners based on nothing more than God's Own Free Prerogative. And so, it is God's Own Determination as to who receives Common Love and who receives Saving Love.

And so, John Mark doesn't tell us that Jesus loved this rich young ruler, but that He felt some "type" of love for him- some kind of tenderness for this man- maybe pity and maybe even a bit of sorrow. And so even though Jesus was kind to this man- He was not setting His "Saving Love" upon him.

But even at that- the Bible doesn't recall that Jesus ever felt any kind of love for the Pharisees at all. So there was something sad about this man that elicited a kind of love and tenderness from Jesus; his diligent seeking; his rushing to Jesus; his enthusiasm about spiritual life and about knowing God. It is hard to imagine a better candidate for Salvation from the human point of view. This man had been prepared his entire life for this very moment. And yet he went away very sad and yet in his sins.

Now I don't believe for a second that Jesus agreed with this man's assessment of himself- that he had kept "all these things" from his youth. And it isn't because I'm such a good judge of character that I say that- it is because Jesus was Omniscient and knew everything about this man before he ever spoke to Jesus.

And that is why Jesus begins the discussion by saying this:

... Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

... which *forced* this man to get out of his standard pattern of thoughts and statements that he no doubt had engaged in many times before, and forces him to begin to ponder the issue of "Goodness" and just who is really "good" and just Who Jesus is. And then Jesus said this:

You know the commandments, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.

Now notice that Jesus told the ruler that He “knew” these things- showing that Jesus knew his heart. This is the same way that Jesus spoke to Nathaniel back in **John 1**- turn there with me:

John 1:47-49

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, "**Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!**"

48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "**Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.**"

49 Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."

Now I have no idea what Nathaniel was doing under the fig tree- but Nathaniel knew. He could have been committing some terrible sin under the tree that he thought was a secret, or he could have been praying to God and asking God for something that nobody knew except God. But when Jesus told him what was in his heart- that is what caused Nathaniel to know that Jesus was God, and the result was that Nathaniel was saved and he worshipped Jesus.

So, here in **Luke 18**- Jesus was telling this rich young ruler all that was in his heart. And after Jesus began the discussion about “goodness” He listed the five Commandments that had to do with how we are to love one another. But notice that Jesus did not even mention the Commandments that have to do with how we are to love God.

And this no doubt cut this man to the core of his being- probably because this man was guilty of breaking all five of them. And what could possibly be the root cause of this man breaking all five of the Commandments that tell us how to love each other? One thing- Wealth.

Now many people through the years have taught this Passage by illustrating that the man was off base to begin with by asking Jesus, “*What shall I do to inherit eternal life?*” They say that the question was bad to begin with because we can’t do *anything* and nobody “inherits” eternal life. But I don’t think that is a valid problem for two reasons:

- ❖ That logic was the result of his religious training.
- ❖ Jesus goes along with his logic.

Now it is very possible that this man was simply trying to earn his Salvation by asking what he was supposed to "do". But it is also possible that that was just his terminology and that he wasn't meaning it the way it sounds. But the main reason I say this is because Jesus had a wonderful opportunity right here to respond to this man's question by talking about Justification by Grace through Faith alone, and yet He didn't do that- at least not *directly*. But it is very striking here what Jesus actually *did* say- once the man assured Jesus that he had kept all five of those Commandments from his youth. Jesus said:

Luke 18:22b

... One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.

And so, to expose this man's love of money and his dependence on his wealth- Jesus says in verse 22 that this rich young ruler had a lack. Jesus said there was "one thing" that he lacked in order for him to inherit eternal life that was above and beyond keeping all five of those Commandments.

Now what is strange here is that Jesus actually told this man to do four different things here:

1. Sell everything you own
2. Distribute your entire holdings to the poor
3. Treasure God
4. Come and Follow Me

... and yet He says that there is only "one thing" that he lacked. So what gives? Is Jesus talking out of both sides of His Mouth here? In the sister Passage over in **Matthew 19**- the Apostle Levi records Jesus saying:

Matthew 19:21b

... If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

So he lacked this one thing- he was *incomplete*. And to be complete or to fix this great lack in his life pertaining to eternal life- Jesus *required* this man to *do* something and *not* to merely believe. Jesus told this man, "If you want to be what you need to be and inherit eternal life:

1. Unshackle your heart from your wealth
2. Have a heart for the poor
3. Treasure God in Heaven
4. Follow Jesus

Well, piece of cake, right? I mean this man has already run to Jesus and bowed down before Him in front of everybody and called Him "Good"- which Jesus said meant that He was God. So selling everything and giving to the poor and treasuring God with the guarantee that Jesus will give him a place in Heaven should have been easy- right? Look again at **Luke 18:23**

But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

Now remember it was this man who had run up to Jesus and had bowed before Him- *asking* the Lord what he had to do to inherit eternal life. And now Jesus tells him what he has to do. Now think about this for just a moment.

It is very possible that this man was guilty of breaking one or more or even all of those five Commandments and was merely *saying* that he had kept them. But it is also possible that this man had truly gone to great lengths during his lifetime to keep all five of them and maybe was even successful in keeping some or most of them.

And so doing whatever he had to "do" to be sexually pure wasn't a problem to this man. Keeping his heart in check so that he didn't kill anyone was okay with him, too. So was going to whatever lengths he had to- to not steal anything and not gossip or spread rumors and to go through much effort to honor his parents. None of that seemed to trouble him. He was willing to obey all of that and seemingly had been obeying them- at least to some degree- for many years.

But to sell all his vast holdings and to give it to people who had not earned it, to treasure God above money and wealth and possessions, and to follow Jesus- that was bridge too far. And so, all the excitement was gone. All the emotional high of this man appearing to be more ready for Salvation than anybody else had been in a long time- was gone. And what had replaced all that emotion? Great sadness.

I mean Jesus just took the wind completely out of this man's sails. Instead of eyes that burned with excitement- this man's head dropped down and he became very sad. And according to **Mark 10:22**- there was a long strange silence that came over the crowd, too, as they watched this man walk slowly away from Jesus- *grieving*.

Now I am convinced with all of my heart that many Church leaders today would have stepped in at this point to interrupt Jesus and stop Him from ruining this opportunity- because obviously Jesus didn't understand how to win lost souls and was just taking this thing too far. And I am also convinced that some if not all of the disciples and even the Apostles thought the same thing.

I mean if *anybody* was ready to be saved- it was *this* man. If *anybody* was almost already saved- it was *this* man. Every single one of the Apostles came to Jesus initially in worse shape than this man- humanly speaking. And all Jesus had to do was go for the "soft touch" and this man would have probably been among the group for the rest of his life.

I mean it almost looks like Jesus ruined this moment on purpose. If you didn't know any better you would think that Jesus was bringing forth a Lesson here that nobody would ever forget that He thought was more important than even this man's soul.

So *why* was this man sad? Why did he walk away from Jesus grieving (**Mark 10:22**)? One reason- the insidious effect that money and wealth and possessions have on the human soul. And then Jesus responded to this sadness and departure in verses 24b&25:

24 ... How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Now there have been all sorts of silly teachings through the years about some crack in the wall around Jerusalem that is supposedly

called "The Needle's Eye" where beasts of burdens struggle to go through. But those are not true. So if you have ever heard anyone say that this is a reference to a gate in the wall around Jerusalem which was so small that a camel had to get down low and take the load off its back- hear this: There is no such gate, and the proper context of this Passage simply will *not* allow such an interpretation.

What Jesus meant when He said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God is that it is easier for a full grown animal called a camel to go through the eye of a tiny sewing needle than it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

In other words- it is *impossible* for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God. And the reason it is impossible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God is not merely because riches steal away our affections and love- even though that is true- but because it is impossible for *any* man- rich or poor- to enter the Kingdom of God. So this is not an issue about money, per se- it's a problem with the human heart.

But money *was* an issue with the disciples and with the Apostles, and sadly- money *is* a problem with many people today- 2,000 years after this was said. And Lord willing- we will get into that in great detail next time.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.