

# 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**

292- The War of Wealth and the Grace of God-Part 2

---

October 04, 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 that Brother Andy just read to you is one of the most amazing encounters in all the Bible. Here is a young, successful,

educated, cultured, and fabulously wealthy aristocrat- a Jew- who was schooled in the OT Law- who runs up to Jesus and bows down before Him- crying out, *"Good Teacher- what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* I mean of all the people standing there that day- this man had all the outward trappings of a prime candidate for Salvation.

And yet over the next few moments- the joyous occasion turned to dust as the Incarnate God unveiled this man's heart and revealed who he really was and what he really treasured more than life itself. And it wasn't Jesus. And this man walked away from Jesus – grieving and very sorrowful.

And we have no reason from anywhere in the rest of inspired Scripture to even think that this man ever had a change of heart. And so we are left with one conclusion to this entire event- this man's love of money and wealth and possessions and real estate paved his road to hell.

And so it is Passages like this that cause me to tremble- some 2,000 years later. It is encounters with Jesus just like this that makes me wonder what it is that *I* love and what *you* love more than Jesus; what it is that has captured my heart and that has captured your heart to the point that *we* would walk away from an encounter with the Son of God- grieving and very sorrowful.

You see, a great hindrance to our life with Jesus is the great gulf between our Biblical understanding of Divine Truth and the corresponding passions of our hearts. The glorious and horrible Truths which thunder through the Bible cause only a faint echo of fear and ecstasy in our hearts. Many times- we take a megaton of Truth upon our lips and yet we speak it with an ounce of passion. So I ask you today as I stand before you trembling:

Do you really believe in your hearts what you say with your lips?

I know for myself that in order to be a true shepherd and not a hireling, in order for me to grieve over the straying lambs, and in order to summon with tears the wild goats, I must believe in my heart certain terrible and wonderful things. If I am to love God and others with the meek, humble, tender, and self-effacing Heart of Christ- I must feel the awful and glorious Truths of Scripture. And specifically: I must feel the Truth about Hell- that it exists, and that it is terrible and horrible

beyond imagining, that all who will not repent go there, and that it is forever and ever.

And even if I were to buy into the liberal theologians who pollute the modern seminaries and try to make the “**lake of fire**” of **The Revelation 20:15**, or the “**fiery furnace**” of **Matthew 13:42** mere symbols- I am confronted with the terrifying thought that Biblical symbols are never to be understood as being *overstatements* but *understatements* of reality. Jesus did not choose these “word pictures” so that we would think that Hell is *easier* than burning.<sup>1</sup>

But I am compelled by the Gospel to feel the Truth that once I was as close to Hell as I am to this Pulpit. And its darkness, like a vapor, had entered my soul and was luring me down. Its heat had already seared the skin of my conscience. The ideas and plans and views of Hell were *my* ideas, plans, and views. I was- in every sense of the word- a “**son of hell**” (**Matthew 23:15**), a “**child of the devil**” (**John 8:44**), and a “**child of Wrath**” (**Ephesians 2:3**). I belonged to the “**viper’s brood**” (**Matthew 3:7**), and I was entirely “**without hope and without God in the world**” (**Ephesians 2:12**) before God’s Mercy re-wrote my life.

I must believe that just like a rock climber- who has slipped and now hangs over the deadly cliff by his fingertips- so I once hung over Hell by a thread and was but a heartbeat away from everlasting torment. And I want to say this very slowly so that it sinks in: Everlasting Torment!

So I must feel the Truth that God’s Wrath was on my head (**John 3:36**), that His Face was against me (**Psalms 34:16**), that the Almighty hated me in my sins (**Psalms 5:5**), and that His Curse and Fury were my portion (**Galatians 3:10**).

And I must know that Hell was not *forced* on God by Satan. It was God’s Design from the very beginning for the devil and his angels, and for people like I was. (**Matthew 25:41**). So I must feel in my heart that all the Righteousness in the universe was on the side of God and was against me. And so in the Balances of God’s Justice- I was lighter than air. I had not one fraction of a right to appeal my sentence of Condemnation. My mouth was stopped (**Romans 3:19**). I was corrupt and guilty through and through, and God was perfectly Righteous in His

---

<sup>1</sup> Every genuine believer should be concerned in our day about the public statements as well as the secret leanings of so many religious scholars and leaders in the modern Church toward the concept of “Annihilationism”- the belief that Hell does not involve eternal conscience misery and Divine Punishment but is simply the “cessation of existence”. It is one of the great heresies of our day and a radical departure from historic, orthodox, and Biblical Christianity.

Sentence (**Psalm 51:4; Romans 3:4**).

My dear friends- I have been told many times- *"Brother Blair, do not think such negative thoughts. Don't preach such negative things. Don't look back. Speak only of the blessed Love of God and look only to the new creation."* But I say to you this morning, on the Authority of God breathed Scripture- *"Remember, remember, remember!"* Remember the horrid condition of being separated from Christ- without hope and without God- on the very brink of hell. Remember **Ephesians 2:12** that says:

***remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.***

Listen to me. If we do not believe in our hearts these awful Truths- and believe them to such a degree that they impact the way we think and the way we talk and the way we act- then please know this- the blessed Love of God in Christ will scarcely shine at all. The sweetness of the air of Redemption will hardly be detectable at all. If the horror of hell is not forefront in our minds- then the infinite Marvel of our new life will become commonplace. And the wonder that to me, a child of hell, all things are given for an inheritance- will not strike me speechless with trembling humility and lowly gratitude.

Without the knowledge of a burning Hell being seared into my mind and thoughts- the whole concept of Salvation will seem ho-hum, and my entrance into Paradise will seem as common and drab as mowing the grass. When the heart no longer feels the Truth of Hell- the Gospel ceases to be "Good News" that is Good indeed, to simply being "News". And the intensity of incomprehensible Joy is blunted and the heart spring of Love is dried up.

But if I remember the unspeakable Truth that people who do not repent and trust in Jesus will scream in a lake of fire forever, and if I believe this firmly in my mind and heart, if I let every remaining sin and every moment of indifference to spiritual things remind me of the smell of hell lingering in the remnants of my corruption, if I let my knees become weak as water as on the day when I tottered on the cliff of my doom, if I recall that, apart from absolutely Free Grace, I would be the most hardened sinner alive- if I remember all this and believe all

this and talk about all this- then, Oh, what a contrition! What a lowliness! What a meekness will be effected in my soul!

Then the gulf between my Biblical understanding and the passions of my heart will be taken away, and love will abound. When the Great Physician carries me from the crematorium of the universe into His intensive-care room- how would I then be able to return evil for evil? What suffering would I be able to look on with unconcerned scoffing? Where would be the lowest sinner over whom I could feel one millimeter of superiority?

You see, when Hell becomes real to me- I become a brokenhearted "leaper for joy". Yes, I grieve for all my wickedness of pride and unbelief and indifference and ingratitude and impurity of mind and worldliness of goals. But that grieving leads me into leaping with joy for the free and inexhaustible Mercy of God. But the leaping and the rejoicing are predicated on the grieving coming first.

It is easy for many of us to remember Jonathan Edwards as the preacher of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." But it isn't so easy to remember the powerful practical effect of Edwards's vision of hell. What becomes of a person who has seen it and who has run to the Arms of Jesus for rescue? Edwards answers:

"A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble broken-hearted love. The desire of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires: their hope is an humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble, broken-hearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a little child, and more disposed to an universal lowliness of behavior."<sup>2</sup>

Only a heart that knows both brokenness *and* leaping- will love like Jesus. And the Power of that love will be proportionate to the fearfulness that is felt about our nearness to Destruction. The keener the memory of our awful rescue- the more naturally we pity those in a similar plight. The more deeply we feel how undeserved and free was the Grace that plucked us from the flames- the freer will be our benevolence to sinners.

---

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed. John E. Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959), 339–40.

We do not love as passionately as we ought because our belief in these things is not real. So our pride is not broken and our demeanor is not lowly. Our theology is cause only for bragging and arguing rather for rejoicing- if we are not moved by the knowledge that even now- what we deserve would be hell. And therefore, we do not look with aching and longing on the crowds that pass us in the airport or the straying members of our flock.

John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace," is a model of such compassion. And he said,

"Whoever . . . has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known, by his own experience, the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, Yea, he is constrained, to love his fellow creatures. He loves them at first sight; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel, and care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, and even while he warns them by his terrors."<sup>3</sup>

Brothers and sisters- we need to feel the Truth of Hell and the nearness of our own escape. Otherwise, the Gospel will be vapid, and we will be unable to count others better than ourselves in all lowliness (**Philippians 2:3**). And if we are arrogant- then who will tell the people of these things? Who else will love them enough to warn them with both tenderness and tears?

If there is the slightest resignation in your theology about warning sinners with tears to repent- then I beg you to cast your theology aside because it is *not* of God. If there is anything in your understanding of the exhilarating and glorious Truths of God's Sovereignty or Sovereign Election or Limited Atonement or Effectual Calling or Perseverance that makes you calloused or unconcerned about people burning in Hell forever- then hear me when I say to you that you have not learned these Truths correctly or Biblically, and you are deceived.

The genuine Christian must *always* have the smell of Hell singeing his garments and the aroma of Heaven beckoning him on. Both of those two visions are *mandatory* if we hope to escape the snares of the evil one and walk this world in white. The pull of the world is simply too strong and too pervasive in this culture for us to meander

---

<sup>3</sup> John Newton, *The Works of the Rev. John Newton*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 132.

around as though we have no Purpose and no Cause. So there must be a “holy intensity” about us as we serve the Lord.

And the result of being gifted to be able to smell the heat of hell and yet rejoice over the glories of Heaven will be an amazing combination of blazing-eyed intensity as we preach and testify with high levels of joy, praise, and exultation over the Hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

Now 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 because of the Fall- riches and wealth and money and possessions have such a hold on us 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 money was an issue with the Apostles. And sadly- money *is* a problem with many people today- 2,000 years after these words were said. Money *dominates* our lives and our world today. And I would suggest to you that money is in the top ten things that we labor for and that we talk about and that we plan on today. And so money and wealth and possessions are things that God Himself said were important to us and with us in this life. And so the way we look at money and wealth and possessions are important- because they reveal, more than anything else, how we look at God. And so there are at least two things about money in this Passage that we need to see and understand:

1. Money and Wealth caused this rich young ruler to walk away from Jesus- grieving.
2. The Apostles and disciples all had a wrong view of money.

In other words- instead of walking away from this encounter with Jesus rejoicing that his sins were forgiven- this man walked away very sad. Why? Dr. Luke tells us that it was because of his wealth.

Now I have been saved for almost 45 years. And I have seen and heard many things over almost a half century in Church. And I guess I've been in literally thousands of prayer meetings- maybe tens of thousands. And I have heard people ask God for good health and deliverance and strength and courage and forgiveness. But it is rare indeed to hear anyone ask for prayer that God would forgive them or deliver them from loving money or cause them to love Jesus more than they love money.

Now it *could* be that nobody that I have ever prayed with is troubled by money. But I find that hard to believe since we are living in the most prosperous nation in the history of the world. Every single one of us here today has wealth and possession that were only dreams of people who came before us. And so I think that the reason that people today are not moved by this Encounter with Jesus to fear that they, too,

may be just like this rich young ruler is because they are too much like this rich young ruler. And to me- that is terrifying.

You see, the modern Prosperity Preachers- the pillow prophets on the Hay, Wood, and Stubble Television Network- they teach that money is only good- that it could *never* affect your soul in a negative way. And so they ignore all of the warnings that God the Holy Spirit put into Scripture that warn us of how money and wealth and possessions can cripple our lives and decimate our souls and cause us to be just like this rich young ruler. Biblical, inspired, inerrant warnings like the kind that God the Holy Spirit moved upon James to write:

**James 5:1-6**

**1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you.**

**2 Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.**

**3 Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!**

**4 Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, *and* which has been withheld by you, cries out *against you*; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.**

**5 You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.**

**6 You have condemned and put to death the righteous *man*; he does not resist you.**

And so because they ignore warnings like this- enormous amounts of teachings and prayer is devoted to acquiring even more wealth and to accumulate more of this world's goods. These pied-pipers teach that prosperity is of God- and a sign of God's Favor- which is exactly what the Apostles and the disciples and this rich young ruler thought.

But according to Jesus- earthly prosperity is extraordinarily dangerous. It makes it humanly impossible to enter God's Kingdom. It is "fool's gold". But its ability to deceive and blind is so powerful that when Jesus held out real, eternal Treasure to this man in exchange for the counterfeit- he wouldn't trade. And so what this man did- was to choose poverty over unimaginable eternal wealth.

Dear friends- idols are not to be played with. They are to be run from, hated, and destroyed. If you begin to look at idols with admiration- they will deceive you, they will seize your soul, and they will capture you. And if financial security is an idol for us- then rest assured that Jesus will call us, in some way, to abandon it.

So what we need to remember is that worshipping idols is a great mystery to us. We usually don't even see that we are doing it- until *after* we have done it. But *abandoning* our idols is the path to eternal treasure and pleasure- because it reveals what is truly in our hearts. But it is hard. It requires a kind of "daily dying" because it *forces* us to abandon what we once believed would give us happiness and life.

But even though idolatry is a mystery to us- one thing is *not* a mystery:

A camel cannot go through the eye of a needle.

... it is impossible. And Jesus interprets His Own meaning about why He said this in His response to what the disciples ask next. When Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into Heaven- the men who actually loved and followed Jesus blurted out a question in verse 25 that showed how wrong they were about money. They asked:

**... Then who can be saved?**

.. which showed what the dominant theology was back then. These Jews had all been taught throughout their entire lives that financial prosperity was a sign of God's Favor. Wealth meant that God was pleased with them, and therefore- *whatever* people were doing to acquire their wealth was seen to be sanctioned by God- even if it was sinful and condemned in Scripture. Even if it made them to be like this rich young ruler.

And that meant that the opposite was also true- that poverty was seen as a sign of God's Displeasure and a sign that poor people were sinners under the Judgment of God. And this bad and wrong theology spilled over into other areas as well. And so sickness- especially long-term illness- was viewed as a sign that God had cursed them, and

certain diseases were held up as examples of sin that people avoided at all costs.

And this is why Jesus spent so much time with people who were poor and sick with these socially unacceptable diseases. He certainly wasn't sanctioning their sin- He was proving to the world that some of God's people are sick and poor and uneducated, and yet loved by God and are His people. And so the outward trappings of prosperity and good health means nothing in regard to a person's spiritual condition with God.

But because they were deceived about wealth- the goal of the average Jew of that day was to be healthy and rich so that they could enjoy God's Favor as well. So in the mind of the men who followed Jesus- if *anybody* was close to God- it was the wealthy people. And if *anybody* was a candidate for Salvation- it would be those who were rich. So when Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into Heaven- these men were perplexed and bewildered at who then could be saved.

Now at this point Jesus had a golden opportunity to answer with an answer similar to one that we might give in our day like:

- ✓ Only the poor in spirit can be saved
- ✓ Only believers can be saved
- ✓ Only those who follow Me can be saved

... but Jesus doesn't give any of those answers, does He? No, the Lord follows through with the *meaning* of what He had just said about the camel and the needle's eye. And so He says in verse 26,

**Luke 18:27b**

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

Now what is Jesus referring to when He says, "**The things that are impossible with people...**"? The rich young man had just been *unwilling* to leave his possessions and care for the poor and treasure God and follow Jesus. And Jesus had said,

**Luke 18:24b&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."**

But then the disciples broaden the issue to include everybody by asking: "**Then who can be saved?**" And Jesus in essence says, "The point I am making about the rich is true for *everybody*. So this is not a problem with money as much as it is a problem with the human heart. And that is why He makes the broad general statement: "With people this is impossible."

And so the subject that Jesus is really talking about here that is so hard for people to do- that is, in fact, *impossible* for people to do- is to treasure God above all else. In other words- Jesus was talking about conversion or Salvation. Because it is the *conversion* of the human soul from loving sin and self and other things that are passing away to loving God that would empower the individual to be able to give away everything that he has and treasure God above all else. Lost people not only do not have that kind of power- they don't have any desire to love God like that.

So loving God to that extent is part and parcel to what it means to be saved. So Salvation is God sovereignly granting- at great cost to Himself- a deep and abiding and exclusive Love for God. So the goal of Salvation is that God will love us to save us- so that by saving us- we will love and treasure and enjoy God above everything else- forever. And so God graciously gives us this kind of love for Him- at great cost to Himself- namely the Death of His Own Son.

We must understand, dear friends, that *nobody* can love God like this on their own. Lost people will *always* love themselves and love sin and love things that are passing away more than they love God. And so this isn't a matter of willpower or putting forth more human effort. No lost soul possesses love for God like that in and of themselves. It doesn't exist. Loving God like that- to that extent- is a gift from God to underserving sinners. And that is why Jesus lived and died and rose again- so that we would be *gifted* with this kind of Love for God that treasures God above all else.

And that also means that the opposite is also true. And so loving money and wealth and land and wives and possessions and power and whatever other idol we might have- is part and parcel to being lost. And *all* lost people love like that. Nobody teaches them to love like this-

they love these things and they do not love God because of the disposition of their fallen nature. So all lost people treasure things and stuff and themselves above God and the things of God.

And so Jesus is saying here that Salvation is humanly impossible. Who then can be saved? Answer: No one -unless God sovereignly intervenes to do what is humanly impossible and to give what humans do not naturally or normally possess.

And this is *exactly* what Jesus meant when He said in **John 6:65**:

**... no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father**

It's exactly what Paul meant in **Romans 8:7** where he said,

**because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so,**

And in **1 Corinthians 2:14**,

**But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.**

And **Ephesians 2:5**,

**even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),**

Now it is my duty to warn you that there is a belief that is very popular in the modern Church that says, Yes, with Man- Conversion is impossible apart from God's Grace, but God makes it possible for everyone by what they call a "Universal Work of Grace", which God gives to *all* people *everywhere*. So, this view says, God overcomes the deadness of our fallen nature and makes *all men* "able to believe".<sup>4</sup>

So these people acknowledge that Salvation would be impossible without this Grace- but with this Grace Salvation *is* possible. And then they go on to say in rebellion to what the Scriptures teach- that God has

---

<sup>4</sup> Explaining the position of Arminianism, and of John Wesley in particular, Millard Erickson says, "This 'prevenient grace' also makes it possible for any person to accept the 'offer of salvation' in Jesus Christ." *Christian Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 914.



given this Grace to *everyone*. And so in this distorted view of Salvation- the decisive "Act of Conversion" is *our* work- apart from any added Work on God's Part.

But that interpretation simply will not work in this Passage. Here is a rich man who loves his riches so much that he chooses to have them rather than to help the poor or have treasure in heaven or follow Jesus. And when Jesus explains this tragic choice, what does He say? Does He say: *"God's 'Universal Grace' had overcome the hardness and rebellion of the man's heart and made it possible for him to leave his riches and love the poor and treasure heaven and trust Jesus, but the man still did not do it?"* Is *that* his explanation for the man not leaving his riches and following Jesus? No. That is not the Lord's Explanation. Jesus' Explanation of the man's unwillingness to leave his riches and follow Christ is:

**With humans it is impossible.**

So it is completely ridiculous in this Passage to argue that God makes faith possible for all men, and that the reason some don't believe is merely their own independent liberty. And it's ridiculous because the issue here is why this one particular man did not use his so-called "liberty" to leave his riches and follow Christ. And what is Jesus' explanation that this particular man, in this moment, would not leave his riches and follow Jesus? His answer is:

**With humans it is impossible.**

In other words, even if there is some "Universal Grace" that enlightens every man that comes into the world- what Jesus is explaining here is one particular man's refusal to leave money and follow Jesus- even *with* such a "Universal Grace". And the explanation from the Incarnate God for this man- even supposedly with such "Universal Grace" is: He did not follow Me because "with humans it is impossible."

Therefore, what Jesus means when He says in verse 26:

**"With God all things are possible,"**

... is that God can and does effectually enable people to leave their riches and follow Christ. He *does* grant repentance, as Paul says in **2Timothy 2:25**. He *does* grant that we come to Christ (**John 6:65**). He does work in us the gift of faith (**Ephesians 2:8**). God *does* what is humanly impossible- that is- He alone converts sinners and brings them to Eternal Life.

So the issue is not primarily whether this man was right or simply bragging when he says, "*All these I have kept from my youth.*" Because Jesus has already shown us back in **Luke 17:10** that even a person who would keep all the Commandments is still an unworthy servant if he depends on them for Justification.

And Jesus has already shown us back in **Luke 18:11–12** that the Pharisee's moral righteousness, and his religious righteousness, and his claim to depend on God for it all- that none of that counts for true Righteousness before God. A person must despair of what is in himself and look away from himself- and look only to Jesus in order to be saved.

So, when it comes to Justification, it doesn't matter whether the rich ruler is right when he says, "*All these I have kept from my youth.*" What matters is what he is depending on. What he is trusting in. So Jesus says to him in **Luke 18:22**,

**"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 this is amazing. He says he only lacks "one thing." So presumably, if this man had that "one thing", then he would be complete. In fact, that's the way Matthew records Jesus words, "If you would *be perfect* (Greek, *ei theleis teleios einai*), go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me" (Matthew 19:21). So this man is *not* perfect. He is not complete. Not in God's Eyes. He needs something else. And no matter how much Law-keeping he has mustered- he still lacks something. The one thing is still missing.

But it sounds like he lacks at least three things:

1. Sell what you possess
2. Give it to the poor
3. Follow me

So how are these three demands really one? These demands may be summed up like this:

“Your attachment to your possessions needs to be replaced by an attachment to Me.”

In other words- it's as though the man stood there with his hands full of money, and Jesus said, “*You lack one thing; reach out and take My Hands.*” But to do this- the man must open his fingers and let the money fall. So the “one thing” he needs is not what falls out of his hands- but what he takes into his hands.

Now the poor of the world are always the beneficiaries when this transaction happens- when a person treasures Jesus above money. And that's why Jesus mentions the poor. ***But the main point is what is happening between this man and Jesus.*** The Lord said, “*You lack one thing. You lack Me. So stop treasuring money and start treasuring Me. You want to inherit eternal life. You want to enter the kingdom of heaven. You want to be justified. Only by your attachment to Me will you inherit eternal life and enter the Kingdom and be Justified. So if you would be complete- which is the only way into God's Kingdom— follow Me. Be connected to Me. Depend on all that I am for you.*”

So yes, there is a clue in the context here about the basis of our Justification. No matter how obedient we are to the Commandments, we will *always* lack one thing, unless we look *away* from ourselves to the Mercy of God in the Person of Jesus Christ. He alone is God's Righteous One by Whom many will be counted Righteous. And I pray that you will look to Jesus today.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2008- 2015 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729 [www.covenantofpeace.net](http://www.covenantofpeace.net)

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1996 by The Lockmann Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of teachings taken from a verse by verse study of **The Gospel According to Luke**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

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.