

"17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" 20 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property. 23 And Jesus, looking around, *said to His disciples, "How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at His words. But Jesus *answered again and *said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were even more astonished and said to Him, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Looking at them, Jesus *said, "With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God." 28 Peter began to say to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 "But many who are first will be last, and the last, first.'" Mark 10:17-31, NAS95.

From our text, we want to understand three essential things in the plan and purpose of God, especially in the matter of the saving grace of God. Three themes are woven into our text, verse by verse and our final conclusion must be that there is a difference

1. between works and Grace;
2. between Law and Gospel and
3. between the will of man and the will of God.

We discover these things as we first look at the character of the rich man.

He appears to have some very commendable traits. First he is zealous.

17* ¶ As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus is beginning to leave to journey to his next destination and the young man wants to intercept him before he is gone so he runs to Jesus and then kneels in front of Him.

The picture we have here is of one running at a rather quick pace and coming to a quick stop as he kneels before Jesus. He is zealous to meet with Jesus the Rabbi before he leaves town.

Next, we can appreciate that this man follows custom and protocol. He has humbled himself before the teacher from whom he seeks counsel. We know he is seeking counsel because he has come not to listen first but to ask questions of the Rabbi. Asking questions of those who should have the correct answers is a commendable attitude for anyone.

Regarding his question, we see that the man has some knowledge of the facts of Scriptural truth. He is at least aware of the truth of eternal life compared to annihilation for example.

When the man is taught by the Rabbi he is willing to give an answer.

19* "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" **20*** And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up.

This reveals to us that it seems that he is genuinely seeking answers to his question. Entering into dialogue with a counselor is a commitment to seeking out a solution or finding the answer that will be the most helpful when there is a perplexing question that needs an answer.

He is also willing to wait and receive an answer that includes further instruction:

21* Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

Many people today are just like this man when we look at the beginning of the story and just take *it prima facie* ie. at first look.

There are all kinds of people who are zealous in their pursuit of the answers to life and death and discovering some kind of spiritual or metaphysical truth (that is truth that originates from outside the physical) is of critical importance.

Today, there are so many concepts of life after death and many people are content to imagine their own doctrine of eternal life without any substantive foundation philosophically or religiously. They just imagine something and make it their truth each man doing what is right in their own eyes. They do the same thing with God and make Him in their own image, which is idolatry.

Many people are willing to enter into discussions about these things and usually have their own pre-suppositions and the discussion only goes so far once the comfort level of having all the answers reaches its climax. Others are willing to give more consideration to what some else says because their own convictions of what they believe are really not very strong.

At our present place in the narrative, Jesus speaks with authority and we begin to see a change in the man. And so it is with people today. Often, when someone is searching for truth or some semblance of it, once someone speaks with authority and it implies or better yet, explicitly demands that truth in some way is narrow or exclusive or absolute, the seeker falls away.

Most people are only looking for a confirmation of what they want to believe as truth. They really are not interested in the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth or as Jesus said, "I am the truth." You cannot get any more exclusive than that.

So, even though this man has some seemingly commendable traits, a closer look reveals to us that he is lacking in the most important things. Although he approaches Jesus with what seems to be a genuine zeal and enthusiasm, we can observe that he does not really have a genuine knowledge about eternal life.

Believing inaccurate knowledge or being without true knowledge is a dangerous thing as the apostle Paul wrote,

Ro 10:2* For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Here we have to say that the man should have known better. Under the Old Covenant there were promises made by God about keeping the law:

De 31:12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. De 5:29 'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments forever that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!

But notice the key word to the blessing. The word is all. If they keep all. The only way a man could be saved under the Old Covenant by doing works was by keeping ALL the law, and of course this was absolutely impossible. That is why the law never did or could save anybody. This is why Christ came to save his people and did so by obeying all the law perfectly because he was born under the law.

So the man's question is really asking for an answer that will be in agreement with his own ideas. What must I **do** to inherit eternal life is the wrong question. He wants it to be confirmed so that he can do something to inherit eternal life. He knows what he has done. The Old covenant scriptures have already answered this for him as far as doing something.

Then Jesus asks, "why do you call me good." The man's approach to Jesus as a Rabbi was sincere but not accurate. Jesus is only absolutely perfectly good because He is God. There is room here for the man to answer, but Jesus already knows He cannot.

No one would ever call a Rabbi good. That is why Jesus asks and then says "No one is good except God alone." Am I God? Do you see me as God?

Then Jesus quotes from the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments:

19* "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'" 20* And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up."

The man understands the commandments, as Jesus has quoted them.

From the time of the man's bar mitzvah, this would be his youth, the Jewish coming into manhood, he would have done an external keeping of the law once he was finally taught it, but with no thought of the heart element because it is evident that he does not know God, he only knows the Law as it concerns works toward men.

He does not have spiritual insight to their true meaning

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14

Jesus has not quoted the commandments to this man that are directed toward God. Why? Because this man has no consideration for God but only the works he thinks will earn him eternal life by treating people nicely. God is not his first concern and Jesus knows this.

But Jesus in his own teaching, answers a scribe in the Matthew narrative three chapters after this story and puts God first in Christ’s law:

“Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Matthew 22:36-40

All the Law of God has always been built on these two commandments. Even the Ten Commandments, which are only a summary of all the Old Covenant Law, are really the two great commandments.

The young man wants eternal life on the basis of his works under the Law and his will. He does not even see that he has lied to Jesus. He never could have perfectly honored his parents or never have lied to someone.

Based on this, Jesus glances at Him in a loving way because this man is so lost.

He then says *you lack one thing!* What is Jesus purpose?

Jesus is saying, “If you believe the way to eternal life is by works, Law and your will, then do this first, and then follow me and be my disciple. I am giving you another law that you must obey. Will you?”

Is this an exclusive or an incidental command to those who would follow Christ?

Is this a command that Jesus gives to all who are to follow him?

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says,

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break

through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21,

A materialistic mindset is always an obstacle between man and God. However, God does use and has used wealthy men, perhaps not many.

By God's grace, Zacchaeus gave away half of his wealth and became honest and a true son of Abraham. Joseph of Arimathea gave Christ his tomb and there are others throughout history who have used their wealth for the glory of God but not many, even as Paul writes,

26* For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble;27* but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,28* and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,29* so that no man may boast before God..

The man was sad, and walked away. His face fell like a lowering cloud, somber, gloomy.

His money was his god, his idol. Was his walking away necessarily a bad thing?

Many are excited at the first consideration of Jesus and the promise of eternal life and then they walk away. Many disciples are excited at first and then walk away

60* ¶ Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?62* "What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before?63* "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

64* "But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him.

65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."66* As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. John 6:60-66 and Jn. 8:32.

How does a disciple walk away from Christ?

There are two meanings of the same word greek word *mathetes*.

There is a disciple who does not make the full commitment to discipleship and therefore proves false and then there is the disciple that makes the full commitment to discipleship and so Jesus' true disciples will forever remain His because they will endure to the end by the grace of God.

So now Jesus' disciples wonder how it is that a man like the ruler is not really blessed of God, because he is wealthy and it seems that from what he said he has tried to be a godly man. If he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven who can? Jesus' answer is, "with men it is impossible (men cannot earn their way into heaven and what seems to be blessings are not proof of being blessed) but with God all things are possible" (salvation is an act of God's Sovereign grace whether a man has riches or is poor.) This is one of our clues to the meaning of Jesus' words when He says to them twice, "the first shall be last and the last shall be first."

27* Then Peter said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?"

Obviously, this question is asked because the rich ruler was not willing to leave things behind and follow Jesus and walked away with nothing concerning the kingdom of heaven. Jesus then gives them teaching that is meant to be encouraging and future focused.

28* And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**29*** "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life.

For the twelve there is a place in the final or consummated kingdom of God when they will somehow under Christ have authority to judge the nation of Israel for rejecting Christ and while on earth the riches of God's grace in association with and through other believers is much more valuable than the riches of the young ruler. They will also inherit eternal life.

Next, Jesus uses a proverb to bracket the teaching of a parable that He will use to illustrate the proverb as we studied last week.

30* "But many *who are* first will be last; and *the* last, first.

The disciples relate wealth and riches as a blessing from God. They can be, but do not express spirituality. Jesus expresses the difficulties of the rich (this is not exclusive. Many other things make it difficult for others but wealth is a particular obstacle.)

Who can be saved? Even this man could be by the grace of God. Was it so bad that the man walked away in grief. No? We need conviction. “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.” John 16:8-11 21.

Was this man ever saved? Some want to believe so with no proof from Scripture because Jesus looked at him with love. Well, God loves the world but He does not choose to save the world. Our purpose is not to demand from Scripture what it does not nor cannot say but rather to apply truth to our lives as it is made clear.

From our text we understand three essential things in the plan and purpose of God, in the matter of the saving grace of God. Three themes are woven into our text, verse by verse and our final conclusion must be that there is a difference: 1. between works and Grace; 2. between Law and Gospel and 3. between the will of man and the will of God.

Works will never save a man for we have been saved by grace and not by works so that no man can boast.

The law is meant to condemn and reveal sin. Paul says it is a ministry of death.

5* Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God,6* ¶ who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.7* But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was,8* how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 2 Cor 3;5-8

Although the law is not gracious it serves a gracious purpose. Men must understand condemnation before they can say, “therefore there is no condemnation in Christ.” The law cannot save anyone nor has it ever done so.

The will of man cannot effect salvation. With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible as John writes in his gospel,

12* But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, 13* who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Jesus never preached the gospel to this man.

Jesus used this man as an illustration the same way he used the children in Matthew 19 as an illustration. Jesus said men must have childlike faith to enter the kingdom. He then has this conversation immediately afterward with a man who has no faith but only some works and based on that he believes he can enter the kingdom.

He was not even willing to really learn more about the question he first asked.

May we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we contemplate the teaching of Scripture this morning and never forget that salvation is an act of a sovereign God who is just, holy, righteous and merciful among many other attributes.

He does what He pleases for His purpose and His pleasure unto the praise of His glorious grace.