



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V23 N9 February 28, 2021

KING JESUS

"The Poverty of Great Wealth"

Mark 10:17-31

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Salvation by Grace

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by his grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9



How is salvation possible?

In Mark's Gospel, entering life (9:43), entering the kingdom of God (v. 47; cf., 10:23-25), inheriting eternal life (10:17), and being saved (v. 26) are terms used more or less synonymously, suggesting that eternal life is experienced in the age to come (v. 30; cf., Lk 18:30). Jesus must have been asked frequently, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" We know he was asked this by a wealthy young ruler on one occasion (Mk 10:17; cf., Mt 19:16; Lk 18:18) and by an expert in the law on another (Lk 10:25).

The encounter between Jesus and the expert in the law is particularly interesting because Jesus agrees with him that eternal life can be obtained – *theoretically* at least – by keeping the commandments. One commentator writes: "It is clear from this exchange that Jesus believed that keeping the true spirit of the Law guarantees eternal life . . . Thus, Jesus appears to agree with the Torah, at least as it was understood in the synagogue. Obedience to the Law, if it includes love of one's neighbor, will result in eternal life. We shall find that this is Jesus' principal point here in Mark 10:17-22 as well" (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 34B, Mark 8:27-16:20, 95).

The problem, of course, is that what is *theoretically* possible is simply not *humanly* possible. Neither apparent obedience to the letter of the law "do not commit adultery" but not its spirit "do not look lustfully at a woman" (Mt 5:27-28), nor obedience to the traditions of the elders to the detriment of others (Mk 7:1-13), counts as true obedience.

A thematically similar passage, Mark 10:17-27, confirms this. An especially earnest man with unusual respect for Jesus ran up to him and asked, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In anticipation of his later words, which indicate salvation is *impossible* for man but *possible* for God, Jesus replied by noting, "no one is good – except God," thereby suggesting that no one keeps the commandments. Early on in the conversation, Jesus was according to one commentator, "seeking to have the man rethink his idea of goodness, since there is no one that is ultimately good/righteous

(Rom 3:10) but God" (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 468).

Apparently, the man had outwardly obeyed God's commandments pertaining to loving others – do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false witness, do not defraud, and honor your father and mother – since his bar mitzvah. He was clearly guided by the false impression that his outward obedience amounted to full obedience. Still, he had no assurance of eternal life.

But had he truly obeyed them, namely, in the way God intended? His response to Jesus' command, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (v. 21), indicated that he had not, for upon hearing it, his "face fell," and "he went away sad, because he had great wealth" (v. 22). In truth, he loved his wealth more than he loved others, not to mention more than he loved God (Mk 12:29-31). Ironically, the rich young man had managed to obey the letter of the commandments while failing to obey their spirit.

One commentator summarizes Jesus' teaching on inheriting eternal life and entering the kingdom this way: "Whoever is to enter the kingdom must receive it as a child would – without calculation and without hedging. In marked contrast to the example of the child, there appears a wealthy man who wishes assurance of eternal life. Tragically, he exemplifies the latter category of persons [i.e., those who are most powerful, wealthy, and influential]. Although his intentions are good and he is by all appearances a Torah-observant man, his loyalty to wealth proves too great an obstacle. He cannot give it up, and he cannot follow Jesus. The disciples too begin to wonder if they have what it takes. They do not, for humans cannot save themselves; only God can. Herein lies the foundation of Christian theology's historical emphasis on salvation by God's action alone (as summed up succinctly in Eph 2:8-9)" (Evans, 103). He only *thought* he had kept the commandments.

1 EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

17 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.'"

20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "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 someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

28 Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

29 "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields – along with persecutions – and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Underline "Good teacher" in v. 17.
- Circle "eternal life" in v. 17.
- Circle "defraud" in v. 19.
- Bracket "all these I have kept" in v. 20.
- Circle "loved him" in v. 21.
- Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 22.
- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 24, 27, 31.
- Bracket "how hard" in v. 24 and "easier" in v. 25.
- Circle "eye of a needle" in v. 25.
- Circle "saved" in v. 26.
- Underline "hundred times as much" in v. 30.

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Jesus was “on his way” from where to where? (See vv. 1, 10, 32.)
2. What word or words would you use to describe how the man approached Jesus?
3. What do you think Jesus is suggesting in verse 18?
4. What do the commandments Jesus listed have in common?
5. Had the man kept the commandments Jesus listed? Explain.
6. Identify the “one thing” the man lacked.
7. Why is it hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God?
8. Explain the *comparison* in verse 25.
9. What makes salvation *impossible* for man but *possible* for God?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about whether disciples should take Jesus’ words in verses 29-31 *literally*.

Commentary On The Text

Shortly after arriving in Perea, certain Pharisees “test” Jesus *in public* by asking him whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife or not (Mk 10:2). His answer so stuns the disciples that they conclude, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry” (Mt 19:10). According to Jesus, Moses may have regulated divorce because “your hearts were hard” (Mk 10:5), but that does not mean God approved of it. Therefore, “What God has joined together, let no one separate” (v. 9). Then, when they are *in the house again*, Jesus confirms privately what he had said publicly, that husbands and wives who divorce their spouses to marry others commit adultery against their former mates (vv. 10-12). Sometime later, Jesus resumes his final journey to Jerusalem (v. 17; cf., v. 32). As he sets out, a pious Jewish man “runs up to him and with ingratiating deference kneels before him and addresses him as ‘Good teacher’” (David E. Garland, *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*, 395). The man has a burning question for Jesus. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v. 17). “He wants to know how to ensure that his goodness will pay off in eternal life. He hopes that Jesus can relieve any lingering doubts about his chances and inform him if there is anything in the fine print he needs to worry about” (Garland, 395). Those who depend on keeping commandments to inherit eternal life can never have assurance! The conversation that follows contains Jesus’ answer and the man’s response (vv. 18-22), Jesus’ comments on riches and the disciples’ response (vv. 23-27), and Jesus’ comments on rewards (vv. 28-31).

Jesus responds to the rich young ruler’s (v. 22; cf., Mt 19:20; Lk 18:18) extraordinary show of respect—addressing him as “Good teacher”—by reminding him “No one is good—except God alone,” thereby undermining any hope he might have of inheriting eternal life *by being good through doing good*, namely, keeping the commandments. One commentator observes: “As the man will shortly assert that he has been keeping God’s commandments, Jesus challenges him to examine his idea of ‘goodness’ and his qualifications for obtaining eternal life” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 240). To be good enough to inherit eternal life one must be perfect, but of course, nobody’s perfect—including this pious observant Jew, as Jesus shortly shows. Nevertheless, when reminded of God’s commandments, which are taken from the so-called “second table” of the Decalogue (cf., Ex 20:12-16; Dt 5:16-20) but cited in a different order, the man claims he has kept them all since assuming personal responsibility for keeping the law at age 12. Rather than dispute his claim, Jesus tells him, “One thing you lack,”

and commands him, “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (v. 21). Hearing these words, “the man’s face fell,” and “he went away sad, because he had great wealth” (v. 22), thereby showing that he loved his wealth more than he loved God and more than he loved his neighbor, and thereby proving that he had not kept God’s commandments in the way God intended. He thought his wealth was a sign of God’s blessing and of his own righteousness. He thus regarded himself as respectably good, but failed to recognize that respectably good is not good enough. Eternal life can only be received by faith; it cannot be earned by works. So while perfect obedience to God’s commandments may be *theoretically* possible, it remains *humanly* impossible.

At this point Jesus turns to his disciples to tell them just how hard it is for “the rich to enter the kingdom of God” (v. 23), that is, to receive eternal life. He doesn’t explain why it’s so hard for them. Perhaps it’s because the rich trust in their riches (v. 24 margin) or because they mistake their riches for righteousness. He simply uses *comparison* coupled with *hyperbole* to tell them that it’s *literally* harder than squeezing an camel through the eye of a needle. In other words, it’s *impossible*—prompting the disciples to ask, “Who then can be saved?” The answer to their question is, of course, no one. No one can be saved apart from God—not even a decent commandment-keeping man, who enjoys God’s material blessings.

Hearing what Jesus says to the man, Peter speaks up to point out that the disciples have done what this rich ruler refuses to do, namely, leave everything to follow Jesus. The ruler was looking for assurance of eternal life; the disciples are looking for assurance of eternal rewards. Jesus doesn’t disappoint them. One commentator writes: “Jesus acknowledged that their allegiance to Him **and the gospel** (cf. 1:1; 8:35) entailed a break with old ties—**home**, loved ones, or property (**fields**), as the case may be (cf. 13:11-13; Luke 9:59-62). But to everyone who makes the break Jesus promised that all these things will be replaced a hundredfold by new ties with fellow disciples (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Acts 2:41-47; 1 Tim. 5:1-2) **in this present Age**, the time period between Jesus’ First and Second Advents. Then **in the Age to come**, the future Age following Jesus’ return (from a NT viewpoint), each will receive the ultimate recompense—**eternal life** (cf. Mark 10:17)” (John D. Grassmick, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 151).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 17 *Good teacher* “His eager approach, kneeling posture, sincere form of address (**Good Teacher**, not used by Jews to address a Rabbi), and profound question revealed his earnestness and respect for Jesus as a spiritual Guide. This man’s question indicated that he viewed eternal life as something to be achieved by doing good (in contrast with Mark 10:15; cf. Matt. 19:16) and also that he felt insecure about his future destiny” (John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 150). “There is no reason to believe that the man who approached Jesus was being ostentatious in his otherwise unusual, perhaps even extraordinary, show of respect” (Craig A. Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol 34B, Mark 8:27-16:20, 95).

v. 17 *eternal life* “The expression *eternal life* describes ultimate salvation beyond the present life (for ‘eternal’ see on 3:29; for ‘life’, 9:43). In the context of verses 23, 25 and 26, *eternal life* is synonymous with entering the kingdom of God and being saved” (Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Mark*, TNTC, 239).

v. 19 *defraud* “Because the command not to covet is missing from Jesus’s list of commandments, some have suggested that ‘do not defraud’ is the equivalent of ‘do not covet.’ It is more likely, however, that it should be understood as a variant of ‘do not steal’ (V. Taylor 1952: 428; France 2002: 402). For the most part, the order of the commandments follows Exod. 20 . . . commandments six through nine” (Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BECNT, 469).

v. 20 *have kept* “The man’s superficial understanding of God’s standards became apparent in his claim that he had ‘kept all’ those commandments from his ‘youth up.’ He regarded obedience simply as external conformity without internal purity (cf. Phil. 3:6). This was the natural implication and consequence of the Pharisees’ teaching” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Mark,” 2020 ed., 217, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/mark.pdf). He had not obeyed in the way God intended. “He lacks ‘one’ thing. He lacks obedience to the first table of the Ten Commandments. He loves his riches more than God” (Stein, 470).

v. 21 *loved him* “‘Looking upon him’ suggests Jesus studied the man carefully for a moment (Swete, 225), and [ἐγαπήσεν αὐτόν] ‘loved him,’ may suggest that Jesus actually hugged him or took him by the shoulders as a sign of affection (that is, the verb refers to overt action, not simply to an inner emotion; for the possibility, see Field, *Notes*, 34; ‘caressed him’; Gundry, 554)” (Evans, 98).

v. 24 *how hard* Some manuscripts add “for those who trust in riches.” (NKJV). Whether included or not, the context indicates Jesus is talking about those who are wealthy (cf., vv. 23, 25). They see riches as a sign of God’s blessing and approval. Jesus uses comparison to indicate exactly how hard it is—doing the impossible (putting a camel through the eye of a needle) is easier. “The disciples’ amazement at Jesus’s words reflects the contemporary view of that day (and tragically often among Christians today) that wealth and prosperity are usually an indication of God’s favor and blessing. For this man, however, they were a curse leading to his damnation” (Stein, 471). The man believed he had kept the commandments (v. 20) and saw his wealth as a confirmation of that.

v. 24 *eye of a needle* “Attempts have been made to ameliorate the metaphor by ‘miniaturizing’ the camel or ‘growing’ the eye of the needle: some Greek manuscripts and a few early translations replaced the word *kamēlon* with the word *kamilon* (‘rope’). As early as Theophylact (eleventh century), interpreters suggested that Jesus spoke of a small gate within the large double gate in the city wall of Jerusalem through which pedestrians could enter (suggesting that once the camel strips off its load and bends its knees and neck it can get through); but there is no evidence whatsoever that any gate in Jerusalem was ever called ‘The Needle’s Eye’ (Schnabel, 243).

v. 26 *saved* “What is at stake is entering the kingdom of God or not entering it (10:24), receiving eternal life or not receiving it (10:17), being saved or not being saved (10:26). The issue here is not ethical in nature but soteriological” (Stein, 471). “The question grows out of the assumption that wealth was a sign of divine blessing while disease and poverty were signs of judgment. It was further assumed that because God was fair, the blessed surely were righteous while the judged surely were sinners” (Evans, 101).

v. 30 *hundred times* “Jesus speaks of the extended family of his followers (cf. 3:34-35) with new familial relationship and the sharing of possessions (cf. Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37)—a reality whose value is far greater than the security that personal possessions can ever give” (Schnabel, 245).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

Assurance of eternal life and assurance of eternal rewards belong to disciples who *by faith* in Jesus receive eternal life and by *following Jesus* receive eternal rewards.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?
2. What does this passage teach me about myself?
3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

Life gets crazy quickly. We become consumed with work, family, schedules, etc. and it feels all-encompassing. All of these things matter, and they are all important so how can you find time to slow down? That seems to be the question I ask myself toward the end of every week. When I am feeling overwhelmed and realize that I have left no time for the Lord, I typically find myself reassessing what tasks are from him and what tasks just feel important to me. Sometimes things that feel like they should be a priority are not from the Lord, and instead are just things that get in the way. The world offers us a lot of things, good and bad, that are enticing. We get caught up with our situations and surroundings and all the sudden we realize we have made no room for the Lord. My friend, let me encourage you to drop some things and make room for the Lord. The way to the Kingdom of God is not through having the cleanest house or the best-dressed kids. It is by seeking the Lord with your whole heart. It is not by worldly treasures but by a consistent pursuit of the heart of God. Take some time to really search your heart and see what is getting in the way of you giving your whole self to the Lord. Are you willing to give it up to be in relationship with God?

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Mark 10:17-31.

1. What did the man ask Jesus?
2. What was Jesus' response?
3. Why did the man go away sad?

What Do You Think?

Jesus tells us that riches will get in the way of our ability to get in the Kingdom of Heaven. What do you need to give up to focus more on God?

What Do You Do?

Fasting is a way to put something aside and intentionally spend more time with God. Choose something to fast from this week. Maybe you will choose video games, watching TV, or anything that takes up a lot of your time. Spend the time you would have doing that thing by being with the Lord.

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Mathew 6:21

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRAL Kids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- ☐ I completed my Bible Study
- ☐ I memorized this week's verse
- ☐ I brought my Bible to church
- ☐ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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