

III. JESUS EXPLAINS THE PERILS OF RICHES (10:23-27).

- A. Them that trust in riches: "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and said unto them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God" (23-25).
1. As used in consecutive verses, "They that have riches," "They that trust in riches," and "a rich man" are made equivalent by the Lord as he warns against their great danger.
 2. One who "trusts in riches" rather than or more than in God cannot enter God's kingdom: He excludes himself by placing his supreme love in earthly things (1 Cor.6:10; 1 Jn.2:15-17). Whatever Jesus meant by "a needle's eye," he teaches that it is impossible for one who trusts in riches to be saved.
 3. There are two reasons why it is so difficult for a rich man to be saved: First, it is difficult for one who has riches not to trust in them, cleave to them, and be corrupted by them. Second, it is equally hard to cease to trust in them and to abandon that trust when it is already formed.
 4. The young ruler had made the wrong choice, and Jesus in this way cautions others against his tragic and monumental blunder.
- B. Who then can be saved? "And they were astonished exceedingly, saying unto him, Then who can be saved? Jesus looking upon them saith, with men it is impossible, but not with God: for all things are possible with God" (26,27).
1. Unless God is the supreme object of trust and devotion, salvation is impossibly difficult! "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).
 2. Earthly riches are good in themselves, but they bring with them many temptations (1 Tim. 6:9,10). And, as Frank L. Cox said, "We cannot, by our own power, lift ourselves out of the mire of greed."

CONCLUSION -

- I. The young ruler was not as good as he went away as when he came to Jesus: Such a choice of opportunities leaves one decidedly poorer on earth, haunted by guilty conscience, and eternally bankrupt unless we repent. Such moral choice leaves its mark upon us. Cf. Goodpasture, 42.
- II. Each of us has a choice of masters to make, the same choice faced by the young ruler: Treasure in heaven vs. treasure upon earth for self. Will we turn away from the Good Teacher, or follow HIM? (Rom.6:16-18)?
- III. The young ruler went to the right Person, asked the right question, received the right answer, but he made the wrong decision.

STUDIES IN MARK--LESSON TWENTY-NINE

Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler

Mark 10:17-31

INTRODUCTION -

- I. This thrilling story was recorded three times in a short book by Matthew (19:16-22), Mark & Luke (18:18-30).
- II. A highly interesting person who was a rich young ruler approached Jesus, most likely on the Lord's last journey to Jerusalem, probably A.D. 30.
- III. This is a practical lesson teaching the right attitude toward wealth and toward eternal life.
 - A. Wealth as such is not condemned: It is a good means of laying up a good foundation against the time to come (1 Timothy 6:17-19).
 - B. Jesus does warn the young ruler, rich people and all of us, however, of the deceit and grave danger involved in covetous trust in earthly riches.

DISCUSSION -

- I. THE YOUNG RULER'S QUESTION (10:17).
 - A. One ran to him: "And as he was going forth into the way, there ran one to him and kneeled to him.." (17a).
 1. Matthew describes him as young (19:20), all three describe him as rich, and Luke tells that he was "a certain ruler" (18:18). We know not what kind.
 2. Some of the attractions of youth are life expectancy, courage, hope, zest, opportunity, promise, loyalty.
 3. Earnest and eager, he "ran" to Jesus: He went to the right Person.
 4. Humble and reverent, he kneeled to him: He had the right attitude toward Jesus.
 - B. His great question: "And asked him, Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life"? (17b).
 1. His calling Jesus "Good Teacher" shows that he recognized real goodness and worth in others.
 2. He yearned and sought for the best life, "eternal life." His "things" had not satisfied him. He was needy and incomplete: Something was missing in his life.
 3. He asked the right question, "What shall I do to ...?" He had doubtless learned from the law of God there was something to do for eternal life (Micah 6:8; etc). His question is most important and profound. One cannot go to heaven by the works of another.

4. However, eternal life is as much or more a reward for being what God wills as for saying and/or doing what he wills (Matt. 22:37-40).

II. THE LORD'S REPLY (10:18-22).

- A. None is good save one: "And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? None is good save one, even God" (18).

1. In the absolute sense, only God is good. But in a relative or comparative sense, all can be good (Acts 11:24; Gal. 2:13).
2. By these words Jesus means that he was "God manifest in the flesh," or that he was not good. To concede therefore that Jesus is "good" was to admit his claim to deity, and, consequently, truly and uniquely able to answer his profound question.

- B. The commandments: "Thou knowest the commandments, Do not kill, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor thy father and thy mother" (19).

1. The law of Moses was in force until Jesus died, so he did not say, "There is nothing for you to do" (Mt. 7:21-27).
2. The searching test given included those moral principles which involves duty to one's fellow man, under the law of Moses and also now.
3. Unless "Do not defraud" is equal to it, "Thou shalt not covet" was omitted. But the law also said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18).

- C. "All these have I observed from my youth up" (20).

1. He had been taught well: He had enjoyed the privileges which are the birthright of every child (Cf. Deut. 6:7).
2. He was moral and honorable: A model of moral integrity and excellence. He had kept himself morally "unspotted from the world."
3. Jesus did not question his claim, and we have no reason to do so. But he asked, "What lack I yet" (Matt. 19:20)?

- D. Jesus loved him: "And Jesus looking upon him loved him" (21a).

1. Though Jesus came from the ranks of the poor, he loved the rich. His answer to the young man was not in terms according to prejudice, rank, race or wealth, but according to love and truth.
2. His love was partly because of what the young man was (so near the kingdom) and partly because of what he could become.

- E. "And said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me" (21b). That was his crucial test.

1. "If thou wouldst be perfect (complete)" (Matt. 19:21).

2. Knowing the degree of the young man's devotion to earthly treasure and his lack of compassion, and yet loving him because of his otherwise marvelous character, the Great Physician prescribed the proper remedy for his sin, in harmony with the principle of "drastic operations" taught in Matthew 5:29,30; Mark 9:43-48.

3. He unveiled and exposed his idol: Love of money, trust in earthly treasure. Jesus wanted him and us to remove every idol from the heart, whether riches, power, friend, family or fame (1 John 5:21).

4. Just one thing would have increased his chances of eternal life from zero to 100%. But it would have also brought him a double measure of happiness: A hundred fold benefit "in this life" (that is a 10,000% return on his investment, which is "abundant life" now), as well as eternal life "in the world to come" (Mark 10:29,30; Matt. 19:29). How important one thing can be! What the Pharisees lacked, and what many of us lack, is proper love of God and of neighbor. How much do you love God? His church? Your neighbor? Love is the soul of Christianity.

5. "And come follow me" (Cf. Luke 9:23; 14:26,27).

- F. His sad departure: "But his countenance fell at the saying, and he went away sorrowful: for he was one who had great possessions" (22).

1. He went away grieved and sad, not in anger or resentment. Had he gone away in scorn or jest, however, he was still rejecting Christ, the Lord of life, his greatest opportunity and life itself. He made the wrong decision!
2. Apparently he was one of those men whose love for his possessions just barely counterbalanced his devotion to God. Yet, one who drowns in a bathtub is as dead as one who drowns in a lake.
3. He did not go away because Jesus had been unkind to him, wanted his money, or drove him away. He "loved him," said, "give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." He went away because he loved and trusted his great possessions more than his own soul & Jesus.
4. Two great magnets played upon his heartstrings: Money and the Master. He was drawn to both and had to make an extremely hard decision. Money won. His judgment was blinded by an unbalanced view of the value of heavenly and earthly things ("the deceitfulness of riches"), the words of Jesus were "choked" from his heart, and he returned to the brief pleasure his wealth and position could give, trying vainly to hold on to the treasures of two worlds.