

# OpenTheo

## Children, Rich Young Ruler (Part 2)



### **The Life and Teachings of Christ** - Steve Gregg

In "Children, Rich Young Ruler (Part 2)," Steve Gregg explores the conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler, focusing on the question of what it takes to inherit eternal life. Jesus first reminds the man that only God is truly good and then encourages him to keep the commandments. While Jesus doesn't suggest that following the commandments alone saves anyone, he does highlight the importance of exhibiting faithful works, which involves keeping God's commandments. The rich young ruler struggles with the idea of selling his possessions and giving to the poor, ultimately choosing his material wealth over following Jesus.

### **Transcript**

I mean, it almost sounds like he's objecting to being called good, where in fact there's nothing wrong with recognizing Jesus as good. I mean, it's kind of a difficult, hard saying of Jesus. But then Jesus did say hard sayings sometimes.

If we take the Alexandrian text reading, why do you ask me about what is good? That's a lot easier, at least for me to understand what that would mean, and that might make it better or might make it worse as an authentic reading. But the reason I find it easier is this. Jesus would then be saying, you shouldn't be asking me how you can be good when only God is good.

You should just be asking me how to be right with God. The man said, what good thing must I do? And the guy had to be told, you can't do any good thing to be good enough. Only God is good enough.

Therefore, nothing you do is going to seal it in for you. It's got to be your relationship with God. It's got to be your faith in me.

It's got to be God's mercy. It's got to be the goodness of God. Let's say if you're not the goodness of you, because there's none good but God.

Why are you asking me a question like this about what is good? I could tell you the most wonderful behaviors that men could do, but even if you perform them as a result of my

telling you about it, you still wouldn't be good enough. Only God is good. In other words, the Alexandrian text is a lot more desirable just in terms of it being a sensible thing for Jesus to say.

But that may be the very evidence that it's not the original, because the other text is more difficult. In any case, I don't settle the matter for you. No one knows for sure which was the actual statement of Jesus, but his comment is one of the hard sayings of Jesus, and it's not really clear how he meant it to be understood.

If you want to enter into life, and that's what the guy asked for, to have eternal life. If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments. Now, there's a bit of a problem here, because we understand what Paul said, that by observing the law, no flesh will be justified in God's sight.

That no one is saved by keeping the commandments, no one is saved by observing the law. The law doesn't save people, it's the grace of God, accessed through faith in Christ, that saves a person. And yet Jesus seems to be teaching the opposite.

Keep the commandments. Now, there's two possibilities here. There might even be more, but I know of two principal possibilities in interpreting what Jesus was saying.

Some people feel that Jesus was playing cat and mouse with the guy. Basically saying, well, here's the standard. If you can keep all the commandments of God, then you can enter into life.

But Jesus knew that no man could. And therefore, this was another way of saying, you can't enter into life through keeping commandments, because you'd have to keep them all. You'd have to keep all the commandments, and no one has ever done that.

Therefore, you're going to need grace. And that Jesus, in saying keep the commandments, didn't mean that he really believed the man could, but that by saying this, he would prove to the man that the guy needed to be saved by some means other than his own works, but by grace, because he couldn't keep all the commandments. Now, if that's what Jesus meant, he at least initially failed in his intent, because the man wasn't convicted.

The man believed himself to have kept the commandments. The man said, which ones do you mean? And Jesus list a bunch of them. The guy said, okay, I've done that.

So the man was not brought immediately to the position of thinking, well, I must really be a scumbag. I really need the grace of God, because I can't keep the commandments. His conviction was that he had kept the commandments.

Now, another possibility is that Jesus said this, not to say that keeping the commandments is what saves anyone, but if a person is going to be saved by faith, it'll

result in works. And the particular works that a Jewish person would exhibit if he was a faithful Christian, like Abraham or Moses or David or someone like that, the works he would exhibit would be keeping God's commandments. And therefore, if you want to enter into life, you need to have the works that show that you have faith, the works that show that you have repentance.

John the Baptist told the Pharisees he wouldn't baptize them until they exhibited fruits worthy of repentance or works that show that repentance is present. And possibly Jesus is saying, basically, you need to have a faith and a repentance that will be exhibited in a life of obedience to God, keeping his commandments. Could go either way.

I don't know which is the right way to tell you the truth. But I suspect that the first explanation may have more to its credit. Do you have another explanation, Jamie? Yeah.

Well, a better quality of life or eternal life? Salvation. What the guy asked for was eternal life. And when Jesus said if you would enter life, it sounds like he would be talking in the context of salvation or eternal life.

The problem is it sounds as if Jesus is saying, if you just keep the commandments, you'll have eternal life. And that could be either seen as the commandments are the cause of eternal life or they are the result of having eternal life. But the wording would make it sound more like it's the cause.

Therefore, the first explanation I gave may be the best or the better of two. Or there may be others. There may be others I really have not been able to sort through as well.

But here's what Jesus may have been doing, saying, OK, you are a ruler of the synagogue. You are a religious Jew. And you need to understand that if you're ever going to have life, you're going to have to have perfect obedience to God.

And therefore, if you want to have life, keep the commandments. That is, you're either going to have to have perfect obedience to God or you're going to have to have faith in me, one or the other. Because if you don't have faith in Christ, the only other way to be saved is to be absolutely perfect and never sin.

Never have given God any cause to condemn you. Never have violated any law of his ever. No man's ever been in that position.

So grace is necessary for all. But Jesus could have been trying to say this, trying to get this across a bit. To have eternal life as a result of doing any good thing, which is what the guy asked, what good thing must I do to have eternal life? Well, if you're going to have eternal life as a result of doing good things, what you have to do is keep all the commandments perfectly.

Now, this is not to say that anyone will ever have life as a result of keeping all the

commandments perfectly, but to say that if there's going to be eternal life, it's not going to be by doing them. It's not going to be this way because no one qualifies this way. It's not by doing some good thing that you'll have eternal life, which is what the guy asked about.

Because if it was available on the basis of doing a good thing, you'd have to do every good thing that you ever had opportunity to do and never have done any bad thing. You'd have to have been 100% good like God is good. And you would therefore need to keep every commandment of God.

Now, Jesus may have meant it that way. And he may have hoped that by saying keep the commandments, this man would despair and say, gosh, how could I have life that way? And then he'd realize he has to cast himself on the mercy of the judge, which is the only way of really being saved. That is not be self-righteous, not to consider good works to be the thing that's going to get you the ticket.

Now, when Jesus said keep the commandments, the guy wanted more specifics, which ones? And Jesus listed some of them. Now, notice he didn't list the 10 commandments. Some of the things he listed are the 10 commandments.

I point this out because sometimes people who are Sabbath keepers and who argue that Christians need to keep the 10 commandments, they point to this passage, Jesus quoted from the 10 commandments. Obviously, Jesus wants us to keep the 10 commandments. No, I wouldn't say Jesus quoted from the 10 commandments, although some of the commands he gave were in the 10 commandments.

He also did have in verse 19, love your neighbor as yourself. That's not one of the 10 commandments. But love your neighbor as yourself is the great commandment.

And all the others that Jesus mentioned, which coincidentally also belong to the 10 commandments, were just other aspects of loving your neighbor as yourself. You don't kill your neighbor. You don't commit adultery against him.

You don't steal from him. You don't bear false witness against him. Honor your father and your mother.

That's a loving way to treat them. Or to put it briefly, love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus didn't say keep the 10 commandments.

He basically said, love your neighbor as yourself. And here's some ways that you can do so. Now, this list of commands is different in other gospels.

In Mark and Luke, those gospels do not record, you shall love your neighbor as yourself, as Matthew does here in verse 19. Mark and Luke only record the previous commandments to that. They only list those ones.

And therefore, perhaps someone who wanted to say, well, Jesus was advocating keeping the 10 commandments, they could maybe say, well, maybe Matthew added that, love your neighbor as yourself later, you know, as a summary statement or something like that. But Jesus, you know, Luke only mentions commands that are in the 10 commandments. However, Mark, although he doesn't, in Mark's gospel, Mark 10, 18 or 19, though he doesn't list love your neighbor as yourself, he does include another commandment besides the ones in the 10 commandments.

He says, and do not defraud. Now, when I first saw this in Mark 10, 18 or 19, wherever it is, when this list of commands is given by Jesus, Mark gives it, when he says, do not defraud, I thought, well, maybe that's Mark's way of rendering, don't bear false witness against your neighbor, because that'd be like fraud. But then I noticed that Mark lists, don't bear false witness and don't defraud as separate commands.

Now, in the 10 commandments, there is not a commandment that says, thou shalt not defraud. And if there's anyone that comes close to it, it's, you shall not bear false witness. But Mark lists false witness and defrauding as separate.

And therefore, it's clear that neither Mark nor Matthew's version are trying to give the impression that Jesus is saying, keep the 10 commandments. And Matthew's version, I think, is the most complete here by adding at the end, love your neighbor as yourself. That was really the area where the man was deficient.

To say you shall not murder, well, the majority of Jews had never murdered anyone. To say you shall not commit adultery, I dare say probably most Jews had never gone out and committed actual physical adultery. Now you can say, well, they did it in their minds.

But that would hardly be what Jesus means here, since the rich young ruler was probably not present when Jesus taught his disciples that to look at a woman with lust was adultery and that to be angry at your brother without a cause is murder. That was a talk to his disciples in a different location. This local guy probably had never heard Jesus say those words.

This man would understand and mean, don't go out and kill anyone. Don't go out and sleep with your neighbor's wife. Don't bear false witness in court against your neighbor.

Don't defraud your parents. And this man had been conscientious in all those areas. And he felt quite self-justified.

He said, I've done all these things for my youth. But the interesting thing is that he still didn't feel like he was okay. Now, notice this.

Notice how the discussion went. Jesus said, if you want to have eternal life, keep the commandments. The guy says, which one? Jesus lifts them.

The guy says, I've done that. Now, he should be able to do this. Well, therefore, I have eternal life.

Because Jesus said, if I do these things, I'll have eternal life. And I've done them. But he knew in his heart he still wasn't right with God.

But he wasn't quite sure what was missing. And so, we have Matthew recording his words at the end of verse 20. What do I still lack? Now, by the way, just before that where he says, I've kept all these things for my youth.

You may notice a textual note there in your margin. From my youth is not found in the Alexandrian text. But, both Mark and Luke include that line.

And it's in the Alexandrian text as well as the text of Scripture. So, the guy obviously said it. Mark and Luke tell us so.

Matthew's gospel, some manuscripts have that line, some don't. But it's an authentic line. So, the man said, from his youth, he'd been a diligent, conscientious Jewish law keeper.

But he said, what do I still lack? Now, this guy's persistent. I mean, it seems to me like if this guy didn't have extraordinary concern about his soul, he could have walked away at this point and said, well, thank God, I've done what I have to do. I have to not kill, not commit adultery, honor my parents, not steal, not bear false witness.

I've done that. That's what Jesus said, I have to have life. So, I must have life, praise God.

I walk away contented. But he had something aching inside. Something inside his conscience said he didn't have eternal life.

His life and God were separate still. And so, he said, what do I still lack? And I can't help but think Jesus was positively impressed and pleased by this man's persistence at this point. That this man was more than ordinarily interested in being right with God.

He hadn't come just to justify himself. Because he could have done so at this point without asking, what more do I lack? He could have said, oh, I've justified myself. I've done these things.

So, this man really wanted to make sure his life with God was as good as it could be. And that there was nothing missing. He said, what do I lack? And Jesus said, well, if you want to be perfect.

Now, only Mark tells us, Jesus looking at him loved him. Once again, it's the case of Mark, you know, adding a little detail about what was going on inside of Jesus. It's Mark who told us Jesus was angry at the Pharisees.

It's Mark who told us that he was displeased, greatly displeased, when the disciples would be with people bringing their children. Now, it's Mark who tells us that Jesus loved this man before he spoke to him. That's Mark 10, 21.

Mark says, Jesus looking at him loved him and said. And then we have Jesus' words. If you want to be perfect.

Now, if you want to be perfect is only found in Matthew. In Mark and Luke, in its place is the statement, you lack one thing. It means the same thing.

You lack one thing. It means you're just short this one brick of a whole load. You've just, you've got, you're almost perfect, except for this one detail.

Now, Jesus loved the guy. Whether he loved him because he loved the heart that the guy apparently had, that he just really wanted to be right with God. I mean, he'd come running.

He had been cautious to obey the laws of God all his life. Even when he was told that he was, you know, that he'd done everything. He says, well, but there's got to be something else more.

I mean, he's not being easy on himself. And he's showing, you know, extraordinary concern about his soul. And so Jesus loved him and said to him, well, there is one, one thing you lack.

If you want to be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor. And you will have treasure in heaven and come follow me. Mark adds, come take up your cross or take up the cross and follow me.

The expression, take up the cross is not only Mark's version, but Jesus said, you'll have treasures in heaven, then come take up the cross and follow me. That expression, take up the cross is from Mark 10, 21. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

This was so promising up to this point. The guy was pursuing hard after God, but he met his nemesis. He met his, the obstacle he would not cross.

Now, Jesus, I think, was not making this unnecessarily hard on this guy. Jesus loved him. Jesus wasn't trying to exclude him.

That's important for us to realize, because people who read this story, especially rich people, get particularly edgy when they see this. Sell all you have and give to the poor and you'll have treasures in heaven and then come take up the cross and follow me. People with money tend to wonder, Lord, is that me? Western preachers have tended to say, well, this was just what this man had to do.

It's not what every Christian has to do. This man was told to do it, but Jesus didn't tell everyone to sell what they had. That's true.

That's true. But Jesus wasn't any harder on the guy than he had to be. And we might ask ourselves, if we have modern persons, modern rich persons, who are hoping to be saved without selling all they have and giving to the poor, we might ask, do they, in all other respects, exceed this person in zeal for God, in good conduct and obedience to God, in being hard on themselves and slow to justify themselves and humble and wanting to know what God requires so they can be perfect before God? This guy exhibited all of these traits and yet he still needed to get rid of his goods because they were a hindrance to him.

I dare say that most rich Christians who are hoping to get saved without giving up their riches do not equal and much less exceed this man in spiritual zeal and concern. And therefore, I would say they're not in need of less drastic surgery than he was. And that's what this was.

This was drastic, radical surgery that this guy needed. The last thing Jesus had told him to do was love your neighbors yourself. The man thought he had.

But how could this be? The man knew of poor people around. And there were people who didn't have necessary things. And yet he was rich.

And he had not done anything for the poor, at least not as much as he could. Now, the statement, love your neighbor as yourself, doesn't just mean love your neighbor a fair amount. It means love him as you love yourself.

Therefore, if this man knew there were some beggars around and put himself in their position and say, if I were them, what would I want them, what would I want a rich guy like me to do for them? You know what I mean? If I have, here I sit with money. If I was sitting in the position of a man who had no money and it was somebody else who had the money, what would I want them to do for me? Have I done that? And his answer would have had to be, no, he hasn't done that. He has not loved his neighbor as he loved himself.

Perhaps love to him was an emotion. And it had never yet occurred to him that it affected his bank book. That love is seen in where your money goes.

Jesus said elsewhere, where your heart is, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart will be. Many people consider that they love God with all their heart and their treasures are in heaven.

But they really have their treasures on earth. And their heart, Jesus didn't say your heart might be there. He said your heart will be there where your treasure is.



Therefore, this man's treasures prevented him from really loving in the way that God requires. And we know from other places, 1 John, James and other places, that when a person does not show compassion in this way, that they haven't shown compassion in the way that God requires. That is in terms of affecting their finances.

I personally do not call myself one of the poor. So in case you think I preach this so that someone might have compassion on me, I want to make this clear. Although, I mean, some people might call me poor.

I'm not poor. I've got all I need. But there are people who are poorer than I am.

And I cannot see them and do nothing or feel no obligation to them and still say I love them as I love myself. Now, there are limits to how many poor people you can help because you don't have infinite supply of money. And there are times when you will have to bypass a poor person without helping them, no doubt.

And that doesn't mean you don't love them. It just means that there's only so many people you can love in that way before you run out of that kind of tokens of love. And so no one can judge anyone else in this matter.

But everyone should judge himself. You know, this man wanted to have life. Jesus said, well, if you want to have life, keep the commandments.

Which one? Well, how about love your neighbors yourself? I've done that. Oh, really? Then sell what you have and give it all to the poor. Oh, I'm not sure I want to do that.

Well, then you don't love your neighbors yourself and you don't have life. Because you have to do these things, he said, if you don't have life. Now, that was regarded even by the disciples as a hard saying.

And it was certainly seen as a hard saying by the young man. It's interesting that when Jesus listed off some of the commands, some of them that were found in the Ten Commandments, he didn't list, thou shalt not covet. That was the man's particular problem.

It was covetousness. But Jesus saved that for the punchline. You know, it's like he listed all of the commandments in the second table of the Decalogue.

All the ones that have to do with your relationship with your brother, except the one, you shall not covet your neighbor's things or whatever. And he left that for the man to say, well, is there anything else? Anything else? Oh, yeah, there's one more thing. There's the thou shalt not covet part.

And you're covetous. You love your money. And that does prevent you from coming into the kingdom.

Now, some people would say the words of Jesus in this case are really not about salvation, but just being perfect. He said, if you would be perfect, so what you haven't given the poor. Well, true, Jesus did say that.

He said, if you'll be perfect. But the word perfect just means complete. Having all the blanks filled.

Remember that Luke and Mark both have instead of if you will be perfect, it says you lack one thing. If you'll be perfect means if you don't want to lack anything. If you want to be complete, there is one thing that you're still lacking.

Lacking for what? For eternal life. That's what the guy came asking about. What do I have to do to have eternal life? Well, you lack one thing still.

He's saying you don't have eternal life. And you won't have it until you fill this lack. Now, I want to make this very clear.

This man was called to do something a lot of people were not called to do. Not only to sell his goods and give to the poor, but also to follow Jesus. Jesus didn't tell everybody to follow him.

And as I pointed out on many occasions, there were friends of Jesus, saved people who were followers of his in their hearts, but didn't follow him around, didn't follow him geographically. As near as I can recall, the only people Jesus ever said follow me to were the ones who were called to leave what they were doing and go with him wherever he was going. Today, when we tell people you need to follow the Lord, we mean that metaphorically.

We're not really saying you have to leave your job or have to leave your home and go from here to there, because they may not need to. They can follow the Lord in their heart. They can follow his teachings, follow his example, follow his wishes, his will, and so forth.

And we say they're following the Lord. But when Jesus said follow me, there's no evidence he ever meant it in that metaphorical sense. When Jesus said follow me, he meant leave what you're doing and come and do what I'm doing with me and travel with me.

And not everyone who is a believer and not everyone who is a disciple and not everyone who is saved was called to do that. Not everybody's called to be a mobile minister. And it's quite clear that Jesus was inviting this guy to be a traveler with him.

And he couldn't travel as long as he had an anchor at home in the form of his possessions. Now, what I am saying to you is that the command to sell everything you have and give to the poor is not necessarily the universal way in which the love of

money is to be dealt with. It may be more frequently the way God wants people to do it than it is practiced.

There may be a lot more people out there who should sell all they have and give to the poor than who have. But I guess what I'm saying is we don't find Jesus giving that command to everybody. And even as near as I could tell, he only gave that command to people that were called to leave their home, to leave their possessions behind and go with him somewhere.

They were called to a life of itinerancy. And so instead of just leaving their home and their treasures to gather rust, he said, sell them, liquidate them, give them to the poor. You won't need them anymore.

If you follow me, you'll have treasures in heaven and a special calling. Now, since I personally do not believe that all Christians are called to leave their home in order to serve God or leave their jobs, I don't believe they're also all called to sell their homes or sell their equipment or sell everything they have. I do believe they are required to love their neighbors themselves.

That is a universal requirement. And since this guy was called to follow Jesus and leave his home behind, then one way he could express his love for his neighbors, take that home he wasn't going to need anymore, sell it and give it to the poor. Take everything he wasn't going to be able to carry with him and give it to the poor.

Now, that's not always the best thing you can do if you're not called to travel. If you're called, for instance, to have a business or a service or whatever, and you need a location. You may need to do it out of your home or out of an office.

You may need equipment. You may need tools. You may need to advertise.

You may need to do a bunch of things. But you see, if you have that lifestyle, that doesn't mean you don't love the Lord with all your heart and it doesn't mean that you don't love your neighbors yourself. Those are simply the ways you generate income.

What you do with the income, of course, is between you and God. But it should look an awful lot to God as concerned about your neighbor's needs as your own. That's the concern.

If you don't need something, God may have you sell it and give it to the poor. But if you do need it, you may not be called to sell it and give it to the poor. It may be something you need for the lifestyle and for the calling God has you in.

And therefore, I would not condemn anybody who doesn't sell what they have given to the poor. I pointed this out before. The man of the tombs, Jesus cast the demon out of him.

He wanted to follow Jesus. He wasn't allowed to. He said, no, you go home.

You stay home and tell your friends and family about me. So some people were specifically called not to follow Jesus, not even allowed to when they wanted to. So when people did want to follow Jesus, he pointed out to them, it's going to be kind of costly.

Remember in the end of Luke chapter 9, a man said, Lord, I'll follow you wherever you go. And Jesus said, well, foxes have holes and birds in the air have nests. But I don't have any of those amenities.

Therefore, if you're going to follow me, you're going to have no home. You're going to be a traveler. You're going to have less than the birds have.

Are you sure you want to do that? So I guess I want to make this clear distinction. I've made it before, but we come to passages frequently where I feel this has to be reiterated. Only because, I'll tell you why, only because I taught something else in my earlier life.

And because I did, I'm aware of people teaching something else. And it was much more of a hard line, absolutism, poverty mentality kind of stuff. That if you're not living in poverty, you're just not cutting the mustard.

You know, if you have anything more than your basic necessities, you're just not really a disciple of Jesus. And I haven't seen it that way for a very long time, but I used to when I was younger. And so that's why I protest as much as I do and try to atone for bad teaching I did when I was younger or something.

But anyway, this man, of course, because Jesus was calling him to follow him, would have no further use of his home and his possessions. And therefore he should exhibit his love in his neighbors himself by selling these things and giving them away. The man didn't want to do that though.

Now look, it says he had great possessions and he went away sorrowful. In fact, he went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. In the parable of the sower, Jesus says that some seed fell among thorns that choked out the seed and bore no fruit.

And he said, those are those that hear the word, but the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke out the word and it comes to nothing. The deceitfulness of riches. What's so deceptive about riches? Well, they promise what they don't deliver.

That's deception. What do riches promise? They promise happiness. People wouldn't pursue after riches if they didn't expect to find happiness through it.

There's nothing intrinsic in a piece of green paper that makes people happy. It's what they hope to do with money once they get it. It strikes them as the road to power and

privilege and luxury and comfort and pleasure and so forth.

And they're quite sure that these are the things that can give happiness. Therefore, the first step of getting any of those things is to get the money to get those things with. And the pursuit of money and the love of money is due to the lie that if you get it, you'll be happy.

And the fact is that if a person loves riches and wants to be rich, they will not be happy. Partly because even if they get rich, they'll find that they're never as rich as they want to be. But they may not even ever get rich.

And if their heart is set on riches and they don't get it, then they'll be, of course, unfulfilled. Look at 1 Timothy 6. 1 Timothy 6, verse 5 and following, 1 Timothy 6, 5 and following, Paul talks about people whose useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain, from such withdraw yourself. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it's certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. I wonder if Paul was thinking of the rich young ruler. He pierced himself through with many sorrows.

He went away sorrowful because he loved his riches. That's the irony. People think that the riches are going to give them happiness.

Instead, if they're, you know, at best, riches will give temporary happiness or gratification. But in the long run, especially on the deathbed, no one's going to lie on his deathbed and say, boy, am I glad I was so rich. Boy, am I awfully peaceful at this hour of death to know that I've indulged myself with everything money could buy, and I've pursued money with all my heart.

And it just brings joy to my heart as I lay here a few moments from death, to think of all the good times I've had spending my money on myself. People just aren't happy about those kinds of things at that hour. I've never known anyone who was.

I've never known anyone who comforted himself in the hour of death saying, well, at least I've indulged myself with everything money can buy. And that's some consolation. Everyone eventually comes to a place where they have occasion to be sorry if they pursued money instead of God.

Of course. Now, as far as pursuing money and God, the Bible says you can't serve two

masters. You can't serve God and man.

Jesus said that. You can't pursue the both. You can only pursue God.

And Jesus said if you seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all the other things will be added to you. You don't have to seek them too. You just seek God and his righteousness and his kingdom.

All the things necessary to be given to you. Not all the things you could lust after, but all the things necessary. And so to follow Jesus means you have Jesus.

And on the day of your death, as you lie in your deathbed, you will find it comforting to say, at least I have Jesus. Not at least I have money in the bank. Can you imagine that being comforting to you? And you know, when the doctor says, well, I give you about a half hour to live.

And you sit there saying, well, at least I'm dying with money in the bank. No, but I mean, that'd be stupid. But many a person at that hour and says, at least I have Jesus.

And this man was given a choice. Give up your possessions and follow me. That means you'll be with Jesus.

You won't be enjoying the presence of your money. You won't be enjoying the company of your possessions, but you'll be enjoying the presence and the company of Jesus. That's your choice.

And the man chose his money and his possessions rather than Jesus. Bad choice. Wrong choice.

And so he went away sorrowful. He was zealous to have eternal life. And he learned that it was going to cost him more than he was willing to pay.

He had to give up his materialism and his idolatry of things. Now, verse 23, Then Jesus said to his disciples, assuredly, I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again, I say to you, 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.

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed and said, who then can be saved? But Jesus looked at them and said to them, with men, this is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. Now I want to mention something that's a slight difference in the different Gospels.

Jesus twice here in Matthew says a rich man. In verse 23, it's hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And in verse 24, it's easier for a camel through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

So we have twice here reference to a rich man. In Luke, in the same statements, it's rendered a little differently. In the first case, Luke renders it those who have riches.

And in the second case, a rich man. OK, so he agrees with Matthew on the second case of using the term a rich man. But in the first case, instead of Matthew's a rich man, Luke has those who have riches.

Now, that's not overly significant. But when you turn to Mark's Gospel, there are three times that the persons that Jesus is warning against being mentioned. The first time they're called those who have riches, which also Luke used in the first case.

But the second case, Mark 10 in verse 24, Jesus says, how hardly shall those who trust in riches. Now that's a new angle. And then he mentions a rich man in verse 25.

In Mark 10, verses 23, 24 and 25, we have those who have riches, those who trust in riches and a rich man used synonymously in Mark's version of this account. Now, what I would point out to you is that some people reading Mark 10, 24 might say, well, I have riches, but I don't trust in riches. I don't trust in my riches.

I still trust in Jesus, even though I have riches. Well, that would be comforting if not for the fact that those who have riches and those who trust in riches are treated as synonymous terms. In the same positions in Matthew and in Luke, they're treated as synonymous, the same group.

The people who have riches, trust in riches. Now, not all to the same degree. Some people who have riches trust entirely in their riches and some to a lesser degree.

I've told you before that one of the ways I can encourage people to build faith is to diminish their cushion of economic wealth. I don't say how much, I don't have any commands to give you. I'm not setting any laws or standards here.

I'm just saying that the more wealth you have laid up, the more you will trust in it instead of God. You might say, no, I have money and I trust God perfectly. Well, you might trust God perfectly for your salvation and it's a good thing.

But you won't be able to trust God for some things when you've got him covered yourself that you would have to trust him for if you didn't have him covered yourself. I know that. I've told you before that I lived by faith for many years before my wife died.

And when my wife died, I got an insurance settlement and I was briefly rich. And I determined I didn't want to be rich and I wanted to dispense with that money within a year. I didn't want to just give it to the first televangelist who asked for it, but I wanted to take my time and responsibly find someone, some place to give it to the kingdom of God.

So I took one year and I took the entire settlement and spent it on necessary things only and gave away the rest. And a year later, I had none of it. And I was glad.

I've never regretted that because I've never wanted to live rich. But the interesting thing I found was that when I had the money, I suspected that that might interfere with my dynamic of faith that I'd known forever as a poor person. As a poor person, I'd always had to trust God for my food and for my phone bill and for my car to run and or get fixed or whatever, you know.

And when I had this money, I knew I didn't have to trust God for those things. I was determined I wasn't going to change my life of faith, but it was impossible not to change it. Because even though I was determined to say, you know, keep my heart on the Lord, and I did, I don't think my heart became less of the Lord.

I found that I just couldn't trust God for things that were already covered. You don't have to. You can't say, God, I'm just looking to you to pay my phone bill when you already know you have the money in the bank and you can write a check anytime you want.

It's nonsense to say, God, I'm trusting you to pay my phone bill because he's already paid it. It's already there on deposit, you know. And it changed things in my life briefly in a way I wouldn't want them to change again.

And I'm not saying it's sinful for people to do something different than I, believe me, whenever I give a testimony like this, I don't want people to say, and if you're not doing it this way, then you really are missing the mark. Because I don't feel that way. I don't feel anyone has to do it the way I do it.

But I'm just telling you a testimony that having riches and trusting in riches are one and the same thing to a certain extent. And the more you have, the less you will trust God in those areas that you've got covered with your money. Or to put it in reverse, the less money you have, the more you'll find you do trust God.

Because you've got no choice but to trust God in those areas. Anyway, Jesus said it's very hard for a rich man to be the king of God. The disciples were amazed by this.

Jesus compared it with a camel going through the eye of a needle. I realized probably, and I should explain, he didn't mean a small gate in the Jerusalem wall. Some people say the eye of the temple is a gate in the wall of Jerusalem.

There's no historic evidence for that. It's just a preaching device that's been passed around so widely that everyone's heard it. Others have pointed out there's a similar word in the Greek to camel.

And that means cable or rope. And Jesus said it's easy for a rope or a cable to go through the eye of a needle. There's no manuscript that says it that way, but a slight change in



the existing manuscripts could read that way, but there's no reason they could change.

It's just as impossible to put a rope through the eye of a needle as to put a camel through the eye of a needle. It can't be done. And what Jesus was saying is it's impossible.

And when the disciples, who can be saved? Jesus said outright, it is impossible. He's not talking about something difficult, really, he's talking about something impossible. He said, with God, nothing is impossible.

With men, it is impossible. So the man said, what good thing can I, a man, do to inherit eternal life? And his answer was, with God, it's possible. But with you, it's impossible.

With man, you can't do anything to inherit eternal life. Only God can save. And how much more difficult it is for a rich man than for one who isn't.

Because a poor man already would tend to look to God for things. Because he has to. Beggars tend to do that.

Let me show you something in James. You just studied James. James chapter 2, in verse 5. Listen, my beloved brethren.

James 2, 5. Listen, my beloved brethren. Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and the heirs of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him? Now, this doesn't necessarily mean that rich people can't be saved. Jesus made it clear with God, it is possible.

But I guess there's another interesting thing. With God, it is possible for rich men to be saved. But does that mean it requires God to make them able to do what they have to do to be saved, namely, fulfill what they have to give to the poor? I don't know.

You know, I mean, it doesn't mean Jesus doesn't say it's possible for them to be saved and still rich. But I think it is, frankly. I mean, I'm just because there are people who have some things, even in the Bible, who are regarded as Christians, even in Jesus' lifetime and in the book of Acts.

So I personally don't think everyone has to be poor. But it does say specifically in James 2, 5 that God has chosen the poor to be rich in faith. They aren't rich in money, so they've got to make it up some other way.

They can't trust in money, they have to trust in God. And so it is harder for a rich man who is not in the habit of having to trust in God, to trust God completely for his salvation, for that which is impossible for a man to do for himself. A rich man has found that rich is open doors.

With a man who's rich enough, almost nothing is impossible except his salvation. And it's

almost like having to become a little child again, sort of like what the previous thing said, if you don't become like a child, you're not going to enter the kingdom. You have to become helpless, you have to become dependent, you have to become totally untrusting of yourself or anything and trusting wholly in God.

That's what it takes. Money or maturity or anything else can be a hindrance. Little children enter it easier, poor people enter it easier, rich people have it harder and big people have it harder than little infants.

So these two stories indicate about entering the kingdom of God. Now, verse 27, Peter answered and said to him, See, we have left all and followed you. Therefore, what shall we have? So Jesus said to them, Assuredly, I say to you that in the regeneration, when the son of man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my sake, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold and inherit everlasting life. But many who are first will be last and the last first. Now, Peter said, We have done what you asked this man to do.

You told this man to forsake all and follow you. He wouldn't do it. But we have done that.

What are we going to have for this? Now, Jesus didn't deny that Peter had left everything. We have to assume that that's what Peter did. In fact, in the story of Peter's leaving his nets, the gospels actually tell us they forsook all and followed Jesus.

So Peter was not boasting of that, which is not true. He was telling the truth they had. But it's interesting also that Peter still had a house where his wife and children presumably lived and his mother-in-law lived there too, we're told.

He also had a fishing boat. He wasn't using it, but he apparently put it in mothballs because he later pulled it out and went fishing again later. So, so here's a man who'd forsaken all he had, but he hadn't, in fact, sold everything he had.

But everything he had was available to Jesus. Peter says, We have forsaken everything. But he still had a boat and a house.

But what do you do with his boat and a house? His house became a ministry center for Jesus and his disciples. His boat became transportation across the lake several times when Jesus needed travel. You know, it's like a modern person having a house and a car, you know, and their house is available for whatever the Lord wants it to be used for, their car, likewise, and or whatever else they have.

So it's interesting that Peter had, in fact, forsaken all in the sense that Jesus required it and that the Bible teaches one should. And yet that didn't mean he liquidated all his

assets and sold it. The rich young ruler was told to do that, but he had special circumstances.

Peter hadn't done quite that. Now, Jesus answering him said, Well, verse 28, which is not found in the other Gospels, the contents of verse 28 is not found in the other Gospels, but verse 29 and 30 are. Verse 28 says, You who have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel.

This is something that we could take a long time. If we had, we don't have a long time. To comment on.

Let me just say this. There's two possibilities in the regeneration could mean in the resurrection, which would mean that Jesus is describing something they'll have after the resurrection. When Jesus comes back, whether in heaven or as someone put it on the millennial earth, depending on one's eschatology, these disciples will reign in special sense on actual thrones in when Jesus comes back and in the resurrection.

Some understand it that way. Another possibility, though, is that the regeneration refers to the rebirth. That's the way the term regeneration is used elsewhere in the Bible is the rebirth.

In other words, in the new creation, in the new covenant, in the church age, in which case we'd have to take the thrones as figurative. He would simply be saying, you apostles will have authority in the church age. You apostles will have special authority.

Sitting on 12 thrones would be figurative of them having special authority from Christ over those who live regenerated. Those who are born again, that would be at the present time. Of course, they're dead now, but their authority still remains the normative authority of the church, the authority in their writings and so forth.

The apostles still rule in the church. Even though they've died, their writings are still the rule of the church. And therefore, it could be understood that way.

Now, notice he said you rule over the 12 tribes of Israel. It's interesting that at a later date, when Paul met Peter the second time in Galatians 2, it says that the decision was made that Paul and Barnabas would go to the Gentiles, but Peter and the others would go to the circumcision. Why? Apparently, because Jesus indicated they would have special ministry and authority over the Jewish church, over the 12 tribes of Israel.

Although Paul and others were sent specifically to the Gentiles. By the way, the other apostles had some Gentile ministry too, but they apparently interpreted their mission largely in terms of the circumcision or the Jews. Well, the tape has just run out of time, but I have to give you something on this last verse.

Verse 29, especially. Everyone who has left house with brothers