

## Striving to be “Good”

(Matthew 19:16-30 / Mark 10:17-31 / Luke 18:18-30)

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### Introduction: Do You Consider Yourself to Be a Good Person? “Good Enough” to Go to Heaven?

- A. *Meritorious* law-keeping to obtain salvation is a *lost cause* leading to a life of misery and uncertainty (e.g., Islam teaches this approach – Surah 101:6-9; 42:17).
- B. While Jesus taught the importance of keeping God’s law for salvation, *He also taught* what it means to be a true disciple who depends on God’s grace (**Jn. 1:17**).

#### I. “No One is good but, One, that is, God.” (Mat. 19:17, KJV).

- A. The ruler wanted to be good; perhaps he believed that he was good already! (**Mat. 19:16-17a**).
  - 1. The whole of mankind has failed to be good (**Rom. 3:10-12**).
  - 2. Sincerely, the young man essentially asks: What does it take to be good?
  - 3. He called Jesus “*Good Teacher*.” – Did he recognize Jesus as “good”?
- B. God is the only Person who is *truly* good (**Mat. 19:17a**).
  - 1. God is *the* standard of goodness! (**Ps 86:5; 119:68; 1 Sam 2:2; Jas 1:17**)
  - 2. Did the ruler actually recognize Jesus as “Good” – i.e. the Son of God?

#### II. “What Good Thing Shall I Do That I May Have Eternal Life?”

- A. “*To enter into life, keep the commandments*” – **perfectly!** (**Mat. 19:17b**).
  - 1. Jesus taught that in order to go to Heaven, we must obey the Father’s will (**Mat. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46**), yet *never in order to earn our salvation*.
  - 2. The young ruler evidently took such an approach, as if there was one “good thing” he could do to achieve eternal life, to finally be “good.”
  - 3. Yet, how could the young ruler gain eternal life by keeping God’s law *alone* unless he kept the law *perfectly*? (cf. **Rom. 2:13; 4:4**).
  - 4. Jesus said this to *test* him, for Jesus knew that he was depending on law-keeping to be saved and also knew of his failure to keep it perfectly.
  - 5. Defensively, the ruler asked Jesus: “*Which ones?*” (**Mat. 19:18a**).
- B. God’s standards of goodness are much higher than we realize (**Mat. 19:18-19**).
  - 1. Why did Jesus list only the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments (**Exod. 20:12-16**) and “Love thy neighbor” (**Lev. 19:18**)?
  - 2. This wasn’t meant to be a perfect summary of all the commandments, (cf. **Mk 10:19a**) but commandments the ruler needed to hear again: **A test!**
  - 3. Though sincere, the ruler did not keep the law as well as he thought he did (**Mt. 19:20a; cf. Mt. 5:21-22 / 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:27-28; Lk. 10:29ff.**).
  - 4. Even our *best* efforts to keep God’s law falls short (**Rom. 3:19-20, 23**).
  - 5. Despite his best efforts, he was a sinner in need of mercy (**Lk 18:9-14**).

#### III. What Then Will Make Us Complete?

- A. “*What do I still lack?*” (**Mat. 19:20b**)
  - 1. The Lord knows all our sins and weaknesses (cf. **Ps. 139:23-24**).
  - 2. In spite of our best efforts to obey God, we are still incomplete and cannot save ourselves without His help, mercy, and guidance.
  - 3. Out of love for us, the Lord tells us exactly what we need to hear (**Mark 10:21a**); “*Will we listen?*”

B. “If you want to be *perfect*...”

1. Jesus wasn't saying that by doing this one thing he would be “perfect” in the sense that he would be a flawless, sinless man or “good.”
2. This wasn't meant to be the final item of things to do to earn Heaven!
3. We can be “perfect,” complete, or spiritually mature (cf. **James 1:2-4**) if are willing to forsake *everything* to follow the Lord (**Mat. 19:21-22**).
4. For the rich young ruler, his problem was his riches which he loved more than the riches of Heaven (**Mat. 6:19-21; cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-10**).
5. To *complete* our obedience, we need to ask ourselves: “Just how much do I love the Lord?” (**Mat. 22:37 / Deut. 6:5**).
6. Would I be willing to give up *anything* that the Lord asks of me? Giving up things that hinders our faith is essential to following Jesus (**Heb. 12:1**).
7. Obedience completes our love (**1 John 2:5**) and faith (**Jas. 2:22**).

C. “Come, take up the cross, and *follow Me*” (**Mark 10:21 / Mat. 19:21**)

1. The ruler, who believed he was just about “good enough” to be saved, still needed to learn to *deny himself* in order to be saved (cf. **Mat. 16:24**).
2. He needed to take up his *cross*, a symbol of suffering and death. To be saved, all must put to death “self” and sin (**Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24**).
3. Most of all, he needed to *follow Jesus* who was indeed “good” – who being the Christ the Son of God had the words of eternal life (**Jn 6:68-69**).
4. He needed to follow Jesus who is *the source* of eternal life (**Heb. 5:9**).

**III. Salvation is Made Possible by God.**

A. “Who then can be saved?” (**Mat. 19:23-25**)

1. To the rich young ruler, Jesus asked the *impossible*: “What! Sell all I have and give it to the poor? How could I do such a thing!?”
2. Too often, people turn away from the invitation of Christ, wrongly supposing that all change “rests on their shoulders” to be a disciple.

B. “With God all things are possible” (**Mat. 19:26**)

1. Every person must *choose* to repent, otherwise repentance would not be commanded (**Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10**).
2. Changes we need to make for our salvation can only be achieved with God's help (**Mat. 19:26**); they cannot be made *solely on our own*.
3. Had he put his trust in Jesus, he would not have turned away so quickly!
4. His riches were his idol, yet his love for riches would not disappear just by selling what he had. – *He needed God's help for lasting change*.
5. It does not matter if a person is a rich man (**Mat. 27:57**), a violent aggressor (**1 Tim. 1:13**), or an immoral drunkard (**1 Cor. 6:9-11**).
6. In Christ we can make changes God requires! (**2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:21ff.**)

C. “You who have followed Me will... *inherit eternal life*.” (**Mat. 19:27-30**).

1. Though we have “left everything” to follow Jesus, the reward of eternal life will make all sacrifices made well worth it (**Mk 10:28-31; Rom 8:18**).
2. Jesus doesn't demand *perfect* law-keeping to be saved, but he does require us to suffer for His sake and do our best to obey Him (**2 Tim 1:8-9**).

**Conclusion: Only by the Help of God is it Possible to be “Good.” Let Us Follow God, Jesus our “Good Teacher” and Be Willing to Forsake All for His Name Sake!**