

LUKE I The Rich Young Ruler Text: Luke 18:18–34

Learning to Let Go of Idols of the Heart

—Bill Turner

1. A smart athlete will meet w/ a coach to ask, What should I do to achieve my goals?
 - a. A young man meets w/ a successful CEO to ask: What should I do to advance my career?
2. Here a young man goes to Jesus to ask the most important question of all...
What shall I do to inherit eternal life?

I. THE PROBLEM: It Only Takes 1 Thing to Separate us from God

A. IT ONLY TAKES ONE THING TO BLOCK THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE.

1. **For This Young Man it was his money (Luke 18:18–23)**
 - a) I believe this young man is sincere (Mk 10:17) Not testing Jesus as the Scribes did
 - b) Jesus was not being harsh... (Mark 10:21)
2. **Jesus is helping the young man have an ABUNDANT life & ETERNAL life!**
 - a) Sharing something within his heart that takes some an entire lifetime to learn.
 - b) And Some actually NEVER Learn.
3. **You must KNOW the Truth—before the TRUTH can Set You FREE...**
 - a) But sometimes the Truth hits so close to the heart that it hurts...
4. **Money was the Idol of His Heart—He loved \$ More Than He Loved God**
“If anything is worse than the addiction money brings, it is the emptiness it leaves. Man, with eternity in his heart, needs better nourishment than this.” —Derek Kinder

But the Point is NOT that we must be poor to have eternal life—The Point is that...

B. IT ONLY TAKES ONE THING TO KEEP YOU FROM ETERNAL LIFE

1. **EX: It only takes 1 thing for A Door to Fly Off a Boeing 747 MAX in mid-air**
 - a) One job at Boeing is to sit in a black-light booth inspecting 1 Bolt at a time for cracks.
 - b) WHY? B/c it only takes 1 crack in 1 bolt for a catastrophic failure.
 - c) It only takes one o-ring to fail on the Space Shuttle for catastrophic failure at Launch.
2. **The Storms of Life will expose the Foundation we are building on... and under too much pressure we usually blow out at our weakest point:**
 - a) For JUDAS it was MONEY
 - b) For SAMSON it was the ATTENTION of a Beautiful Woman
 - c) For KING SAUL it was JEALOUSY
 - d) For KING HEZEKIAH it was STATUS
 - e) For HEROD ANTIPAS it was LUST
 - f) For KING JEROBOAM it was POWER
 - g) For HAMAN it was POPULARITY
 - h) For GEHAZI it was GREED
 - i) For KING SOLOMON it was his many PAGAN WIVES
 - j) For DIOTREPHEES it was Desiring for PROMINENCE
 - k) For the DISCIPLES it was Wanting to be GREATEST

II. THE DIFFICULTY: Letting Go of Idols of the Heart (v.24-25)

A. IT IS EASIER FOR A CAMEL TO GO THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE

1. Why would Jesus say this? (Luke 18:24-25)
 - a) There have been several interpretations over the years...
 - (1) Most popular claimed a gate in wall of Jerusalem was called 'Eye of needle'
 - (2) so low & narrow a camel could barely enter on its knees w/ its burden removed.
 - b) We want this interpretation because we want to believe that we actually can get a Camel through the Eye of a Needle if We Try Hard Enough and Work Long Enough — We Can Do it on our Own!
2. But Jesus is using an absurdity to illustrate an absurdity!
—An impossibility to illustrate an impossibility!
3. But WHY? Because we always think—I Can Do This on my own!
—I can keep my idols and save myself my own way!
—Because God exists in order to make all my dreams come true!
4. NO, It is impossible for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle...
 - a) and It is Impossible for me to FORCE My Way into the Kingdom of God
 - b) On My Own Terms By My Own Strength.
5. An Idol is a Lie that deceives...

To Love an Idol is to Love a Lie More Than God Himself!

B. WHAT DO WE HAVE TO GIVE UP TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

1. Any Idol of the Heart that Blocks Our Relationship With God

'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'

- a) An IDOL is Anything that is more important to you than God...
- b) They're Not just small figurines of OT times—Idols are false belief systems
- c) They are Anything that you seek to give you what only God can give.

2. HERE ARE SOME MODERN DAY IDOLS OF THE HEART...

- (1) **IDENTITY STATUS:** This can become an idol when the name of Christ is not good enough for us—so we spend a lifetime making a name for ourselves.
- (2) **MONEY or MATERIAL THINGS:** Money is not wrong—it is useful for good. But it is the love of money above all else that is the root of all evil.

ILLUSTRATION: As different people were telling the story of how they came to Christ, a man raised his hand and said, when I was a young man I came to church with only a dollar to my name. It was all I had and a missionary was going to Africa and I decided If I'm going to be a Christian, it's going to be all or nothing. So I gave him my last and only dollar, and God has blessed me abundantly since. I'm now a rich man because of it.

After he sat down a old lady leaned over and said, "I dare you to do it again!"

- (3) **JOB/STATUS:** We are to work to support our family. But our job or career can become an idol of identity for status.

- (4) **PHYSICAL APPEARANCE:** This affects men and women but the pressure it creates on social media, especially on young girls is heart breaking.
- (5) **ENTERTAINMENT:** Can become an idol. Enjoying the life God gave you is good as long as you don't replace God with your pursuit of happiness.
"God cannot give us happiness and peace apart from Himself because it is not there. There is no such thing." (C.S. Lewis)
- (6) **LUST OF THE FLESH:** Physical intimacy between a husband and wife is a gift given by God within marriage. But Sex sells and it is a modern day idol.
- (7) **COMFORT:** Comfort is not wrong. But if we value our comfort more than we value God than even comfort can become an idol.
- (8) **TECHNOLOGY/SMART PHONES:** These are not wrong. But Technology can be a tower of Babel. Technology has the final answers, not God. Many today are praying to their phone more than praying to God.
- (9) **INFLUENCE/FAME:** Older generations it was job/identity/status. But younger generations seek influence/fame on social media.¹
"If you live for other's acceptance—then you die by their rejection"
- (10) **SELF:** Maybe the most deceptive idol of all.
God exists in order to make all my dreams come true.
 RIGHT is what meets my needs. WRONG is what doesn't meet my needs.

There is no rest or peace in idols—it is always striving—never ending striving
"guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." (Proverbs 4:23 NIV)
'For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also'

III. THE POINT: The Power of God to Save Us

A. WITH MAN THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE...

For Several Reasons...

- 1. **FIRST:** No one can say they are pure without sin... (Romans 3:23)
- 2. **SECOND:** No one can atone for their own sin (Proverbs 20:9 NKJ)
- 3. **THIRD:** all our righteousness is like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6)
 - a) **Some one will say:** "I will become a Christian when I get my life cleaned up."
 - b) **But That's like saying:** "I will go to the Doctor as soon as I get Well!"

With Man this is Impossible...

B. BUT WITH GOD ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE!

- 1. **No one can make themselves Holy—but God can! (Isaiah 61:10)**
- 2. **Did you know that Moses was a rich young ruler? He was!**
 - a) Raised in the palace an adopted son of the the most powerful man in the world
 - b) Moses was trained in all the higher learning of the Egyptians

¹ Ten Surprising Modern Day Idols, by Jeffery Curtis Poor. Adapted, I added 'Self' as the tenth -bt

3. But Moses knew something that the Pharaoh and priests did not.

Moses had been taught two World-Views...

- a) An Egyptian Worldview based on idolatry and mythology...
- b) And a Biblical World-view based on Truth

4. So Moses had a choice—

- a) to remain in the palace and keep the riches and royal status of the world
- b) Or Leave the Palace and the Riches and the Status to follow God.
- c) He chose to suffer affliction w/ the people of God (**Hebrews 11:24–26**)
- d) And God made it possible!

This is what Jesus did...

C. JESUS MADE THE IMPOSSIBLE—POSSIBLE (Luke 18:31–34)

- 1. Like Moses—Jesus saw the suffering of His people under the curse and penalty of sin—which is death.
- 2. Like Moses—Jesus left the Riches of Heaven to born in a Manger
- 3. Like Moses—Jesus did not leave the place to be served—but to Serve
- 4. Like Moses—Jesus chose to suffer with His people
- 5. Jesus went to the cross and shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins... to make the impossible—possible.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9)

Paul would've been a rich young ruler among the Pharisees...

until he realized the truth (Philippians 3:5–9)

CONCLUSION:

- 1. **He loves you for WHO you are—**
but He loves you too much to leave you the WAY you are!
- 2. **With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!**
(Matthew 19:26)

CS Lewis: “If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world.”