

Sermon Outlines

Why Did The Rich Young Ruler Go Away Grieved?

Reading

Mark 10:17-27

Some cases in the gospel are very promising. A man or woman, or maybe a young person, comes asking all the right questions and shows the right attitudes, but in the end they make no progress to become a Christian. They do not go through with the Lord, but turn back to the world. We tremble for them, for their souls are in great danger. The hold of this world on their hearts is impossible to break.

This Rich Young Ruler

In Matthew's account the Lord referred to him as a young man. It is a sad case of one so full of hope, but ended in delusion and despair.

Note the promising things about this young rich man:

- He sought the Lord
- He came running.
- He knelt to the Lord.
- He gave the Lord the honourable title of "Good Master", or teacher. - It showed a teachable spirit.
- He asked the critical question: "What must I do that I may inherit eternal life?"
- He was informed of the ten commandments and was striving to keep them (v19).
- The Lord loved him (v21).

We would rightly expect that he was a likely candidate for the kingdom of God. But he "went away grieved." (v23)

1) We learn that the essential test for Christian discipleship is willingness for total dedication to Christ.

The Lord went straight to the heart of the matter when He called upon this young man to sell all and give his possessions to the poor in order to seek treasure in heaven. The call to be a Christian requires a genuine faith in the sufficiency of Christ accompanied by radical change in practice.

- Our faith must be in heavenly riches.
- Christianity demands that we adopt a life of discipleship.
- We are to take up the cross of Christ and live in total loyalty to Him and His kingdom. We must be willing to put the Lord Jesus first. He must be our pearl of great price for whom we will trade-in all our earthly assets.

2) We learn the hold that earthly riches have upon men (v23-26).

A tremendous battle raged in this young man's heart at the call of the Lord to sell all for discipleship. He had a strong interest in becoming a disciple, but the hold of riches and discipleship was even stronger. "He went away grieved: for he had great possessions." Earthly riches blind from the true heavenly riches. The world is filled with examples of the power of money and materialism to influence men's decisions. The pride of men is greatly increased from the seeming security of riches. Hearts are hardened by elevation in this world through money. As has been commonly observed, "It is not so much the having money; it's trusting in it." Good men are blinded from seeing the honour and glory of Christ when they see only dollar signs.

The gospel is God's call to cease trusting in money for long-life, health and soul satisfaction. For good reason, Isaiah the prophet offered peace with God without money. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which

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satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (Isaiah 55:1-2).

Every day we learn of the power of money to corrupt leaders, business people. For this reason the justice statue is pictured as blindfolded. The judge must not be influenced by bribery.

Because the gospel appears to be a message for poor men, many obstacles arise to evangelise the rich in this world. Even to gain access to the rich is difficult and to get their ear and a willing heart to repent from trusting in riches is nigh impossible. The gospel of repentance that calls men to take the place of a beggar at the feet of the Saviour is especially offensive to all who enjoy riches in this world. When people enjoy affluence, as the vast majority of Canadians do, the work of gospel ministry is nigh impossible.

3) We learn of the power of grace to turn even rich sinners to Christ (v27-28).

The gospel is not a natural work in men's hearts. It is the sovereign work of God the Holy Spirit who is the quickener of souls from death unto life. The Spirit moves as the wind (John 3:8). Salvation is not by man's might nor power, but by the power of God's Spirit. A rich person can be the subject of the Holy Spirit's regenerating work as easily as a poor man. When it pleases God to call kings, queens and earthly leaders who have riches in this world they too shall be converted. The apostle Paul did not say, "not any noble" shall be called, but "not many" (1Cor. 1:26).

Through history, God has been pleased to save some noble people of this world as well as the rich and powerful. In v28, Peter is an example of one who renounced much in this world to be Christ's disciple. We also think of Matthew the tax collector, who could have used and abused his position to gain wealth in this world but renounced it to be a disciple of Christ. Whatever possessions or claims they had to this world they left them all to follow Christ.

They heard the effectual call and were made willing to obey the Lord. They were given the grace to drop their worldly lively-hoods, say farewell to families and friends to immediately take up the cross of service for Christ.

To some degree, the Lord works similarly in each sinner who turns from the world to trust in Christ alone for salvation. Repentance demands that we renounce the world and cease to trust in its supposed security of power and fame. The world is to be accounted as unworthy of our hope for life, death and eternity.

4) We learn of the rewards promised to Christians who sacrifice earthly riches for Christ (v29-31).

Who can deny that it pays to serve the Lord Jesus. All who have had their eyes opened to the delusive hopes of this world and its emptiness take heart in the promises of Christ. These promises apply to this world and to eternal life.

There are immediate gains to be had in Christian discipleship among the people of God and in Christ's service. God's people become our true family. The Lord is no man's debtor. Better is the bed of straw with a good conscience than a feather bed and pillow where torment of soul is endured. To "be content with such things as we have" brings a sense of heaven into our souls (Phil. 4:11).

5) We learn that there is a divine reversal of the order of things for Christians. What we lose here on earth for Christ will be gain in glory, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last first." (v31).

There is also a warning here to continue in faithfulness to Christ or we lose His gracious blessing. Think of those cities and nations which were the first to receive the gospel but have been given over to apostasy and

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finally to domination by the heathen. The rise of Islam to conquer nations that first had gospel light ought to warn us of the danger of losing first place with God.

England, Scotland, Holland, Germany, America, Canada and all countries who have known gospel light need to wake up to the reality that their former blessings, that made them first among missionary sending nations, may be lost if they cease to hold on to Christ and His gospel. The same warning applies to churches, preachers and to every born-again Christian. Do not toy with God's blessings, lest you be last in the end.

In closing, hear the words of J.C. Ryle on this solemn subject. "How true these words appear to believers when they look back over their own lives and remember all they have seen from the time of their own conversion! How many began to serve Christ at the same time with themselves and seemed to run well for a season? But where are they now? The world has got hold of one. False doctrine has beguiled another. A mistake in marriage has spoiled a third. Few indeed are the believers who cannot call to mind many such cases. Few have failed to discover, by sorrowful experience, that "the last are often first, and the first last."

"Let us learn to pray for humility when we read texts like this. It is not enough to begin well. We must persevere, and go on, and continue in well-doing. We must not be content with the fair blossoms of a few religious convictions, and joys and sorrows, and hopes, and fears. We must bear the good fruit of settled habits of repentance faith, and holiness. Happy is he who counts the cost, and resolves, having once begun to walk in the narrow way, by God's grace never to turn aside."

. . . . Ian Goligher