

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: In Matthew 19:16-22, Jesus encounters a rich young ruler. Can you explain what Jesus meant in verse 17? He states that there is none good but God. What is the meaning?

ANSWER: This particular passage is full of wonderful truths from which all of us can learn. Primarily it teaches us the proper view we should have of mankind as well as the view we should have of our ability to be righteous before God in our own power.

In order to understand properly the exchange between Jesus and this young man, it is important to grasp the concept that the religious people had of themselves in Jesus' day. The Jews were the recipients of the Law. They were the people God had chosen to keep His name alive among the nations and through which He would bring the Messiah, the savior of mankind. The Law of Moses was not designed to be the source of salvation for man. Rather it was designed to point out man's sinfulness. In this sense it served as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Paul in Galatians 3:19-25 states:

"What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith, which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come we are no longer under a tutor."

There are several points that are noteworthy in the passage above. We first find that the law was added due to sin. Its purpose was to make sin manifest. Paul in his epistle to the Romans states,

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the

law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." (Romans 7:7, NKJV)

From this verse we determine that the law was good and holy in its intent to point out mankind's sinfulness. This ties directly to Paul's statement in the Galatian letter that the scripture confines all under sin. Man is a sinner and the law proves it! The law was given to point out our need for a savior. In this sense it was designed to keep man on track until Jesus came to take away the sin of which we are guilty.

Note also that Paul says that if a law could be given that gave life then we would be made righteous by that law. Consequently there would have been no need for the Christ to suffer for our sins. We would have simply been righteous by our ability to keep the law. But keep in mind that the law was added due to sin. Man was already confined under sin before the law came. Therefore its purpose was to point out how sinful we already were. This should have prepared the world for the coming of Christ. Before man seeks salvation there has to be the understanding that man needs to be saved! Saved from what? From sin! Our righteousness comes not from the law but from the atoning death of Christ received by faith in Him. It is for this reason that Paul refers to the law as "the ministry of death written and engraved on stones".

The above is what the Jewish leaders had trouble accepting. Somehow in their minds the law established their righteousness. Thus they saw no need for the work of Jesus. Their view of sin was limited to an act committed. They did not see that sin is the result of a depraved heart. Jesus told them on numerous occasions that what defiles a man is not that which comes from the outside but rather it flows from a corrupt heart. He states,

"What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man." (Mark 7:20-23)

Sin is a condition of the heart. It is in the heart that sin is conceived and this then leads to the sinful actions.

This concept was foreign to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. They viewed sin from the outside in approach. In fact, they did

not see themselves as sinners. They viewed themselves as righteous holy people who established their righteousness by the law. Their source of righteousness was themselves, not God. You can imagine their surprise when Jesus told them He came to die for their sins! They just did not get it. They were surprised that He would even suggest such a thing. After they got over the initial surprise they became angry and turned on Him. The scripture is complete in describing their hatred and ultimate rejection of Jesus.

The preceding discussion was necessary to establish the background of the conversation between Jesus and the rich young ruler. In order to understand the flow of the dialogue it is necessary to comprehend the mindset of the one asking the questions. With this background established we now turn our attention to the passage.

We begin with the question being posed to Jesus of what must be done to have eternal life. In making this statement the young man refers to Jesus as Good Teacher. To this Jesus replies, "*Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is God.*" (Mat. 19:17)

This statement has twofold significance. The first is that man is a sinner. It becomes obvious that the young man as evidenced by his later remarks missed this point. But Jesus was affirming the sinfulness of man. "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23) is the meaning of Jesus' statement. The point is plain. If God is the only one who is good and the young man is not God, then he is not good! The second significant point is that the young ruler inadvertently acknowledged Jesus as God. This was indeed true. Jesus is God and thus is good. But did the young ruler realize the truthfulness of His statement? Probably not, but it is a point well made!

Jesus then uses the law to establish the proposition that only God is good (sinless). He tells the young ruler that in order to have eternal life he must keep the commandments. We can see demonstrated for us the mindset of self-righteousness in the reply. The young man asks which commandments. Jesus elaborates and mentions the Ten Commandments. To this the young man proudly states, "*All these things I have kept from my youth up. What lack I yet?*" (Mat. 19:20) Remember the common mindset was that man is defiled not by what is on the inside but rather sin is externally motivated. The young man was under the impression that he had not sinned. He never gave any thought to the fact

that while outwardly he might have been obedient but inwardly he had violated God's law.

This sort of reaction is not just peculiar to the people of Jesus' day but is also common in our own time as well. Most of us would proudly assert that we are not guilty of murder but at the same time may be angry with our brother without cause. John tells us that whoever hates his brother is a murderer! (I John 3:15) We must remember that sin is a condition of the heart!

Jesus then makes the point very clear. Knowing the hearts of all men, Jesus instructs the young man to sell all he has and come follow Him. The young man then went away sorrowful for he had great possessions. Here is illustrated the deceitfulness of sin. Sin has the ability to hide itself in our hearts and we are often blinded to it in our own life. The sin of this young man was another god. God made it clear that man should have no other gods before Him. This young man had a god that he loved and served more than the God of heaven. It was his possessions. He was not going to give up his god for serving the Christ. He was guilty of covetousness. He loved and served his riches. He was a sinner! He was convicted by what was in his heart.

The realization of sin produced sorrow in this man's heart. However, the sorrow he possessed was a worldly sorrow and not a godly one. Godly sorrow leads us to repentance, a change of heart that leads to a change of action. In this case instead of acknowledging his sin and being converted he simply went away.

It is our hope that we learn the truths that are taught in this beautiful passage and apply them to our own life. So many times we boast in our ability to serve God. Many times the perception we have is that we are in some way above sin. The truth is that if we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves. We are sinners. The question we need to ask concerns what we have done and what we are doing about our sins. If you haven't obeyed the Gospel you need to. If you have, do not be deceived nor blinded to your need to walk in the light so His blood can cleanse you. We need to constantly confess sin both generally and specifically as God's people.

All of us need a savior. There is only one. Jesus Christ the Son of God!

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WHEN CHRIST SHALL COME

Will he find you faithful, watching and waiting for his appearance? It is human nature to wonder and guess when Christ will come. No man, only God knows when the time will be. *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."* (Mat. 24:35-37) *"Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."* (Mat. 24:44) Therefore be ye also ready for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.

Do you ever wonder how Christ would find his bride, the Church, if he came on the first day of the week? How does he expect the Church to be? *"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."* (Eph. 5: 25-27)

Would you be found at worship service as we are taught to do? *"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."* (Acts 20:7) *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins."* (Heb 10:25-26)

If you are not at worship, what is your excuse? Were you sick? Sometimes a severe illness may keep us from being able to attend worship service, but remember there is no greater pain than that suffered by Christ on the cross for our sins. If it was a work day, would you stay at home? If you miss work, you might lose money. If you miss worship, you might lose an eternal home in heaven. *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Mat 6:19-21)

Do you feel bad because you stayed up late on Saturday night partying, drinking, using drugs or participating in other worldly things in which Christians should not? Our bodies are to be a sacrifice. *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* (Rom. 12:1-2) *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* (Jam. 4:4)

The condition of our lives is a serious matter. Nothing is more important than our Christian life and serving God. We do not want to be as the Laodiceans, *"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* (Rev. 3:14-16)

We must be faithful to receive a crown of life. *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Rev. 2:10)

Submitted by LORAIN HOWELL
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GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
May 1 – 5	Van Lear Congregation Van Lear, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 5 – 7	Dowell Hill Congregation Columbus, IN	Jeff Richardson (tentative)
May 8 – 12	Estesburg Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)

May 14 – 20	Ashlock, KY Congregation Near Celina, TN	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
May 15 – 19	Fairview Congregation Mt. Vernon, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
May 15 – 19	Hopkinsville Congregation Hopkinsville, OH	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
May 22 – 26	Mt. Zion Congregation Crab Orchard, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. Who were the sons of Joseph and Asenath as recorded in Genesis? MANASSEH & EPHRAIM (Gen. 41:51-52)
2. How old was Isaac when he married? FORTY (Gen. 1:14-18)
3. When Jesus healed a group of ten lepers, to whom did He tell them to go? THE PRIESTS (Luke 17:14)
4. What does the Psalmist say all the earth will one day do? WORSHIP GOD (Psalms 66:4)
5. Before God, what does Job see mortal man's greatest problem to be? TO BE FOUND RIGHTEOUS (Job 9:2)