

## Almost Converted

By Dr. Steven J. Lawson

sermonaudio.com

**Bible Text:** Mark 10:17-22  
**Preached on:** Sunday, September 21, 2008

**OnePassion Ministries**  
5622 Dyer St, Suite 200  
Dallas, TX 75206

**Website:** [www.onepassionministries.org](http://www.onepassionministries.org)  
**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/onepassion](http://www.sermonaudio.com/onepassion)

And so I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Mark 10. For those of you who are visiting with us today, we are in the midst of a verse by verse study of the gospel of Mark, and we're loving it. It is thrilling our hearts. It has brought the person of the Lord Jesus Christ so sharply into focus in our hearts week by week and there really is no higher ground than a study of the person and the work and the teaching and the terms of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we come today to a most landmark passage of scripture. We are all here today on a favorable day as we shall be looking at the rich young ruler. Mark 10, I want to begin reading in verse 17. The title the message today is "Almost Converted." Mark 10. I want to begin reading in verse 17.

17 As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments, 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 And he said to Him, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." 21 Looking at him, Jesus felt a love for him and said to him, "One thing you lack: go and sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." 22 But at these words he was saddened, and he went away grieving, for he was one who owned much property.

This passage before us deals with the rich young ruler who came to Christ for eternal life but left as he came, lost. This one-on-one encounter reveals how close one can be to being saved and yet not be converted. This man came to the right person, he asked the right question, he received the right answer and then immediately made the wrong decision. He was so close to being converted and yet so far away. His toes were right up to the narrow gate and the gate was open wide that leads to the kingdom, and he drew back and did not take that decisive step to commit it all to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was interested in spiritual things, but he did not inherit them.

He has been called the hottest evangelistic prospect in the Bible and yet he was never saved. He came running to Christ. He bowed down in reverence. He spoke with respect. He asked what he must do to be saved. He was poised and ready. He received the truth.

But he was unwilling to admit his sin. He was unwilling to forsake it all for the sake of the call. He was unwilling to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. He simply wanted to add Jesus to everything else that was going on in his life. He got in line to sign up simply for fire insurance without surrendering his life to Jesus Christ, and he went away as he came, without salvation. He was unwilling to confess his sin. He was unwilling to repent of his sin. He was unwilling to surrender his life to the Lordship of Christ. He wanted Jesus on his own terms therefore he was not saved. He wanted all of the benefits, but none of the commitment. The cost factor was too high for him. He was unwilling to give up his number one priority which was the world in order to make Jesus and recognize Jesus as the new priority in his life, and Jesus would not meet him halfway. Jesus would not lower the terms. Jesus kept the standard as it is for every one of us here today. If we are to enter the kingdom of God, we must confess our sin and say, "God, have mercy upon me, the sinner," and we must forsake every other pursuit in our life whether it is the world, whether it is money, whether it is sports, whether it is music, whether it is popularity, whether it is our children. Whatever it is, everything must be secondary and Christ must be supreme or there is no salvation.

There is no deal to be cut with Jesus and so the rich young ruler will find this out and so will we find this out. Salvation is for those alone who are willing to forsake everything that they might have Christ. Do you know anyone like this? Do you know anyone who is sincere and earnest about spiritual things but unwilling to be committed to Christ? And do you know anyone who comes to the right place and who asks the right questions and who hears the right answers but continues to make the wrong decision again and again? Do you have a husband like this? Do you have a parent or a friend or a child like this? Could this be true even of you? Salvation involves a total commitment to forsake sin and to follow Jesus Christ. He will take disciples on no other terms.

Let us learn now and apply the lessons of the rich young ruler who was almost converted. I want you to note with me, first, verse 17: the searching soul. We see in verse 17 that this man comes to Christ who is searching for eternal life. And this man is open, this man has an interest in spiritual things. We read in verse 17, "As He," Jesus, "was setting out on a journey." Let me set the context. Jesus has been in a house in Perea mentioned in verse 10. He now leaves this house, the house in which he has given instruction on divorce and remarriage, the house in which parents had been bringing their children to Christ, verses 13 through 16, and now this episode comes to conclusion, and Jesus leaves the house and he sets out on a journey. It is in the midst of this that we read in verse 17, "a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him," and Mark does not comment regarding anything else about this man except we learn in verse 22 that he owned much property. That's why he's called the rich ruler. Matthew describes him as a young man, Matthew 19:20 and 22, and Luke calls him a certain ruler, Luke 18:18. So when we compress Matthew, Mark and Luke together, we discover that he is a rich young ruler. This means that he was a man of extraordinary influence in his community, with a man of sizable wealth. He was a very prominent individual, relatively young. He is in adulthood, but he is very rich. He is quite wealthy and with that he has clout in the in the community and thus this rich young ruler we learn also is very moral, is very upright, he is very successful and he seemingly has everything under control. The fact that he ran up to Jesus in verse 17 indicates how

sincere he is. He doesn't have to be drug to the Lord Jesus. He doesn't have to be taken. He comes running to the Lord Jesus and the fact that he kneels before him is an indication of his respect for Christ as a spiritual teacher and the reverence that he has for him.

"And asked Him, 'Good Teacher.'" He identifies him as good teacher. He has great respect, great admiration for Christ. He identifies him as a teacher, meaning a respected rabbi of the day, one whom he perceives to be a spiritual leader and authority in the Old Testament, a teacher of divine truth, and he gladly now kneels before Christ as if sitting at his feet in order to learn spiritual truth from him. He identifies him not merely as a teacher, but as good teacher. And the word "good" indicates that he believes that Jesus has a good stature of godly character, that he is a righteous man, however, there is nothing to indicate that he believes that Jesus is the Son of God. He is just one of many teachers in Israel, but he asks this question which is the fundamental question of life, everything hinges upon a right answer and a right response to this question. His eternal destiny will hinge on this question. His temporal life and the quality of it hinges upon the answer to this question. Everything hinges upon this answer and his response to this answer and the question is, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" You and I would kill for someone to come up to us and ask us this, and this is every businessman's dream, to buckle himself into an airplane and for the man next to you to look over at you before the plane even departs and, says, "Say, can you tell me how to be saved?" Now this is every housewife's dream to have one of her friends to actually initiate this and to ask her, "Can you tell me how I can come to have a life like you enjoy? Tell me how can I become a Christian?"

This man has come to the right place. He has come to the right person. He is asking the right question. And yet, as we look at this question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life," on the surface, it seems very innocent, but the word "do" to me indicates that there is in his mind some deed that is yet undone that if he were to perform it, he would possess eternal life. The question implies that he sees himself as having the necessary ability to do whatever was required of him to inherit eternal life. He has everything else going for him. His business life is in order. His home life is in order. His community life is in order and there is this other compartment in his life, his religious life, his spiritual life, that he now wants to be in order and so he says, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" I doubt very seriously that this man really understood what eternal life is. The fact is, he probably grasped little more than that it was the spiritual dimension of his life that was lacking and he yet needed that to be in right standing.

What is surprising, if anything, as we read of this man who comes to Christ, is that he has a need at all about anything. If anyone seems to have life by the tail, it is this man. Think about it: he is young, he is healthy, he is strong, he is wealthy, he has affluence, he has possessions, he has prosperity, he has success, he has respect, he has notoriety, he is upright, he is moral, he is honest, he is hardworking, he has integrity, he is exemplary. This is the man that that every father would want his daughter to marry. This is the rich young ruler. He seems to have everything yet the fact is he has nothing because he does not have eternal life, and there is in him a void that cannot be filled by the things of this

world, there is, as Blaise Pascal said, a God-shaped vacuum that is within every person and can only be filled by God himself and until then, this man is empty on the inside. He is incomplete. He is unfulfilled. He is without peace on the inside. And so he is driven in search of what is missing in his life to fall at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there are different kinds of seeking for God. There is general seeking, and there is true seeking. R. C. Sproul has rightly said that every theologian is known by his distinctions, and we need to make a distinction here in what it is to be a seeker of God. This man is simply a general seeker, that is to say, he's not really looking for God, he is not searching for God, he is only searching for those non-redemptive things that God can give. He is looking for the gifts but he is not looking for the Giver. This is not a true seeker of God for the Bible says there is none who seeks after God, no not one, right? Let me raise that before you ask me this after the sermon when I'm standing in the lobby. We all know this. This man is simply a general seeker in the sense that he knows something is missing in his life and he is searching, but not for the right reasons. He is not searching for forgiveness of sin. He is not looking for pardon for iniquity. He is simply a man who wants, who we would say today, he's lonely or he's incomplete or he wants peace. Well, Jesus Christ did not come into this world to take away anyone's loneliness. Jesus did not come to address felt needs. He has come to address needs that are unfelt until the word of God and the Spirit of God brings to the surface those needs that are true and lead to eternal life. There is a sense in which this man has no idea who he is talking to and what he is asking for.

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" The searching soul. I want you to note, second, or the seeking soul. I want you to know, second, the searching response. In verse 18 and 19, Jesus now responds in a way that, quite frankly, seems strange to us. In fact, this could be the strange response because it is unlike any evangelism class that most of us have ever sat through. Jesus does not begin a four-step presentation of the gospel and ask the man, "Would you like to pray and receive Me into your life?" No, the strange response in verse 18 and 19 needs to become a part of our evangelistic repertoire as we talked to lost sinners about their relationship with the Lord. In verse 18, Jesus gives these very veiled words almost, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." It seems to be that this man is ripe fruit ready to fall into our Lord's hands, and if our Lord will just hum, "Just as I am," he is ready to fall into the Lord's hands. But our Lord now wants to seemingly strain at a gnat. He wants to talk about one of the words that the rich young ruler has used, it is the word "good," which would seem to be the least important word in verse 17. It would seem like Jesus would say, "Well, let's talk about eternal life or let's talk about Me as a teacher." But Jesus circles back around and wants to talk about the word "good." Look at it in verse 18, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." Jesus now wants to talk about the holiness of God and he wants to talk about his own deity, and Jesus wants to talk about, in the next verse, the knowledge of sin, and no one will be saved even if they supposedly say they want to be saved until there is an understanding of the holiness of God, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ and the knowledge of one's personal sin.

And so the word "good" in verse 18 is the key word, is the only word that is repeated twice. "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone." Jesus instead of rejoicing that this man was willing to receive eternal life, Jesus now counters by plunging beneath the surface and asking him this question, here is the issue: this man is using the word "good" in an incorrect way. This man is using the word "good" in referring to Jesus in a relative way as opposed to an absolute way. And again, R. C. Sproul would say a theologian is one who makes distinctions, careful distinctions in the understanding of the truth. There is the use of the word "good" that is in a relative sense, "Well done, thou faithful and good servant." Man is good only in a relative way. As he would be compared with other men, some men are good, others are bad as measured on a horizontal way and in a general way to God's standard, but there is only one who is good in the absolute way and that is God himself, and the rich young ruler is guilty of blurring, the distinctions between relative goodness and absolute goodness. And so that is why Jesus says what he says, "Why do you call Me good? There is only one good and that is God."

Now three things that Jesus is saying here. 1. God alone is good, as I said, in an absolute way. To be good in an absolute way refers to perfect holiness, it refers to moral perfection. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. God alone is perfectly good in that God alone is perfectly holy, God alone is perfectly righteous. Good is an adjective that belongs to God alone in an absolute way. And so Jesus challenges this young man in regard to his notion about the goodness that he possesses and he drives the stake down that God alone possesses absolute goodness.

Until we understand this, none of us will ever be saved because it is only in measuring our own lives by the absolute goodness of God do all of us come to understand our own sin. As long as we measure ourselves simply with someone else, then we see ourselves as a good person because there is always someone who is worse off than we are. It is not until we see ourselves in the pure and perfect light of the holiness of God that our own sin is exposed and we have great need for salvation. This was the shock for Isaiah in Isaiah 6 as he stood in the presence of the holiness of God and then he said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips; For I have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." This rich young ruler has not yet seen the holiness of God therefore he has never seen himself. He has never seen himself as weighed in the balances and found wanting with a holy God. He still is strutting into the presence of Christ wanting to add eternal life to his resume and he has not yet come to see that, "I'm ruined in the presence of a holy God."

Oh, he has seen relative goodness but he has not yet come to see absolute goodness in the perfect holiness and moral perfection of Almighty God. That's where Jesus is driving this conversation. "Why do you call Me good? There is none good but God alone. You do not yet know this." Second, this rich young ruler failed to see that the one who stood before him, the one to whom he has run and knelt before, is none other than this infinitely perfect good God in human flesh. To this point, all he sees is that Jesus is a relatively good teacher. Compared to the other rabbis, compared to the other spiritual gurus of the day, Jesus is just one of many, although good, and Jesus presses this and says, "Why do you call Me good for there is none good but God?" The crystal clear implication is, "Young man, you do not know who you are talking to. You are in the presence of the

infinitely Holy God who has come to earth in human flesh, none other than the Son of God, the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Third, because this young man failed to see these first two realities, the absolute holy goodness of God and the full perfect deity of Christ, he therefore failed to see himself as God sees him. As a sinner under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, as one who has fallen short of the absolute goodness of Almighty God, and it is only in seeing the perfect holiness of God and in the perfect deity of Christ does one come to the understanding of his own unholiness and his desperate need for grace. In verse 19, we would anticipate perhaps now Jesus will begin the four step presentation of the gospel, and then say, 'Is there any reason you can give Me why you should not pray this prayer after Me and commit your life to Christ?' In the average evangelical church, this rich young ruler would be a deacon in the church within 10 weeks. He'd be a trustee within months. Yet Jesus sees into his heart and sees that this man is a long way from the kingdom of God.

And so in verse 19, Jesus now wants to talk about, if you can believe this, the 10 Commandments. He says, "You know the commandments." It is in the commandments, and these are the 10 Commandments, the moral law of God. The reference is not to the ceremonial law, neither is it to the civil law, it is to the 10 Commandments, the moral law of God. The moral law of God is the revelation of the absolute holiness of God. It is in the 10 Commandments that there is the blazing light of the glory of the absolute goodness of God that is revealed to man. So Jesus now tells him what he must do to inherit eternal life.

There are basically two ways to inherit eternal life. 1. From the moment that you are born till your last breath, you must perfectly keep the law at every point, never once whether a sin of omission or commission, never once breaking one of the commandments. Of course, there's still the matter of Adam's sin that has been imputed to the entire human race that must be dealt with as well, but hypothetically, theoretically, live a perfect life. In fact, in Matthew's account of this in Matthew 19:17, this is what Jesus said. It's omitted by Mark included by Matthew. If you wish to enter into life, are you ready for the answer to this? This is what Jesus said, one-on-one evangelism. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. Can you imagine a preacher standing up and giving the good news, just be perfect? One man says the only perfect man I know that's ever lived was my wife's first husband. He had to be the only perfect man but, you know the commandments. When he says, "you know the commandments," that is to say, "Keep them. Obey them." Now, if you ever break them just once maybe when you were two years old, three years old, four years old, just once, hell, damnation and destruction forever, for the wages of sin, singular, the wages of sin is death. How many sins did Adam have to commit in order for death to come on the entire human race? Just one sin. So does this seem strange that the Lord Jesus would suggest to this man that he could enter into eternal life by the things that he does? We have to do so perfectly or else we are under the curse of the law. Well, of course no one has ever kept the law perfectly except the Son of God, and we are all under the curse of the law so that way of salvation will not work. The only other way that is left is the direction that Jesus is driving this

conversation to, although this conversation will be aborted before there is any discussion of grace because this rich young ruler wants salvation on his own terms, in his own way, and turns around and leaves before even arriving at a discussion of grace.

Notice what Jesus does in verse 19 after he says, "You know the commandments," as if pointing his finger to them, "Keep them and you will enter into life." He then begins to articulate the 10 Commandments lest they should avoid the thinking of this rich young ruler. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Do not defraud, that is a restatement of do not bear false witness because when you bear false witness, you defraud someone. Honor your father and mother. You know that the 10 Commandments were given on two tablets, the first four commandments on the first tablet that govern our relationship to God, the last six on the second tablet that govern our relationship to our fellow man. And so Jesus, in deference to this man, bypasses that which is the hardest, really our relationship with God, to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind and all of your strength, he comes to the more accessible half, the final six commandments that govern his relationship to his fellow man.

Now before we move on, I want to say this. I want everyone in the building to get this. Most Most believers today would not even think of using the 10 Commandments in their personal evangelism. That would not be a go-to passage. Yet it is for Jesus. The law is an important tool in evangelism. Paul writes in 1 Timothy 1:8, I would remind you that's not in the Old Testament, that's in the New Testament. 1 Timothy 1:8, "The Law," capital L, "The Law is good if one uses it lawfully." The 10 Commandments are good. And then he goes on to talk about their use in an evangelistic setting. The law is good because number 1) it reveals God's holy standard; 2) it reveals the sinfulness of sin to sinners; and 3) it magnifies before their eyes their need for salvation. If all we do is preach good news, no one will be saved. There is no good news without first knowing what the bad news is. It is the bad news that makes the good news good.

I've shared with you before if we came in and tapped you on the shoulder today and said we just want to tell you we have really good news, your house is not on fire, you would just yawn at us. In fact, you would say, "Please don't interrupt me during the sermon." But if you had found out some very bad news before this service began that your house had gone up in flames and your children were in that house, and then we told you your children were saved, there was no fire at your house, that would be really good news. The same is true in evangelism, and the same is true in the gospel, and it is the role of the law, it is the function of the law, it is the purpose of the law to weigh every sinner in the balances and they be found wanting. It is the standard by which God measures our spiritual moral lives. And we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the function of the law still in the New Testament to reveal the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin to sinners, and without this knowledge you're going to have to have a very winsome personality to convince numb sinners that they need salvation.

Galatians 3:24 is an important verse at this point regarding the function of the 10 Commandments in the New Testament. Paul writes, "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ." Did you hear that? This is not in Deuteronomy, this is in Galatians. "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." The law says to every one of us, "God is holy and you are sinful and there is an infinite chasm that separates Holy God from sinful man, and sinful man is under the wrath of God, and he is owing the wages of sin which is death." But the law then points to Christ who is the lawgiver. Christ is the lawgiver, and it points to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the only means by which we may be saved. The 10 Commandments condemn every person to hell. The 10 Commandments also take people by the hand and lead them to Christ for salvation.

This is what Jesus in his evangelism, this is the issue that he is pushing on with this rich young ruler. Let me say this: the rich young ruler and all who are like him are the hardest people in the world to reach with the gospel. The Samaritan woman there by the well who has had five husbands, it's pretty easy to convince them of sin but rich young rulers who have the world by the tail, who have virtually no needs on a horizontal life, it is very hard to break through to them and Jesus is pressing with the only antidote that will, the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and framed in the 10 Commandments.

I want you to note, third, the spiritual denial. Verse 20, the spiritual denial, because this man is in absolute denial about the condition of his soul. This man is so smug, he is so arrogant, he is so prideful. Look at verse 20, "And he," the rich young ruler, "said to Him," the Lord Jesus Christ, "Teacher," notice he's dropped the word "good." He doesn't want another theological discussion on the absolute holiness of God and the sinfulness of man and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's already gone into that full discussion with Christ, so he leaves off the word "good" as if to minimize this, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." Liar. This man is so self-deceived by his own spiritual pride and his own self-righteousness and his own religious arrogance that he does not see himself as standing in need of salvation from God that would come as a result of him acknowledging his sin and admitting that he needs the forgiveness of sin. To this man, the gospel is for the harlot, the gospel is for the tax collector, the gospel is for sinners, notorious sinners, but not him. In Matthew's account of this, Matthew adds these words from the rich young ruler, "What am I still lacking?" It simply does not occur to him that what is lacking is his true and greatest need, it is to acknowledge his sin to a holy God and throw himself upon the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you to note, fourth, the simple requirement. Verse 21, the simple requirement. One of the things that Jesus is teaching as well as his evangelism is the simplicity of it. "Looking at him," verse 21, "Jesus felt a love for him." This love is a compassion for him that welled up within the Lord Jesus Christ. He is a friend of sinners. He has come to seek and to save that which is lost. There was a genuine love that welled up within him for this man as he looked at him and, in reality, looked into him.

"And said to him," notice the first four words, here's the simplicity, here is the simple requirement, "One thing you lack." Not five things. Not 10 things. Not 20 things. In order for you to inherit eternal life, in order for you to enter the kingdom, in order for you to receive salvation, there is one thing and only one thing that you must do in order to be saved, and the clear implication is, you have not yet done this one thing. It's not that you've done 99 things and there's one more thing that will make 100, and then you're in as if God is grading on the curve and you're at the 99 percentile and if you'll do this one more thing for a little extra credit, then that will bump you up to 100 and then you're in. No, the implication is there is one thing that is still lacking and it is the one thing that you have not yet done. There is only one requirement for entering into the kingdom of God and to receive eternal life, and you still have not done the one thing. You can go and do 100 things, 300 things, 1,000 things but you have not done the one thing.

So what is the one thing that is still lacking? Jesus gives the answer. It is crystal clear. It is lucid. It is unmistakable. Notice what Jesus says. He says, "You must repent and believe." It is the heads and tails of the same coin, and this message has not changed from the day Jesus came into Galilee and said in Mark 1:15, "Repent and believe in the gospel." It is the very same when Jesus said to Levi, "Follow Me." And it is repeated so many different ways throughout the New Testament, "Enter by the narrow gate. Build on the rock. Come to Me and take My yoke upon you. Deny yourself. Take up a cross and follow Me. Become like a child. If you are to be converted, you must be born again. He who believes in Me will never thirst. I am the door. If anyone enters through Me he will be saved. He who believes in Me will live even if he dies. He who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. He who believes in Me believe in the light so that he may become sons of light." It is repentance and faith.

Look at the repentance, "go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." This is not saying that you have to buy your way into heaven but what this is saying is that anything and everything in your life that is most important to you that has become your God and your idol, whatever is number 1 in your life, you must dissolve it and remove it because there can only be one number 1 in your life if I'm to come into your life, Jesus is saying, and it must be me. Jesus will not come in and ride in the back seat of anyone's car of life. He will only come in and sit in the front seat and that behind the driver's wheel. Anything and everything in your life, whether it's money, whether it's sports, whether it's education, whether it's your work, whether it's your marketplace, your money, your family, your kids, your grandkids, "Except a man hate his own father and mother and brother and sister, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

"Go and sell everything and come back once you've done it." Jesus meant it. You have idols in your life. And he would have said to someone else, "Get rid of whatever else it is in your life. Seek you first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these other things will be added unto you." Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters, for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." You cannot serve God and money. You cannot serve God and football. You cannot serve God and your grandchildren. You cannot serve God and your grass in your yard. You

cannot serve God and your house. You cannot serve God and anything else. It is God and God alone.

That is what Jesus is saying. It is a call for total repentance, for radical repentance in a person's life and the idols that were on the altar of this rich man's heart was his money. money. It's not wrong to have money but it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. And do you know what? Many times it's poor people who have nothing who love money more than people who have it. They fantasize about it. They daydream about it. "Oh, what would it be like to win the lottery? What would it be like to win this jackpot? What would it be like to finally have money?" They have money written upon their heart even though they don't have any in their pocket.

Jesus said, "If you're to inherit eternal life, you're going to have to get rid of all your money." That's repentance. Then there's saving faith. All repentance does is give up the sin, saving faith attaches us to the Savior. And so Jesus then said, "and come follow Me." Beloved, that's as simple as it gets. You can understand that, can't you? That's what saving faith is, it is for you to take the decisive step of faith and to commit your life to Christ and to move out in life and to walk with him and talk with him, and you have entered into a personal relationship with him, and you are committed to him, you are surrendered to him, you are submitted to him, and you talk with him and he talks to you in his word.

"Come follow Me." It's in the present tense meaning from this step forward, this is the first step of a journey for the rest of your life. To follow Christ is one of the chief ways that Jesus represented what is saving faith. True saving faith is not passive, allowing one to merely profess Christ and then be but a spectator in the Christian life. True saving faith is active. It is dynamic. It thrusts us forward. It moves us out. It propels us on in walking with the Lord day by day. To follow Christ is what he called for. To Matthew who was sitting in the tax booth, Jesus looked at him and said, "Follow Me." To the man who offered excuses, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." Jesus said, "No. Follow Me. Let the dead bury the dead. You follow Me. Enough with your excuses." To Phillip whom Jesus found in Galilee, Jesus said, "Follow Me. Leave it all behind. Leave the world behind. Move out. Connect yourself with Me by faith". And Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice and they follow Me."

Let me be as specific if Jesus is being specific here, this simple requirement, this one thing that is necessary to inherit eternal life is a call to total, complete, radical commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. It is a call to renounce anything and everything that is more important than Jesus in order to be fully surrendered to him. No one can follow Christ without renouncing everything that was once most important. Jesus said, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."

This is the simple requirement, this is the sole singular requirement to inherit eternal life, and until this rich young ruler, who is used to calling the shots and giving the terms to others, until he sells all that he has and comes and follows Christ, he has no eternal life.

Note the sad ending in verse 22. This is a sad ending. It's sad because he was so close. It's sad because he came to the right person, he asked the right question, he received the right answer, but he made the wrong decision. But at these words, the words of the gospel of Christ, the words of the 10 Commandments, the words of the clarification of the holiness of God and the deity of Christ, but at these words he was saddened. Luke records he became very sad, which is to say, his countenance fell and deep gloom clouded his face, and you could read it in his eyes. He was very saddened. I once heard Adrian Rogers say, "I want everyone who hears me preach to leave either sad, mad or glad." And I hope I can push the truth enough that everyone leaves here today either sad or madder than a hornet, or rejoicing and skipping out of here that you have inherited eternal life.

It says he went away grieving. Do you see that? The verb tense is it's a present participle, which means it is a continual ongoing feeling of sorrow that left him crushed. What a contrast. He came running up with eagerness and sincerity, he thought he had the deal cut with Jesus, and now he leaves saddened and grieving. Why? Why would someone say no to the Lord Jesus? Why when Jesus says, "Come follow Me," would someone pull back and say, "No, I cannot follow Christ"? Why would he be so sad? Why would he be so grieving? Look at the end of verse 22, "for he was one who owned much property." He couldn't let go of his pursuit of the world. You remember in the temptation of Christ, the devil took him up to the height of the mountain that overlooks the Jordan River Valley and he offered him the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, he had all of the kingdoms parade before the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, that in and of itself was an extraordinary presentation and the devil said, "Worship me just one time and all of the kingdoms of all of the world will be Yours. The pomp and might of Rome, the superior Imperial might of Egypt, all of the kingdoms are Yours, just bow the knee one time to me and I will transfer all of the assets and all of the possessions of this entire world into Your hands." And Jesus said, "It is written you shall have no other gods before Me. Worship the Lord and Him alone."

This young man did not fare so well with that offer. This young man accepted the devil's offer to live for this world and the possessions of this world rather than to worship God and him only. He would not let go of the world. The world had filled his heart and stained it and corrupted it, and he wouldn't let it go. And it is because of the world he made a Judas decision to take the coins of this world instead of the infinite value of the mercy and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't mistake what Jesus is saying. He is not saying that if you have money you cannot go to heaven, but what he is saying is if money is number one or anything else in your life is more important to you than God or Christ, you have not inherited eternal life because he will only give his riches to those who say, "In my hands no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling."

How will it be for you? Have you come to the place yet where you have left it all for Christ? Or do you still yet, like the rich young ruler, need to inherit eternal life? If you are to inherit eternal life, I leave you with the words of the Lord. It is an open invitation to all to enter into the kingdom and inherit eternal life but there is one thing, and one thing only that will lead you into the kingdom and it is repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Believe upon him today. Throw yourself upon his mercy. Throw the world away. Enter into the kingdom and you will have true riches forever.

Let us pray.

*Father, this is an intense encounter between Christ and this rich young ruler, and at times we almost find ourselves admiring the rich young ruler more than we admire what Jesus has to say. Lord, make this so clear in our hearts and in our minds what it is to inherit eternal life, what it is to enter into the kingdom, what it is to be saved. Lord, may we all here today examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. Have I come to Christ like this? Have I divested myself of all interests in the world like this? Have I become a follower of Christ like this? Lord, let us not be self-deceived as this young man was that would say something as audacious as, "Oh. I've kept all these commandments from my youth up." Lord, let us not be so blind. Let us not be so deceived. May You shine the light of the holiness of God into our hearts and may we see ourselves and our need for Christ as this young man and may the law be our tutor to lead us to Christ that we may be justified by faith. Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

The following has been an audio recording of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church and is under the direct copyright of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church. All recordings may be used freely for the ministry and application of the word of God, however, written permission must be obtained from Christ Fellowship Baptist Church before any recordings broadcast or redistributed in any form. In no way should this recording be disseminated without the express consent of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church.