

TRUE GOSPEL, REAL DISCIPLES

EASIER TO BECOME A MILLIONAIRE
THAN TO FOLLOW JESUS

Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments.” “Which ones?” he inquired. Jesus replied, “ ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,’ and ‘love your neighbor as yourself.’ ” “All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

MATTHEW 19.16-26

THE DISQUALIFYING INVARIABLE

*Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?”
“Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good.”*

MATTHEW 19.16-17

- ▶ Human perspective asserts that there is worth and value in who I am and what I have attained, and ultimately, that those factors make me “good” and give me worth. The gospel disagrees.

*What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! As it is written:
“There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”*

THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS, 3.9-12

- ▶ The gospel is emphatic that our “good” has no worth or merit with God. In today’s culture, such a perspective is deemed to be harsh, hurtful, and denigrating of others. Yet to reject it, is to reject any need for the gospel and for the work of Christ.
 - ➡ If I truly have intrinsic “good” that gives me merit with God, then the gospel message that God sent Jesus to pay my penalty and reconcile me through his death to God, is bogus.
 - ➡ If there is “good” (acceptability with God) in the way I am living and the direction that I am going in life, then Jesus was wrong to require repentance (a total change of values and lifestyle) and to demand that I acquiesce to his way, his truth, and his life as the only acceptable way to God.

- ▶ The gospel is unwavering in its position that our sense of personal goodness and worth invariably disqualifies us with God. The only acceptable merit is through a “life-exchange” with Christ.

There is no difference between [anyone], for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

ROMANS 3.22-25

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

EPHESIANS 2.8-9

BUT ISN'T JESUS GOOD?

Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

MATTHEW 19.21

- ▶ Jesus responded to this successful young man by declaring that there is only One who is good, that is, God. But isn't Jesus also good?
- ▶ In making this statement, Jesus was establishing the bottom line for what it means to experience true conversion and to follow him. Jesus set aside his equality with God, took upon himself the nature of a slave and was obedient to the Father's will—to the point of death (Philippians 2.6-8). Thus, the Father was his standard for “good”.

- ▶ Jesus had one life-plan and goal: *to represent the Father with an impeccable resemblance to the Father's character and will.*

“For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”

“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me.”

“Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father.”

“When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The One who sent me is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases Him.”

- ▶ Jesus was truly “good” because he was sinless and infinitely righteous. And it was that “God-righteousness” within him that compelled him to “*follow*” the Father—
 - ➡ to reject any self-interest or advancement,
 - ➡ to exclude everything from his life that was not the Father’s specific choice,
 - ➡ to be taught (or disciplined) by the Father how to live in order to precisely fulfill the Father’s plan (cf. Isaiah 50.4-5).
- ▶ Thus Jesus was demonstrating what it would mean to follow him; to be a true follower and disciple of Jesus is emulate his example.

- Whether speaking to the wealthy young man or to the large crowds, Jesus presented the same perspective and cost involved in being a real disciple—

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: “If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

“Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won’t you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, ‘This person began to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

“Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won’t he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

LUKE 14.25-35

- This is what it means to be a real disciple; it is the rejection of self-goodness and achievement, the abandoning of what has no eternal value and stands in the way of obtaining that which does. To be a disciple is to “follow”—pursuing a life that resembles and reflects Christ.



Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: ‘ye were bought at a price,’ and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.”

—DIETRICH BONHOEFFER, *The Cost of Discipleship*

THE IMPOSSIBLE MADE POSSIBLE

When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

MATTHEW 19.21

- ▶ It is impossible for us to qualify ourselves as acceptable to God; it is only by grace through the merit of Christ that we are saved. It is also impossible for us to live a life of spiritual worth and eternal value through our own efforts. But as we surrender every aspect of our lives to Christ, competing agendas are eliminated, and by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit we will become increasingly more Christ-oriented and Christ-like.

THE FINAL WORD

And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.”

MATTHEW 19.29-30

- ▶ No one can simultaneously go in opposite directions or successfully embrace competing values; no one can serve God and money at the same time—it is strictly an “either/or” proposition. In reality we are simply giving up what is ultimately worthless in this life to gain what is eternally priceless: the affirmation and reward of Christ. Eternity will reveal the worth of Jesus for us in this life and reward us accordingly.