

Equipping Pastors International
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Lesson #4

DISCIPLESHIP
**What Does It Mean
to Trust Christ?**
Mark 10:17-31

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The story of the rich young ruler is difficult for the average twentieth century Christian mind to comprehend, for it does not harmonize with most twentieth century theology.
- B. Jesus Christ is the Master Evangelist and how He dealt with men should be a pattern for modern-day evangelism. NOTE: After studying this section of Scripture, we will realize that even the evangelical wing of Christianity is saturated with doctrines and practices which have no real biblical basis. The modern gospel, in many ways, does not resemble the gospel as it was taught by Christ. Omission of essential truths in the gospel is tampering with the gospel. *When a half-truth is presented as the whole truth, it becomes an untruth.*

II. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD (10:17-18)

- A. **"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him. . ."** -- Humanly speaking, this man had many wonderful qualifications. He was youthful (Matt. 12:20), a ruler (Luke 18:18) and rich (Luke 18:23). He was trained in the social graces, for he "kneeled" to Christ, showing proper courtesy and respect. He was a worthy candidate for "Who's Who" in Jerusalem. NOTE: The carnal mind reasons that a man of such wealth and affluence would be a prize trophy for Christ and the local church, for he could be such a great help to Christ and His kingdom. Men are impressed with the external, but God knows the heart.
- B. **". . . and asked him. Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"** -- This young man had a great spiritual desire and he was anxious to know how he might be saved, for he came "running" to Christ. Notice carefully the question was how to get eternal life, so the question is about salvation. NOTE: This rich young man was a "live one" and appeared to be ripe fruit ready to be picked. This was an evangelist's dream, for he was begging to know how to get to heaven. NOTE: Logically, this would be the time to share the simple gospel with this man and invite him to receive Christ. Modern evangelism would get a "decision" from this man while he is interested in spiritual things. But Christ, instead of forcing a decision, actually rebukes and challenges this man and then sends him away unconverted. How could Christ use such poor tactics? He would not pass Personal Evangelism 101 in most Bible colleges and seminaries! Human evangelical reasoning would think that Christ knows nothing about evangelism, but He is the Master Evangelist so we must evaluate His method and compare it with much of the superficial evangelism going on today.

- C. **"And Jesus said unto him, Why called thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God."** -- The young man only thought of Christ as a good teacher, but Christ asks this question to focus his attention upon the fact that only God is good, and since the young man acknowledged Him as "Good Master," in actuality he was acknowledging Christ to be God. This man was ignorant of the fact that he was speaking to Christ who was God incarnate. NOTE: The purpose of this question was to also direct the young man's attention to the goodness and holiness of God. Christ begins dealing with this man by pointing out who God is with special emphasis upon the goodness and holiness of God. A holy God will in no way pass over sin and He must judge sin or He would be neither holy nor just. Man has sinned against God and the sinner's only hope of salvation is to be found in the grace and power of God. NOTE: Evangelism should begin with a declaration of the attributes of God. Without a knowledge of God, a sinner does not know whom he has offended, who threatens him with eternal destruction, or who is able to save him. Also, without a knowledge of God, man feels absolutely no responsibility to God. NOTE: The rich young ruler was ready to discuss religion and had some kind of understanding about eternal life, but he was ignorant of God and had no concept that he had sinned against a holy God (Psalm 51:4).

III. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S LAW (10:19-20)

"Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth." -- Now Christ speaks to this man about God's holy law, especially as summarized in the Ten Commandments, for the law is but a reflection of the character of God. Why the law? Because the law is the means God uses to convict men of their sins (Rom. 3:20). Only when a man realizes he has transgressed the law of God (1 John 3:4) will he understand his guilt before a holy God. Actually this young man thought himself a moralist, for he felt that he had kept the law from his youth. Of course, he had not kept the law, but he thought he had because he had never seen the sinfulness of sin and his own condemnation before a holy God. NOTE: The preaching of the law is the only way to teach a sinner his guilt and thereby stir within him a desire for God's grace. The man who sees his sinfulness before a holy God is the man who has been convicted by the law and knows that only God's grace can save him. NOTE: The keeping of the law never saved anyone (Gal. 2:16; Acts 13:38-39).

IV. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES REPENTANCE (10:21a) **"Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: . . ."** --

- A. Christ knew the young ruler's knowledge of the law of God to be superficial, so he puts His finger on the sore spot in his life--materialism. When Christ tells him to sell all and give

to the poor, he was effectively preaching the tenth commandment which says, "Thou shalt not covet." The man had an intellectual knowledge of the law, but Christ makes him put it to a practical test. The sin of greed was keeping him from trusting Christ. This does not seem so bad to the human mind, but the soul's lust for materialism is a filthy and ugly sin before God. NOTE: If Christ just would have quoted the tenth commandment, the young man would have said, "I do not covet, for I do not desire anyone's property or wealth." This was probably true, but materialism possessed his person, and Christ sets forth a practical test by demanding that he abandon his riches. The young man loved his riches more than he could have ever loved God, and he turned away. He wanted riches above Christ or at least riches equal with Christ, but he would not put Christ first above all riches.

- B. The young man was to repent and change his mind about his sin of covetousness. If he was to have eternal life, he must turn his back on his "green god." Christ must be first, above all material pursuits, and He asks the young ruler to turn away from the idol of his soul (I Thess. 1:9). NOTE: This young man wanted heaven without turning from the sin of materialism. He wanted Christ to die for his sin, but not to take it away. He wanted eternal life, but not a changed life. He wanted escape from hell, but he did not want to put Christ first. He wanted the pleasures of sin and the joys of eternity. NOTE: To be wealthy is not sin, but it is the love of money that is sinful. When material possessions become an obsession, then they are wrong (I Tim. 6:10, 17-19). If materialism is placed ahead of Christ, this is sin!

Churches are being filled with professing Christians who have never heard that Jesus demands repentance of any who seek eternal life. People flock to "accept Jesus as a personal Savior" without selling all. They have never been told by the preacher that there is a condition placed on having treasures in Heaven--that is, repentance. So the converts of modern evangelism are often as worldly after their "decisions" as before; for they have made a wrong decision. The covetous still cling to their riches and pleasures. Wealth and ease remain as the prevailing mark of their lives. (Walter J. Chantry, Today's Gospel).

V. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES FAITH (10:21b)

- A. ". . . **and come, take up the cross, and follow me.**" -- Christ not only calls for a negative turning from one's old life but a positive act of faith in following Him. Faith is not just intellectual assent but a commitment of oneself to Christ who alone can forgive sin and grant eternal life. Christ loves this young man and gives him a sincere invitation to follow Him. This is a gracious invitation to believe and to follow Him in mind, love and obedience. He is not only a Savior to be accepted but a Master to be followed, a Lord to be obeyed. NOTE: This is not salvation by works but salvation that

results in works (John 10:27).

- B. Our Lord was perfectly honest with the rich inquirer. He did not take the side-door approach to evangelism. He plainly asserted that following Christ would involve a cross. The young ruler was warned ahead of time that to follow Christ would mean sacrifice and discomfort at times. Discipleship is costly! Chantry again remarks,

Though unintentionally so, deceit marks many modern invitations to Christ. Audiences are reminded that they are sad, lonely, discouraged, and unsuccessful. Life is a great weight to them. Troubles encompass them. The future holds dark threats. Then sinners are invited to come to Christ, who will change all of that and put a smile on their faces. He is pictured as a cosmic psychologist who will patch up all problems in one session on the inquiry-room couch. There is no reminder of the discipline, which Christ demands. No suggestion is given that to follow Jesus is sacrificial and painful.

It isn't surprising that many who "go forward" to try the "modern gospel" pill are never seen again. They react like a young military recruit. The recruiting sergeant told him about seeing the world, about honor and fortune and training. But nothing was said of early rising, forced marches, K.P. duty. There was no mention of the blood, fire and terror of the battlefield. Sometimes the young "convert," after a few days of professing Christ, wakes up to discover that troubles are compounded. The psychological honeymoon has ended so quickly. Thinking that he was duped by the dreamy promise of the evangelist, he is never seen again.

VI. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES CONTEMPLATING THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP (10:22)

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions." -- This young ruler was grieved in his soul because Christ had put his finger on the one thing that was keeping him from commitment to Christ. He sincerely asked Jesus Christ about eternal life but was not given the gift. He was moved by the message of Christ but was not converted. He was under conviction but his love for money was greater than his love for Christ. Christ permitted him to go away unconverted. Why? Because he was under conviction and had to settle this thing in his own mind and heart. Perhaps he trusted Christ another day, but one thing for sure, Christ never gave him any assurance that he was saved by forcing him to walk an aisle or pray some superficial prayer. He gave the rich young ruler no false hope or false peace. He let him ponder what it meant to really follow Christ. Assurance of salvation only comes from God (Rom. 8:16), and it is a healthy thing for men to examine the reality of their salvation in Christ.

VII. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES SUPERNATURAL ENABLEMENT (10:23-27)

- A. **"And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."** -- Christ is actually saying here that it is impossible for rich men to be saved just as it is impossible for a large camel to go through the tiny eye of a needle. This astonished the disciples. NOTE: While this statement directly refers to materialists, it can be applied to any sinner in his natural, unsaved state. He could have just as easily said, "How hard it is for drunkards, fornicators, adulterers, pleasure seekers, etc., to enter into the kingdom of heaven."
- B. **"And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved?"** -- The disciples realized that all men, at one time or another, had trusted in riches rather than God, so this virtually eliminated all men from the possibility of salvation. NOTE: Jesus was telling his disciples that He had demanded the impossible! It was impossible for the rich youth to sell all and follow. The ruler was a slave to sin and Satan. His mind was perverted spiritually and his emotions were twisted and his will was in bondage to sin. In essence, he could not obey the gospel commands to repent and believe in his natural unsaved state.
- C. **"And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible."** -- Unsaved men cannot repent and trust Christ without supernatural enablement from a sovereign God. But God can do the impossible. God can change the sinner so as to make him willing to believe and follow Christ. NOTE: Each time a person trusts Christ, God has done the miracle of regeneration. The sinner's hope in salvation is that God will make him alive, and the Christian's hope in evangelism is that God will supernaturally work in sinners' hearts to enable them to trust Christ.

VIII. TRUSTING CHRIST INVOLVES BEING RECIPIENTS OF GREAT PROMISES
(10:28-31)

- A. **"Then Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee."** -- Peter and the disciples understood exactly what our Lord was talking about when He dealt with the rich young ruler. They had made a break with their past life and were determined to follow Christ no matter what the cost was to them personally.
- B. **"And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, . . ."** -- Christ acknowledges that true disciples will suffer much at the hands of the world as they stand true to Him and the truth of the gospel.

- C. "**. . . but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions.**" -- Those who are true disciples and suffer persecutions will be mightily rewarded in this present life. Surely this means that those who commit to Christ may lose physical blessings temporarily but will be mightily repaid materially in God's providence. More important, however, will be the spiritual blessings that come to committed Christians, for they shall have spiritual sisters, mothers and children. NOTE: These blessings will come, but there will be no time that true disciples are free from persecution in this world.
- D. "**. . . and in the world to come eternal life.**" -- The ultimate reward for faithful discipleship is eternal life. True disciples persevere in the faith and prove, demonstrate and give evidence with their lives that they have been truly born of God. A truly saved person can never be lost, but those who are truly saved persevere for Christ. Perseverance is not optional; real believers push on.
- E. "**But many that are first shall be last; and the last first.**" -
- True disciples will persevere in good works in different degrees, for some will obviously be more obedient than others. True disciples will be rewarded with crowns according to their faithfulness.