

# Ministry of Grace

## Matthew 19

### Preface:

Last week we learned a lot about our relationship with other Christians (children of God). The disciples wanted to know who was going to be the greatest in the kingdom. Jesus told them, “In order to be great you must learn to be the least of all.” We also learned that we must not be the cause for someone else’s stumbling. We need to learn to value the lowest and least important among us. And we need to learn to be forgiving of others. After all, whatever terrible thing a brother or sister might have done to us, it pales in comparison to the pain we have caused Jesus by our sinfulness.

This week we will review what Jesus taught regarding divorce and we will learn that living a life of faith is far more important than either riches or good works because riches and good works will not get us into the Kingdom. Only faith in the blood of Christ and the Grace of God will accomplish that.

### Jesus Heads Toward Jerusalem

#### **Matthew 19:1-2**

**<sup>1</sup>Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. <sup>2</sup>And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.**

**Mark 10:1** – <sup>1</sup>And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

### Notes:

There is a subtle suggestion here that many people miss. This is Jesus’ farewell to Galilee. At this point He is focused on going to Jerusalem where He would be betrayed, seized, tried in three court settings, declared innocent, and crucified anyway. Luke, in his gospel account says,

**When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.  
(Luke 9:51)**

**Matthew 19:1** seems to indicate that Jesus went directly from Galilee to the region beyond the Jordan, but this is not the case. If you read Luke’s gospel from **Luke 9:51** through the middle of chapter 18, you will find that a whole lot of things transpired between His departure from Galilee to the events described in **Matthew 19:3-12**.

Matthew says that Jesus entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. This area is actually not part of Judea, but is Perea, the area on the east side of the Jordan River adjacent to Judea. Perea was part of the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. It was very common for Jews to travel between Galilee and Judea via the road on the east side of the Jordan because this allowed them to avoid travelling through Samaria.



**Mark 10:2-12** – <sup>2</sup>And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" <sup>3</sup>He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" <sup>4</sup>They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." <sup>5</sup>And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. <sup>7</sup>Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." <sup>10</sup>And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup>And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, <sup>12</sup>and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

### **Notes:**

We covered much of this material when we were looking at the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5. But, since it is the subject of this portion of Matthew chapter 19, we will review what we said earlier.

In Jesus' day there was a lot of controversy regarding divorce. It centered on the interpretation of a phrase in **Deuteronomy 24:1**.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found **some indecency in her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house ... (**Deuteronomy 24:1**)

This verse teaches that a husband could divorce his wife if he no longer favored her because he found "some indecency" in her. But, what does "some indecency" mean? The opinions of the leading Rabbis of the day, ran the gamut from a man's wife burning dinner, to – she was walking around with her hair down, to – she was speaking to men on the streets, to – she was speaking disrespectfully of her husband's parents. Some even interpreted the expression, "finds no favor in his eyes" to mean that a man could divorce his wife if he found someone more attractive. However, interestingly enough, their concept of "indecency" did not include adultery. Why was that? Because according to the Law of Moses, adultery was punishable by death.

This is why the Pharisees came to Jesus and asked, "**Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?**" (**Matthew 19:3**)

Instead of answering the question directly, Jesus and the Pharisees had a discussion about divorce. Jesus pointed out that God's original plan was that a man and a woman who came together in a marriage relationship became "one flesh." He did not say, "One spirit." After all, to separate spiritually is not difficult. But, to separate flesh would require death. The Pharisees then asked Him,

**"Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"**

This was actually a trick question, designed to entrap Jesus. You see, Moses did not "command" that a man should divorce his wife. Notice how Jesus responded:

He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart **Moses allowed** you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Notice that Jesus said, "and marries another." Jesus' teaching was that it was not the divorce, but the remarriage that caused the issue.

But what about a marriage today where one person is a Christian and the other is not? The Apostle Paul spoke very specifically about this situation:

But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

(1 Corinthians 7:15-16)

What is the bottom line? Scripture allows divorce and remarriage in three instances. First, if someone's mate is guilty of sexual immorality and is unwilling to repent, divorce and remarriage are permitted. Secondly, if a believer is deserted by an unbelieving spouse, divorce and remarriage are permitted. The third, though not specifically mentioned in any of the teachings on divorce in the Bible, is if a believer was married and divorced before he or she became a Christian then remarriage is permitted. This is because when a person gets saved he or she becomes a new creation and the old has passed away.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17) [NKJV]

Yet, there is one type of situation that the Bible does not speak to directly or indirectly, and that is physical or emotional abuse. When this happens to you in a marriage, you need to go to your pastor or the elders of your Church and, with their help, seek out good Christian counselling for the abuser. But, if the perpetrator of this abuse refuses to submit to the Elders or to the pastor, or refuses to go to counselling, then the victim needs to find other living arrangements, separate from the person they are married to. No one should continue living with a spouse who is abusing them!

Finally, what about a Christian who has gone through a divorce and it was not in accordance with the principles we have laid out here? Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said it very well when asked what to do in this situation:

All I would say about them is this, and I say it carefully and advisedly, and almost in fear lest I give even a semblance of a suggestion that I am saying anything that may encourage anyone to sin. But on the basis of the gospel and in the interest of truth I am compelled to say this: Even adultery is not the unforgivable sin. It is a terrible sin, but God forbid that there should be anyone who feels that he or she has sinned himself or herself outside the love of God or outside His kingdom because of adultery. No; if you truly repent and realize the enormity of your sin and cast yourself upon the boundless love and mercy and grace of God, you can be forgiven and I assure you of pardon. But hear the words of our blessed Lord: "Go and sin no more!"

## **Let the Children Come to Me**

### **Matthew 19:13-15**

<sup>13</sup>Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, <sup>14</sup>but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." <sup>15</sup>And he laid his hands on them and went away.

**Mark 10:13-16** – <sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the

children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." <sup>16</sup>And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

**Luke 18:15-17** – <sup>15</sup>Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>17</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

### **Notes:**

In Luke's gospel account of this blessing of children he refers to "infants," which is from the Greek word *brephos*, meaning an unborn or newborn child. This is the word used to describe the newborn Jesus when the Shepherds visited the manger at Migdol Eder. The Greek word translated "children" here in Matthew 19 is *paidion*, which means "an infant." This is the same word used to describe baby Jesus when the Magi came to Bethlehem to see the newborn King of the Jews. Also, in verse 14, Jesus said that the disciples should allow the *paidion* to come unto Him. From these three descriptions we can deduce that the children that were being brought to Jesus for a blessing were not young boys and girls, but very young children (infants).

Apparently, the disciples considered it "beneath" Jesus to waste His precious time blessing little babies, but Jesus thought otherwise. Remember that Jesus' ministry was not to kings and priests who had no need of a physician, but to "the lost sheep of Israel" and those who were sinners in need of the Great Physician. **Jesus' ministry was to the needy, the lowly and humble.** Also, keep in mind what the Apostle Paul said,

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

(1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

Jesus' ministry has always been to those who perceive that they have a need and to those who cannot do for themselves what only He can do, and He doesn't impose Himself on those who don't want Him. This is a lesson that we, as Christians, should learn. God doesn't want Christians who "have it all together." He wants those of us who are dependent on Him and willing to submit our will to Him.

## **The Rich Young Man**

### **Matthew 19:16-22**

<sup>16</sup>And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" <sup>17</sup>And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." <sup>18</sup>He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, <sup>19</sup>Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>20</sup>The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

**Mark 10:17-22** – <sup>17</sup>And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup>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.'" <sup>20</sup>And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." <sup>21</sup>And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

**Luke 18:18-23** – <sup>18</sup>And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>19</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>20</sup>You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" <sup>21</sup>And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." <sup>22</sup>When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>23</sup>But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

### Notes:

We know three specific things about this man. He was rich (**Luke 18:23**), he was young (**Matthew 19:20**), and he was a ruler, probably of a Synagogue (**Luke 18:18**). As such, he was certainly brave to come to Jesus out in the open since his reputation and livelihood may have been at stake. We also know a few more things about him based on his words and actions. He was a devout Jew (keeping the commandments mentioned by Jesus), he believed that the path to eternal life was through works (all Jews of that day believed so), and he coveted possessions (he was not willing to part with them).

This man's first question was, "what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" Mark and Luke, however, give us more information about his first interaction with Jesus. Both of them quote the man as addressing Jesus as "Good Teacher." Jesus responded to this title with the question, "Why do you call me good?" And, he pointed out that, "Only God is good." In other words, Jesus was telling the man that he had just referred to Jesus as God, which may have momentarily set the man back on his heels mentally. Jesus then informed the man that if he wanted such eternal life, he must keep the commandments.

Before we go any further, however, let me say that Jesus was NOT telling the rich young ruler that he could be saved by keeping the Law. Jesus did not introduce the idea of keeping the commandments to show the young man how to be saved, but to show him that *he needed to be saved*. We know from Paul's teaching that "There is none righteous, not even one," which is a quotation taken from Psalms 14.

The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one. (**Psalms 14:2-3**)

And, remember what James said?

For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. (**James 2:10**)

The rich young ruler asked Jesus which of the commandments he had to keep. And, after hearing the list from Jesus said, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" Let's look at the commandments

that Jesus quoted. But, first of all, we need to ask which of the commandments Jesus DID NOT quote? Jesus did not quote the first four commandments, which deal with our relationship with God:

1<sup>st</sup> Commandment - You shall have no other gods before Me.

2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment - You shall make no idols.

3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment - You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

4<sup>th</sup> Commandment - Keep the Sabbath day holy.

But the commandments that Jesus did refer to are:

6<sup>th</sup> Commandment – You shall not murder.

7<sup>th</sup> Commandment – You shall not commit adultery.

8<sup>th</sup> Commandment – You shall not steal.

9<sup>th</sup> Commandment – You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

5<sup>th</sup> Commandment – Honor your father and your mother.

11<sup>th</sup> Commandment – Love your neighbor as yourself

Say what?! Wait! There is no 11<sup>th</sup> commandment, and “Love your neighbor as yourself” is not one of the original 10 Commandments. It’s interesting to note, however, that Jesus will later include this as part of the summation of all the commandments. When asked which of the commandments is the greatest:

... he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 22:37-40)

Also – notice which other commandment Jesus did NOT mention:

10<sup>th</sup> Commandment – You shall not covet.

This was the commandment that the rich young ruler had a real problem with. In fact, when the young man said, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?” Jesus’ response was that he should sell all his possessions and give the money to the poor. The rich young ruler was not able to do this because he coveted possessions. If he had sold all he had and if he had given it all to the poor, would he have been saved by works? No!

## **Difficulty of Salvation for the Rich**

### **Matthew 19:23-26**

<sup>23</sup>And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>25</sup>When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" <sup>26</sup>But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

**Mark 10:23-27** –<sup>23</sup>And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" <sup>24</sup>And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup>And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup>Jesus looked

at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God."

**Luke 18:24-27** –<sup>24</sup>Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." <sup>26</sup>Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" <sup>27</sup>But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

### **Notes:**

The Jewish people of that day believed that riches were evidence of God's blessing. They based this on the promises God gave the Jewish nation in Deuteronomy chapters 26 through 28. In that discourse God told them that they would be prosperous if they obeyed, but they would **not** be prosperous if they disobeyed. However, in His life and His teaching, Jesus tried to show the people that the inner spiritual blessings are far more important than the material gains. God sees the heart, and God wants to build character. Material blessings on earth may be a gift of God in response to a person's obedience, but salvation, that is, eternal life, is the gift of God in response to person's faith. Material riches are NOT a guarantee that God is pleased with you.

To put it another way, entry into the Kingdom is based on acts and deeds which are done as a result of faith, not those which are done in place of faith. The second chapter of the book of James speaks very strongly that works without faith are useless, but works that are done as a result of faith are the evidence of a real saving faith. The rich young ruler was only looking on the exterior of works, works done apart from faith, but Jesus' disciples did not pick-up on this. So the disciples were astonished when Jesus said:

... "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person 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 a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23-24)

Their question, "Who then can be saved?" was based on the same false assumption that the rich young ruler based his life on. And, in explanation to his previous comments, Jesus told them, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." But, again, the disciples missed the truth that Jesus was telling them. Basically, He said that a man or woman cannot do enough good deeds to earn their way into the Kingdom (salvation). It can only be given to them by God, not because they have earned it, but because of God's mercy and grace.

Now, before we go on, let me address Jesus' comment about a camel going through the eye of a needle. In Jerusalem there is a gate known as "the eye of the needle," which is so small that in order for a camel to pass through it, the load it is carrying must be removed and the camel has to go through on its knees. This is certainly a great amount of difficulty, and it produces a great story for tour guides in Jerusalem, however ... if the three gospel writers (and Jesus) were referring to this gate, they would all most likely have used the same words for the expression "the eye of the needle." But, they didn't. In fact Luke (a physician) used the medical terms for *the eye of the needle*, whereas the others used the common terms. Besides, Jesus was not saying that it is difficult for a rich person to work his or her way into heaven, He was saying it is impossible apart from a work of grace on God's part.

## The Disciples' Reward

### **Matthew 19:27-30**

<sup>27</sup>Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" <sup>28</sup>Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup>And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup>But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

**Mark 10:28-31** – <sup>28</sup>Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." <sup>29</sup>Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, <sup>30</sup>who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup>But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

**Luke 18:28-30** – <sup>28</sup>And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." <sup>29</sup>And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, <sup>30</sup>who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

### Notes:

Peter, Peter, Peter! Once again, we see here the same impetuous Peter who, it seems, cannot have a thought enter his head without blurting it out openly. Sure, there was validity to the question, after all, the disciples had left everything behind to follow Jesus, but there was a self-focus in the question as well. We don't know what every one of the 12 disciples had left behind, but we know that Peter, James, and John (and possibly others) had left their jobs as fishermen to follow Jesus without a guaranteed paycheck each week, and Peter had left a wife at home, but what about Matthew (the writer of this gospel account)? He had left a very lucrative tax collecting job that paid far more than a fisherman's salary. He could easily have argued with Peter about who had made the biggest sacrifice, but he didn't.

Once again, we see Jesus' merciful compassion and forgiving grace. Instead of chiding Peter for his self-centered "what about me, what about now" thinking, he focused on the future blessings. The word translated "new world" is *paliggenesia*, which is made up of *palin*, meaning "again" and a form of *genesis*, which means "a generation." This word refers to "a regeneration, a renovation, or a rebirth." It is a clear reference to the Kingdom, which Jesus had been promising all along, but which the Jews had rejected.

Jesus promised His disciples that in the Kingdom, the 12 disciples would sit on 12 thrones and would be judging the 12 tribes of Israel. The first problem with a literal translation of this expression is the fact that not all 12 of the disciples would make it into the kingdom. Judas will not be there. And, if there were 12 thrones for the 12 disciples, who would sit on the 12<sup>th</sup> throne? Also, if we look at the book of Revelation where Jesus is giving the messages to the 7 churches of Asia, we find the following:

And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations — he shall rule them with a rod of iron... (**Revelation 2:26-27**) [NKJV]

So, now we have to ask ourselves who are the ones who overcome? John tells us in his first letter:

For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

So, we see that all Christians (the overcomers) will rule over the nations in the Kingdom. The real question is – will the 12 disciples (representing all believers other than Christians) rule over Israel and all Christians rule over the rest of the nations? Or, will all believers (Old Testament believers, Christians, and Tribulation Saints) rule over all of mankind during the Millennial Kingdom? I honestly don't know the answer to this one.

### **Final Warning**

The point that Jesus was making is that those of us who have rejected the world and have believed in God's promises will be rewarded for the things we have given up for the cause of Christ. But – Jesus cautioned Peter and the rest of us not to think of ourselves as deserving more rewards than others because God's measure of what is reward-worthy is different than our measure. We must not make the mistake of being obedient to God simply for the sake of future reward. We must be obedient as a way of showing humble gratitude for what He has already done for us.

### **So What?**

The rich young ruler was seeking after eternal life. Like many Jews of his day, he thought that he could get it by doing the right things. He apparently had been thinking about it a lot, because we never read of Jesus teaching that it could be acquired by works. In fact, Jesus taught as part of this lesson that, “**With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.**” In other words, entry into Heaven, that is, to receive eternal life, is impossible for us all by ourselves. It is not something that we earn and it certainly is not something that we deserve. To the first century Jew, being saved, receiving eternal life, was synonymous with entrance into the Kingdom. As I said, apparently this rich young ruler has given it some serious thought, and now that a noted teacher was around he took the opportunity to find out what he had to do to get there.

As Christians, we have received the promise of salvation, that is, entry into the Kingdom, based strictly on God's grace. But what is grace? The Greek word translated “grace” is *charis*. According to Strong's dictionary of the Greek language, it is based on the word *chairō*, meaning “to be full of cheer,” that is “to be calmly happy.” Therefore, *charis* is “something done that produces happiness.” But it is more than just that. It refers to an action or deed that is performed, not out of obligation, but voluntarily, for the purpose of causing joy, without expectation of receiving anything in return. In other words, it refers to a free gift given, not because it was asked for, nor deserved, nor earned, but because the giver decided to give it.

We Christians sometimes fall into the same rut that the rich young ruler was in. We think there is something that we need to do for God to gain His favor. We think that by reading our Bible every day, and by praying “in the name of Jesus,” and by attending church every Sunday, and by giving to our church, and by doing deeds of righteousness, and by memorizing Scripture, and countless other “acts of faith,” that we will gain God's favor and somehow make our salvation more sure. Don't get me wrong, we should be doing all these things and more! But we should be doing them because our Lord, our Master, our Owner has told us to do them. Not out of obligation or with expectation of getting anything in return, but out of gratitude for what He has already done for us.

The rich young ruler went away sad and unfulfilled because “things” were more important to him than submitting himself to God and obeying the Lord.

## **Now What?**

How about you? is there something in your life that is more important than submitting to God and obeying your Lord? Is there some area of your life that the Holy Spirit has been convicting you about? Have you surrendered it to Him? Or, are you more interested in holding on to it because you can't seem to let go. Do you want to know what God's will for you is today? Hear what Paul had to say to the Christians in Rome:

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Romans 12:1-2) [NASB]

Don't put it off any longer. The time to surrender to your Lord is now!

**Let's pray.**

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