

Chapter Eighteen (18:1-43)

THE SON OF MAN WARNING AGAINST WORLDLY-MINDEDNESS

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Will God, like the petulant judge of the parable, be worn down by our persistence and finally give in to our prayers?
2. What is wrong with being thankful that one is not an extortioner, unjust or an adulterer? Wouldn't God be pleased with that?
3. How could Jesus turn over the kingdom of God to children? Isn't that unwise?
4. Why would Jesus rebuke the rich young ruler for calling Him good?
5. Is Jesus' espousing the modern doctrine of "righteousness equals riches" in 18:29-30?
6. Who "hid" from the twelve the meaning of Jesus' prediction of His death?
7. Why did the crowd rebuke the blind beggar and tell him to quit crying out to Jesus? Were they so hardhearted they refused the man healing?

SECTION 1

Pessimism (18:1-8)

18 And he told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man; ³and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Vindicate me against my adversary.' ⁴For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor regard man, ⁵yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. ⁷And will not God vindicate his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? ⁸I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

18:1-5 Vigilance: Jesus had just told His disciples He would not always be with them in this world, physically, as He was then. They would have to stay behind in a world of self-indulgence, irreverence, confusion about the kingdom and downright wickedness comparable to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Lk. 17:20ff.). It is going to be a rotten world, ready for the vultures. The question a disciple of Jesus would have is, "What am I to

do living in a society like Noah's or Lot's?" Jesus is coming back but no one knows when that will be. In the meantime, He is to be crucified, raised from the dead and ascended into heaven. And His disciples must live in an indifferent society. There will be people like this judge—indifferent, callous and impervious. The poor and powerless will despair of ever receiving justice or being vindicated. Their rights will be trampled, they will be exploited and no one will care enough to make things right for them. What are they to do? How can the powerless and poor go on without just giving up and becoming like the rest of the world?

Necessary to the survival of one's spiritual life in a society like that is persistent, unbending, unending prayer. Jesus taught this parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. One's trust that God will ultimately answer with vindication is the one imperative for spiritual survival. The Christian's relationship to God must be steadfast for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. The Christian must pray without ceasing. The Christian must be like the widow of this parable who would not capitulate to her adversary. She was clinging to the hope that the judge would eventually vindicate her. This judge was about as indifferent to the woman's plea as a human could possibly be. Finally, out of some selfish motive of his own to rid himself of an inconvenience, he gave in and did what he did not want to do at first. But our God is *not* like that! It is not by praying that we "wear God down"—it is by persistent faith we put ourselves in the right attitude to receive what God wants eagerly and speedily to give us. This parable is teaching the same lesson as the one in Luke 11:5-13 (see comments there).

But how can a person "always pray" or, "pray without ceasing?" Aren't there other things in life, even the Christian life, to do besides praying? We must understand what prayer is. Prayer is far more than uttering words in some public meeting, or even alone at one's bedside. Prayer is the "urge" or "bent" of one's life toward God. Prayer is the continual conscious and unconscious focusing of the mind on that which is above. Prayer is the communication of an attitude of faith, trust and love, whether that be communicated in words or deeds or both.

18:6-8 Vindication: Here is what this parable says: If an indifferent, self-serving, callous judge like that will finally give justice to a poor, defenseless widow because she did not give up, is not our gracious God eager and able to give complete justice to us! Shepard says Jesus' argument in this parable is *a fortiori* ("with stronger reason"). God will speedily vindicate His elect. He does not need persuading, He only needs people who are preparing themselves by unswerving faith to accept His way and His time schedule. Some are not willing to exercise the persistent faith to accept God's way of vindicating them. Some, thinking God ought to work as man works, are unable to accept delay. Many are impatient with God.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

They will not accept the longsuffering of God so that all may have an opportunity to repent. It may appear to many that God delays for a long time. But we must understand the word "speedily" from God's perspective. God may have vindicated us immediately upon our asking and because we had no spiritual maturity we did not see it or understand it. He does not always vindicate in ways we would hope or expect or even comprehend. What we must have is faith in the absolute faithfulness of God to answer always, speedily, though the answer may be contrary to our expectations and understanding (cf. Isa. 55:6-11). Remember the faith of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and remember that it took all the centuries until the first coming of Christ to vindicate their faith!

Jesus did not mean to suggest that He would find widespread wickedness and chaos when He said, ". . . when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" At least He did not mean to suggest that here; in this context. The Greek text has the definite article before the word faith and Jesus' statement should read, ". . . will he find *the* faith. . . .," the particular kind of dogged faith that produces persistent prayer in time of trouble. The Bible indicates there will be believers still alive on earth when Jesus returns (cf. I Cor. 15:51ff.; I Thess. 4:13ff.). So His question here is more in the form of a challenge. He asks, "Will there be any believers on earth praying with the persistence of this widow when I come back or will they have despaired and fainted and resigned themselves to the idea that God is not aware of their needs, or He doesn't care?" That is very near unbelief. That is pessimism. That is the way the world thinks. The disciple of Jesus must think differently.

SECTION 2

Proud (18:9-14)

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

18:9-12 Haughtiness: Do not miss the purpose of this parable. Jesus told it to those who "trusted in *themselves* that they were righteous and

despised others.” He told it to all who think they have something they have earned to present to God as justification. It is a warning to everyone like Job, in the O.T., who audaciously bragged that if he just knew where to find God, he believed he could stand before Him and argue his case. Job found out (Job 38:1ff.) that he was totally incapable of arguing his case before the Lord after all!

Two men went up into the temple to pray. All the men of Israel could go into the “court of Israel” to pray at the appointed times of prayer (3 times daily, cf. Acts 3:1). The “court of Israel” contained the altar of burnt offering and the laver. Only priests could enter the temple proper. Women prayed in the “court of women,” the next court outside the “court of Israel.” One of the men was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector, a publican. The Pharisee stood—probably in a place he could be seen—and prayed unto himself. The Greek phrase, *pros heauton proseucheto*, indicates the Pharisee directed his prayer, not really to God, but to himself! Five times he uses the personal pronoun “I” in the *nominative* case! Even as he thanked God he was *scorning* the publican. That is something to thank God for—that you are able to scorn someone else! Rabbi Simeon ben Jochai said: “If there are only two righteous men in the world, I and my son are these two; if there is only one, I am he!”

Pride has reached epidemic proportions among men. Children boast about their toys or fight for the front seat in the car. Parents fight at Little League games. Corporations are saturated with ego-maniacs trying to outmaneuver others. Church brotherhoods have their “pecking orders.” Branches of the military services fight one another. As one man has put it, “Name just one person who is conscientiously working his way to the bottom of the heap!” Politicians like to say this country is the home of the common man—but who has ever met one?! When we research our family tree we look for kings and statesmen—not carpenters or cobblers.

Pride:

- a. is idolatrous self worship
- b. puts self in the place of sovereignty that belongs only to God
- c. is an attempt to appear in a superior light to what we are with an anxiety to gain applause
- d. is a consuming craving for appearance and reputation irrespective of reality
- e. is making oneself very good by the cheap method of making all others very bad.

Pride is extremely difficult to overcome because it takes root even in the essential virtues of life. We become proud of good works; we become proud of humility. It was good that the Pharisee was not an extortioner, unjust and an adulterer. But all his goodness was destroyed by his haughty

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

pride. He was good because God's law told him not to be bad and he was afraid of the penalty of disobedience. He probably would have committed adultery or some other vice if he thought he could have gotten away with it. That is absolutely the wrong attitude toward God's law. He would probably have killed the publican had he thought he could have escaped punishment—he hated the publican in his heart. Jesus dealt with that kind of legalism in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt. 5:17-47). Pride is the mother of all vice. It is the monster that fouled Paradise when the serpent hissed: "Ye shall be as gods." Pride fills hell, drives men mad for more, causes men to say their opinion is the only one, sours friendships, strangles love, devours faith, blinds men to their real needs, and segregates men from their neighbors. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself—but undoubting about truth. We have very nearly reversed this. Humble and self-effacing we must be—but modest about the gospel—never!

The tax-collector stood afar off. He did not feel worthy to be near the "righteous" Pharisee. He did not feel worthy of lifting up his eyes to heaven. The Greek verb *etupteu* is an imperfect verb indicating the publican kept on "smiting" himself and kept on saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Over and over he confessed his unworthiness (cf. Dan. 9:18). The Pharisee confessed other men's sins; the publican confessed his own. The Pharisee evaluated himself as righteous; the publican evaluated himself as the worst of sinners. The Pharisee reminded God of what he had earned; the publican pleaded only for mercy. The Pharisee justified himself but was unjustified; the publican cried for mercy and was justified.

The publican exhibits classic humility. Jesus taught that true greatness is vindicated neither by great abilities and successes nor by the roar of popular applause but by service. "He that would be greatest among you let him be the servant of all." There is nothing "chicken" about humility. Looking God and His word in the face and believing what He says about you takes a man! No weakling can stand to know the whole truth about himself. Humility calls for that extra-ordinary courage to take it and step down from the throne of one's own heart in favor of God, pick up one's cross, and follow the humble Christ. Humility is not something with which one is born. It has to be learned, it has to be developed—and it comes by faith.

The Pharisee was not justified by God. How could he be? He did not think it was necessary for God to justify him. He believed he had justified himself by his outward righteousness. He would not have accepted God's justification if God had offered it to him (which God had already done in type and prophecy). But the publican knew there was no possible way he could be justified if God did not do it. To "justify" is to pronounce free of guilt, to make one qualified, to declare pure and true. The tax-collector realized that in light of God's requirement of absolute holiness, he was

lost and the only thing he could do was plead for mercy so that God might find some way to pronounce him free of guilt. That was the only way he believed he could ever be cleansed of guilt. We had better believe that too! God had found a way—through the atoning death of His Son. That was and is still available to anyone who will believe it and enter into it through the covenant terms specified in the New Testament. That involves first of all a humbling of oneself to accept as a gift the forgiveness of God. Next it requires a humble surrender to God's sovereign command to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 2:38, et al). Then it requires a lifetime of humble discipleship and service to Jesus Christ as He has outlined it in the Gospels and the Epistles. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted, declared not guilty, and given an inheritance in the heavens, uncorruptible and undefiled that will not fade away.

SECTION 3

Pushy (18:15-17)

15 Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. ¹⁶But 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. ¹⁷Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

18:15 Contempt: Apparently the discourse on marriage, divorce and celibacy (Mt. 19:1-12; Mk. 10:1-12) took place between the parable of the Pharisee and the publican and the bringing of the children to Jesus. The reason for thinking so is the parallel treatment of this incident in Matthew and Mark *after* that discourse.

It was customary for Hebrew parents to present their babies to a rabbi for rabbinical blessing. Jesus was a very popular "rabbi" at this moment. But why would the disciples, of all people, rebuke the parents for bringing children to Jesus? Most probably it was a selfish reason. Like most of us when we are listening to something that interests us we do not wish to be interrupted. The disciples were enraptured in the teaching Jesus had just done on the law concerning marriage and divorce and celibacy. They were hanging on every word, and suddenly an interruption by precocious parents and crying, laughing babies. So the disciples "rebuked" the parents. One commentator has suggested the disciples had gotten a false view of Jesus' purity from His discourse on celibacy. They thought anyone like Jesus was too holy, too transcendent to be bothered with children. Perhaps their motives were somewhat true and they simply wanted Him to have some

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

rest. He was on the road to Jerusalem and the cross and the strain of the coming ordeal was already showing. He had had an extremely exhausting ministry just recently in Perea and Judea and He must have looked tired. One thing is certain: they did not know the heart of Jesus concerning children, nor did they comprehend the relationship of childlikeness to the kingdom of God.

18:16-17 Correction: The parallels to Luke's account are in Matthew 19:13-15; and Mark 10:13-16. It is important to read them in connection with Jesus' correction of the disciple's attitude toward children. Mark records that Jesus was "indignant" (Gr. *eganaktesen*, angry) with the disciples and said, "Permit the children to come to me." The three accounts together picture Jesus taking the children in His arms, blessing them, and laying His hands on them as He prayed. He embraced them and prayed for them. *Touching* and *talking* with children is essential to their being. It is really so with adults also. Even adults long to be given a friendly handshake or hug—there is nothing like it to say, "I care." Reading of this incident we should be reminded that Jesus was angry only two or three times in all the records of His life—this issue of forbidding the children to come to Him is a *very serious* matter to Him! It is central to the very life of the church that this issue be noted and understood! Children, even child-like adults, will want to come to Jesus almost the moment they are introduced to Him. Get a child into the presence of Jesus or tell a child who Jesus is and a child will almost always go straight to Him. For this reason it is significant that Jesus did *not* say, "Bring them to me . . .," but, "Forbid them not to come to Me." If a child is not almost immediately drawn to Jesus after he has heard of Him it is because some adult has put a stumbling-block in the child's way. How many thousands of "little ones" have been forbidden to come to Jesus because of either deliberate or unconscious adult barriers? Children are the very life of the church on earth. The church dare not be superficial and hasty about selecting those who will introduce the children to Jesus. There is no business of the church more important than its ministry to children. Jesus teaches here that *nothing* should come before allowing children to come to Him. The best way the church can perform this primary ministry to children is to *focus* its overall ministry on families. The church must train its *families to be* "the church" apart from the corporate worship activities. Even in the congregational activities the constant emphasis should be on family.

Why was Jesus so emphatic about this matter of children? Because the kingdom of God belongs to children. Unless any man become like a child, he cannot enter the kingdom. That does not mean, of course, an adult must regress to the infantile level of maturation mentally and physically. It means become child-like in nature. It means to strip oneself of all the sophisticries and facades of adulthood and return to the uncomplicated, guileless simplicity of a child's pure faith. What is a child like?

- a. conscious of imperfection—always eager to be taught
- b. unprejudiced—receives peers without bias as to race, color, etc.
- c. malleable—will give in, bend and surrender to truth
- d. impressionable—trusting, receptive, vulnerable
- e. unhypocritical—honest, open, candid
- f. delights to make others pleased with him by giving love and affection.

Hobbs writes, "A child's simple, 'I love Jesus and want to live for Him,' may express a profounder Christian experience than reams of theological debate and explanation." Jesus was warning the disciples they had the whole thing backward. Instead of expecting an adult experience in the child, we should strive to bring about a childlike experience in the adult. Those who are scornful or contemptuous of the simplicity of a child have missed the very essence of right relationship to Jesus! Therefore, the thrust of all preaching and teaching of the gospel is to produce the character of childlikeness in people, old and young, or they will never be permitted to enter God's kingdom.

SECTION 4

Parsimonious (18:18-30)

18 And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"¹⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.²⁰ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"²¹ And he said, "All these I have observed from my youth."²² And when Jesus heard it, 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."²³ But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich.²⁴ Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."²⁶ Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"²⁷ But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."²⁸ And Peter said, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you."²⁹ And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,³⁰ who will not receive manifold more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

18:18-19 Righteousness of God: There are crucial lessons for every believer in this confrontation between Jesus and the rich, young ruler.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The primary lesson is the one Jesus concluded with, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (Lk. 18:24). Another very important lesson has to do with evangelism. Some have entitled this incident, "The big one that got away." Look at this prospect's potential:

- a. He was a rich, young, ruler.
- b. He was courteous (Mk. 10:17—He ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him.).
- c. He had a deep interest in religion ("What must I do to inherit eternal life?"), he did not wait to be called on or found.
- d. He was enthusiastic in the pursuit of spiritual help.
- e. He was unafraid of public opinion (seeking help from Jesus, who was already in disfavor with most Jewish rulers).
- f. He was a man of moral action (He had kept more commandments of God than most men.).
- g. He had lived a life of purity.
- h. He was honest in business.
- i. He respected his parents.
- j. He was no liar or slanderer.
- k. He was successful in the world.
- l. He was a man of influence and authority.

He is the preacher's dream-prospect. Most preachers would have had him signing a "commitment card" immediately. What a great statistic he would make—he could get "celebrity" billing. But Jesus disappoints us by handling this prime prospect rather roughly. He begins with a rebuke to the ruler; then challenges him about his faithfulness to the commandments of God; demands that he make an immense financial sacrifice; and finally lets the prospect get away.

The young man knelt, flatteringly, before Jesus and said, flatteringly, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus did not answer his question, but began with a rebuke. Paraphrased, Jesus would say, "The goodness of any *man* (which you take me to be) is not worthy to be noticed. It is God alone who is essentially good!" Jesus began His attempt to redirect this man's mind from worldliness by solemnly fixing his attention on God's character—infinite holiness. This young ruler had traveled so long in the company of those who reveled in the flattery of one another (calling one another "Master," "Rabbi," "Ruler") (cf. Mt. 23:6-7) that he could no longer see himself or any other man in proper perspective. He needed to see that God alone should be praised. Men must see themselves in relationship to God's absolute holiness before they can see themselves as they really are (cf. Isa. 6:1ff.)—in need of grace. It is almost shocking to realize that Jesus' first concern here is not the young

ruler himself, but seeing that God is glorified. The glorification of God was Christ's first priority (cf. Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 20:9, 22, 44, etc.). That was Jesus' primary goal in every instance of His ministry (cf. Jn. 17:1ff.). The young ruler centered attention on his own need—Jesus insisted that glorifying God was of first priority. This is the foundation of all evangelism, of all conversion. Man's salvation depends upon this fundamental principle. Evangelism is preaching who God is! Converting people must be preceded by establishing the character and nature of God as manifested in Jesus Christ. Without knowing God the sinner does not know whom he has offended. Without knowing God's faithfulness the sinner is left to trust his own abilities to justify himself. The gospel is not what man must do, but what God has done! God is Creator. God is Holy and His law demands (necessitates) judgment upon sin. The Bible speaks more of God's holiness than it does of His love! That is probably because men are more prone to concentrate on that which makes them feel at ease than on that which threatens or humiliates them. Much evangelism today is based in an insipid sentimentality which begins, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." Jesus did not begin that way! He said, "Young man you had better get straightened out first in your own mind who God is!"

In the concept of most people today there is no room for the idea that God is holy. Most people think of God, C.S. Lewis once wrote, as an aged, indulging grandfather-type-person. Much of modern evangelism has lost touch with the divine method. Jesus did not speak soothing positive clichés to this man—He stirred up the fear of God in his heart by preaching that God alone is holy! We do not bring any sinner before God with the right attitude at all until we bring him bowing in humility and praise for God's holiness and penitence for his own sinfulness. We approach God for His own sake first, not ours. If God's absolute holiness and omnipotence is not validated and confirmed in our own mind, first, we are lost! Our salvation depends not on our goodness, but on His! (cf. Dan. 9:17-19).

18:20-21 Regulations of God: Finally Jesus said, "If you would enter life, keep the commandments," (Mt. 19:17b). The commandments (law) of God reveal the character and nature of God. The second important thing this self-righteous young man needed preached to him was the law of God. How can he know where he stands in relation to God's demands on his life if he does not have the law of God preached to him. Jesus reminded him of the first nine commandments. The absence of God's law from modern preaching is as responsible as any other factor for the evangelistic impotence of our churches:

- a. The word "sin" makes no sense apart from God's holy law. How can we convince today's sinners to really recognize they are sinners since most of them are totally ignorant of God's law for all mankind? Jesus continued to press the law at the rich young ruler.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- b. The cross of Christ means nothing apart from the law. If Jesus did not die to atone for the penalty of the law, then His death is tragic and senseless. And that is exactly how many people see His death today because they are not made cognizant of the demands of God's law.

Jesus used God's law as a primary tool of evangelism. Many Christians today consider the law a relic of the past and of no use in evangelism. Satan has subtly deceived us into thinking law and love are contradictory. Precisely the opposite is true. Love cannot be expressed without the guidelines of divine law, and law cannot be kept spiritually except by the motive of love (cf. I Jn. 5:3). Law and love are not opposed to one another. The conflict arises between law and grace as a means of salvation. The law cannot be the means of salvation—salvation for sinful man is grace by faith. Men are not turning to Christ today because they have no sense of who He is and what He has done. They have no concept of sinning against God and therefore they do not think they need salvation. They do not know they are sinning because the law of God is not being preached. God is faithful. He keeps every word He utters. This was the burden of the Old Testament prophets. To turn Israel back to God so that He might redeem them and use them for His messianic plan of redemption, the prophets preached the law of Jehovah. A "remnant" recognized themselves as sinners and turned to the Lord in faith, repentance and covenant-keeping. A remnant was saved.

Jesus found the ruler's knowledge of the commandments to be superficial. He recognized the law's outward demands but not their spirituality. The law of God was spiritual. He intended it to be written on the spirits of men (on their hearts). But they perverted God's law by making a pretense of keeping the outward commandment while violating the spiritual principle of it in their hearts. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets (Mt. 5:17). He came to bring God's law to its spiritual fullness. It is in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus puts His finger on the real spirit within God's law. Now Jesus puts His finger on the ruler's real sin. He says, "Go sell all. . . ." Jesus preaches the tenth commandment in all its incisive spirituality. He used God's commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" as a scalpel to lance the festering sore of greed in the rich ruler's heart. The young man's sin was invisible to the human eye. It was even invisible to him! It did not show on the surface of his life. Had Jesus merely said, "Keep the tenth commandment, 'Thou shalt not covet.' . . ." the rich man would probably have replied, "I do not desire anyone else's property or wealth, I am satisfied where I am and with what I have." That was the trouble, he was satisfied with his wealth and was not rich toward God (cf. Lk. 12:21). So Jesus translated the tenth commandment into its spiritual reality by demanding that he *abandon* his riches, give it to the poor, and

follow His way of "having not where to lay His head." The rich ruler loved his riches more than God's holy law. So all the time he had been "keeping commandments from his youth up" it was really hypocrisy. He kept only those commandments that did not demand complete renunciation of self and whole-hearted trust in God.

Totally out of character with worldly-mindedness, Jesus, rather than compromise the truth of God's holy law in the name of false love, allowed the ruler to depart! Had Jesus ignored the inviolable character of the perfect law to try to enlist this sinner, He would have lost him, because in compromising God's faithfulness Jesus would have destroyed love. True love for God is inseparably bound up in the keeping of His commandments (cf. Jn. 14:15, 21; 14:23; 15:10; I Jn. 2:24; 3:24; II Jn. 6; etc.). True love will never negotiate against the truth upon which it is established. Much of Christendom through the centuries and even today has tried to see how little it could demand in keeping God's commandments and still get converts. Many take the position that they do not want to offend, to divide, to lose fame or a thousand other things. Yet Jesus came to the world for the very purpose of judging, dividing, and casting a sword. The gospel is God's great sieve through which He sifts all mankind. Those who keep His Word have His Spirit, those who do not are of the devil. The kingdom of God is, after all, the *rule* of God in the hearts of men. The law of God is to be the arbiter (umpire) in our heart (cf. Col. 3:15).

18:22a Repentance: "Go, and sell all that you possess, . . ." said Jesus. Now Jesus is telling the rich young ruler what he must do to inherit eternal life—he must repent. He must change his mind about what he trusts most. He must turn from his "god of gold" and surrender to the mind of God as expressed in the tenth commandment. The "one thing" the young man lacked was the reversal of all his priorities. He must allow God's word to transform his whole viewpoint, revolutionize his fundamental philosophy of life. Telling people today, "Just accept Jesus as your personal Savior," will not save! People must repent! Christ cannot save anyone whose mind is still under the rule of carnality (worldliness). It is scripturally necessary, of course, to tell people to confess Christ and be immersed in water for the remission of sin. But it is not scripturally correct to tell them to do so without preaching repentance to them. Doubtlessly this ruler would have gladly accepted an invitation to become a follower of Jesus if Jesus had not demanded that he give up his wealth. He had come running to Jesus. But he is not willing to forsake mammon! His security was in mammon—not in Jesus. Churches are being filled with people willing to have Christ and "financial success" (mammon) today. They are never told they must renounce all they possess. They are never told they must repent of such double-mindedness. So their "converts" are as worldly after their "joining the church" as before. No one has the authority to *lower* the requirement for

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

discipleship from what Jesus required here, of this rich, young, ruler, or what He required in many other places (cf. Lk. 14:25-33; 9:57-62; Mt. 10:34-39, etc.). Christ has not revealed a revised gospel for the twentieth century!

18:22b Regeneration: By asking the ruler to sell all he possessed and give it to the poor, Jesus was asking him to abandon his fundamental philosophy of life. He was urging the man to sweep his heart clean of all allegiance to any other priority. But the heart cannot tolerate a vacuum. It will inevitably yield its allegiance to someone or something. When the heart is rid of unworthy affection, it must deliberately choose the worthiest affection. So Jesus invited the young man, "Come, follow me!" Jesus did not offer this rich man an easy discipleship. He offered Himself to be followed, imitated, learned from and obeyed. The ruler had called Jesus, "Master," now Jesus is urging him to accept the portion of a servant. There is too much easy discipleship today. So-called "contemporary Christian music" tends to promote a discipleship of subjectivism rather than one of active servanthood. Jesus' invitation here contradicts much modern evangelism. Much of that seems to imply that Jesus is a personal Savior to help people get out of burdens and difficult circumstances and give "good feelings." Not much is ever said about Jesus being Almighty Master to be obeyed. Not much is ever said about Jesus giving us His strength to bear heavy burdens and difficult circumstances. Jesus is sometimes pictured as standing ready and anxious for us to crook our finger and say to Him, "Come, follow me, and keep all trouble out of my life."

Jesus will not deceive this lad. Eternal life is had by bowing down to the Lordship of Christ in active, obedient service to Him. It is a matter of the gospel record that many more turned away from Jesus than became obedient disciples (cf. Jn. 6:66:, etc.)—because He insisted men renounce all they had. Only on those terms does Jesus offer eternal life. Eternal life is being *saved from sin*. Faith is following Christ away from sin toward obedience to God's law. This is a strange doctrine in some places today. Many talk about accepting His help—but few say anything about accepting His rule in every thought, motive and action of life. Following Jesus involves *sacrifice*. Jesus was absolutely honest with this young man. To preach to people any other way is either unconscious failure or deliberate deceit. Would-be disciples must be challenged concerning the discipline which Christ demands. There must be complete honesty about the sacrifice, persecution, humility and self-surrender involved. It is not surprising that today when so many go forward to try the "Jesus-high" they are never seen again. Often the "convert," after a few days or weeks of professing Christ wakes up to discover that everyday "troubles" have been compounded by the very fact that he now calls himself a Christian. He finds himself being treated like Jesus was treated—and that was not what he was led to believe. The psychological honeymoon has ended so quickly.

Integrity and honesty demand that we evangelize like Jesus did. The modern sinner deserves to be treated like the rich young ruler. He must be told that the Lord to whom we are calling him will expect him to "sell all" and follow Him. People must be impressed with the gravity of deciding to be a disciple of Christ. Most evangelistic programs or meetings give one the impression that we should never let a prospect do any *prolonged, serious thinking* about answering the call to Jesus. We prefer to "psyche" them up emotionally, keep the "sell all" requirement low profile, and get them down the aisle before they do have time to think about real discipleship. We are afraid to do anything that might hinder *immediate* success or victory. Jesus wasn't! There is no evidence that the ruler ever trusted Christ and followed Him by giving up all he had. But he was *honestly* confronted with the gospel and its implications for his life. He was not tricked, "psyched," high-pressured, manipulated or emotionalized into a statistic. When he went away, he really knew the full answer to his *initial* question—"What must I do to inherit eternal life." He must be regenerated.

A few ancient manuscripts add after Jesus' statement, "Come, follow me," the words, "taking up the cross." But the best manuscripts omit these words. The word Luke uses to describe the young man's countenance is *perilupos*, meaning "pained." Mark uses the word *stugnasas* which means "gloomy, hateful, threatening or lowering" (cf. Mt. 16:3). The young man was shocked, stunned and agitated. He was very rich and what Jesus had demanded of him *seemed* altogether unreasonable, unheard of, unprincipled and even insane! This ruler did not just hang his head and slink away—he went away upset!

18:24-30 Rewards: Jesus looked with love at the young man as he was walking away in a disturbed mood (and at His disciples) and said: "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" Why? Because wealth means power and a false sense of security and this is more likely to create pride and self-sufficiency than it is to create poverty of spirit. Actually, it is *more* than hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, it is practically *impossible*. Jesus went on to say, ". . . it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The Greek words Luke used were *tramatos* which means "hole or eye" and *belones* which means "dart or needle." Jesus was not talking about a small gate in a city wall, He was talking literally about the eye of a sewing needle.

Matthew records that the disciples were "greatly astonished" at Jesus' statement. The Greek words used here are *exeplessonto sphodra* and mean literally, "violently stricken in mind." They were "floored!" What Jesus had said stunned them. It was inconceivable in contemporary Judaism that wealth should be a hindrance to entering the kingdom of God since this was considered to be a sign of God's favor! When God allowed Satan

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

to take Job's possessions and children, Job's friends could only conclude that Job was guilty of some terrible sin against God. Poverty, physical illness (Jn. 9:1ff.) and other forms of catastrophic misfortune were considered a sign of sinfulness by most Jews. So the disciples were exceedingly amazed—and so is the rest of mankind. The disciples asked, "Then who can be saved?" If freedom from the wish to be rich and to hold on to one's hard earned wealth is the only route to salvation, who can be saved? There is not a man that would not be rich if he could. Most men, at one time or another, have day-dreamed about being rich. And if the desire for riches keeps us from salvation (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10) who can be saved? The disciples are probably being honest and expressing the unspoken affirmation of their own hearts that if they could have had the rich, young ruler's wealth they would have gladly accepted it. They were chagrined because they knew Jesus was not pointing His statement only at those who were rich in fact, but also to everyone who would *prefer* riches above almost anything else—which includes most of the people in the world!

Jesus' first reply was, "The things impossible with men are possible with God." What men cannot do meritoriously through human motivation, God can do by His grace in their heart when they believe Him. It is impossible for a man to renounce all he possesses until he allows his whole mental process to be taken captive unto obedience to Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:3-5). And man's whole mentality will not be surrendered to the rule of Christ until he resigns himself to the grace of God by faith. The difficulty of saving a rich man is not with God, it is with the man who resists God's grace by faith and insists on trusting in his own wealth as his sufficiency.

Christ has told the ruler that if he wished to fill the real void in his life and be "perfect" (complete) (see Mt. 19:21), he should sell all he had, give it to the poor and follow Him. When he would do this he would have *treasure* in heaven. That last statement stimulated Peter's mind. he immediately declared, "Lo, we have left our homes and followed you, what then shall we have?" (see Mt. 19:27). Peter apparently felt that he, and his comrades, stood in a much superior relationship to Jesus than the rich, young ruler. Peter's question implied, "We have done what you told him—we are the *first* of your disciples. This young ruler has turned his back on You, Lord, and if he should come back at the last moment, remember, we were working for you first, and we have left all and followed you."

Peter anticipated earthly rewards, Jesus declared the rewards for sacrificial service in His Kingdom would be spiritual. The essence of God's kingdom is of the spirit (Rom. 14:17). Jesus promised that everyone who labors will be rewarded, but many who are first will be last and the last will be first. The student should read the parallel accounts of this discussion in Matthew 19:23—20:16 and Mark 10:23-31. Matthew's account notes that Jesus first said, ". . . in the new world . . . you who have followed me

will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." In other words, the disciples will have the privilege of letting the Jews into the kingdom of Christ by the preaching of the gospel and writing the New Covenant scriptures. Whatever these apostles shall one day preach will be the keys to the kingdom (cf. Mt. 16:18-20) and whatever they loose or bind on earth shall already have been loosed or bound in heaven (cf. also Mt. 18:18; Jn. 20:22-23). They will declare the terms of forgiveness, salvation and citizenship in God's kingdom. What they preach shall be the criteria (judgment). Then Jesus said, anyone who leaves worldly riches for Christ will receive all of God's world working toward his redemption, plus eternal life (cf. I Cor. 3:21-22). God will work everything for good to them that love him and are called according to His purposes (Rom. 8:28). Wherever a Christian goes in this world God will have available for him brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers in the spiritual family of God. Everywhere a Christian goes in this world God will use from His great storehouse of creation all that the disciple needs to serve Him. But what does a Christian need to serve God? Sometimes he needs chastening, deprivation and struggle. The believer does not always need bread and never needs indulgence. He does need faith, hope and steadfastness. God can supply that richly. Whatever is *needed*, God will supply. And what He supplies will always be *more* than whatever the believer has given up to serve Him.

We would be remiss if we did not insert here a brief comment on Matthew 20:1-16 because it is the parabolic conclusion to this subject of rewards. When Peter asked, "What then shall we have. . . ." Jesus answered with the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16). This parable does not intend to teach that a man may foolishly waste his life and come to work for Jesus at the eleventh hour and expect a reward. Nor does it teach anything about socialism or communism or share-and-share-alike economic systems for nations or the world. It teaches one simple truth: In the kingdom of God a man's reward will be, not according to length of service, or notoriety of service, but according to his faithfulness to the opportunity which is given him. The owner of the vineyard rewarded according to his own judgment. The householder kept His promise—each person who chooses to labor for God will be graciously and generously rewarded. If the last are first and the first are last, it is none of the laborer's business. If those who went to work first had the right attitude, they would consider it a *reward* to be given opportunity to be first or longest out in the vineyard! God rewards on the basis of the spirit and attitude in which the work was done—not on volume. The last workers had not been at work before because no one had hired them—they had not the opportunities the first had. But when the householder sent them out they were faithful and true to their only opportunity. Their reward was what the owner

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

decided to give them—the same as that given to those faithful to their earlier opportunity. Neither long nor short service is pleasing to God if done for wrong motives. Remember the Prodigal and Elder Son of Luke 15. Men will be rewarded in God's kingdom not for *what volume* of work they accomplish but what they would have done if they had had the opportunity. Of course we all show what we would do by our attitudes and actions toward the little opportunities we do have! "He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest in much" (Lk. 16:10; cf. also Lk. 16:11-12). God does not reward according to human standards (volume)—He looks on the heart (motives).

SECTION 5

Power-Mania (18:31-34)

31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³²For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon, ³³they will scourge him and kill him, and on the third day he will rise." ³⁴But they understood none of these things; this saying was hid from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

18:31-33 Confrontation: The Lord could see where this whole discussion of leaving all to follow Him and rewards was focusing. In the minds of the disciples it was being turned into a fantasy of position and power. Especially the statement Jesus made about "judging the twelve tribes of Israel" and "sitting on twelve thrones," (Mt. 19:28). So Jesus predicted (for the third time, see Mt. 16:21-23; Mt. 17:22-23) plainly that he was going to Jerusalem and there would be *crucified* (see Mt. 20:17-19; Mk. 10:32-34) and on the third day raised from the dead. He knew He must repeat and repeat this concept of the Messiah's mission and the nature of His kingdom or these worldly-minded disciples would never survive the shock. They must be confronted honestly and plainly so that when it comes to pass they will remember Jesus did not mislead them.

Jesus' prophecy about His death and resurrection clearly demonstrates His supernatural knowledge. He knew ahead of time *where* He would die (Jerusalem). Had He been only a man He could never have been so specific. He knew ahead of His death *how* He would die (crucifixion, Mt. 20:19). Being a Jew and really having committed no crime against Rome, one would expect Jesus to meet death normally or, if executed by the Jews, by stoning. He knew prior to His death *who* would be involved (Jewish

and Gentile rulers, Mt. 20:18-19). All His enemies would have to do to prove Him a false prophet was to not fulfill His predictions—but they were fulfilled to the letter. Not only were Jesus' predictions of His death fulfilled but the prophecies of the Old Testament made centuries and millenniums before were also fulfilled. The student should read in this connection Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12; 50:4-9; 49:1-7; Daniel 9:24-27; Psalms 22:1-31. When Jesus said to the disciples, “. . . everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be accomplished. . . .” He was trying to emphasize to them that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were *not* to be interpreted according to the popular Jewish rabbinical traditions. The tragedy was the apostles understood none of what He said. There was a reason for this.

18:34 Caprice: It wasn't because they *could* not understand. Jesus made His prediction plainly enough. There was nothing symbolic or figurative in His language. The Greek word *sunekan* is translated “understood” and means literally, “bring or set together.” They could not bring together what Jesus said and their own earthly concepts of the Messiah. They *would* not get it all together! The Greek word *kekrummenon* is translated “hid” and is the word from which we get the English word “cryptic.” It means “concealed, hidden, secret.” The word in Greek is in the perfect tense which means this crucified-Messiah concept had been misunderstood in the past and was continuing to be misunderstood. And why had they misunderstood it? Because they deliberately refused to accept the concept. Peter rebuked Jesus for stating this concept the first time He made the prediction (Mt. 16:22; Mk. 8:33). The word “grasp” is the Greek word *eginoskon* and means “to be taking in knowledge, to come to know.” They did not understand Jesus because they were *not* taking in what He was saying. They deliberately refused to listen to what He was saying.

Why, now after the third plain prediction of His death, do they still refuse to accept it? The student must here turn to Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45. There the underlying reason for their refusal to grasp the true Messianic concept (even though it was predicted centuries before in the Prophets) is revealed. They were striving among themselves for political positions in what they thought was going to be an earthly kingdom. Two of them, James and John, sent their mother to request promotion to favored positions. Jesus sternly warned the disciples they were acting like heathen and it must not be so among them. Luke omits this incident but at the same time he is the only one who records the disciples arguing about the same thing in the Upper Room at the time of the Last Supper (cf. Lk. 22:24-30).

The fact that the Messiah was to be crucified and suffer a humiliating death was perhaps the *most crucial issue* Jesus faced in His incarnation (other than His claim to be God in the flesh). We notice His own disciples,

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

after more than three years of learning from Him, still conceived of His kingdom as an earthly one that would ultimately manifest itself in a human political structure. Furthermore, even after His death, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus had to be rebuked by Jesus and instructed again that their own Prophets had predicted the Messiah's humiliation. Paul wrote that the crucifixion of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles (I Cor. 1:23). The unregenerated mind of man will not believe that he can be saved by a crucified Savior, because human pride refuses to accept the idea of vicarious atonement. For that reason God raised Jesus from the dead and *verified* historically and empirically that Jesus' death was a vicarious atonement. The Jews never thought of their Messiah as one who would atone for their sins but one who would deliver them from their earthly bondage. They wanted political and economic deliverance, but they were really not interested in spiritual freedom (cf. Jn. 8:31-39). And after two thousand years of gospel history the majority of the world is still interested only in political and economic deliverance.

SECTION 6

Pitiless (18:35-43)

35 As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; ³⁶and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. ³⁷They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰And Jesus stopped, and commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹"What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." ⁴²And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." ⁴³And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

18:35-39 Cruelty: Finally Jesus leaves the area known as Perea, crosses the Jordan river into Judea and comes to Jericho. Immediately the careful student of the gospel records notices *apparent* discrepancies. In the first place, Matthew and Mark say, ". . . as He was leaving Jericho (Mt. 20:29; Mk. 10:46) and Luke says, ". . . as He drew near to Jericho. . . ." (Luke 18:35).

- a. Solution #1: As Jesus entered, Bartimaeus cried out for help too late to be heard—he circled the town, joined by another blind man, appealed to Jesus as He left Jericho, and was healed.

- b. Solution #2: There were two Jerichos known to people in Jesus' day. There was the old Jewish city about a mile away from the new Jericho (a Roman city), and both were directly in Jesus' path to Jerusalem. Matthew and Mark refer to His leaving the older city; Luke refers to Him as being about to enter the newer Roman city. In between the two Jerichos, somewhere, Jesus healed the two blind men. Archaeology has confirmed this and solution #2 appears to be the most plausible (cf. *Archaeology and Bible History*, by Joseph P. Free, pg. 295, pub. Scripture Press). See our map, page 348.

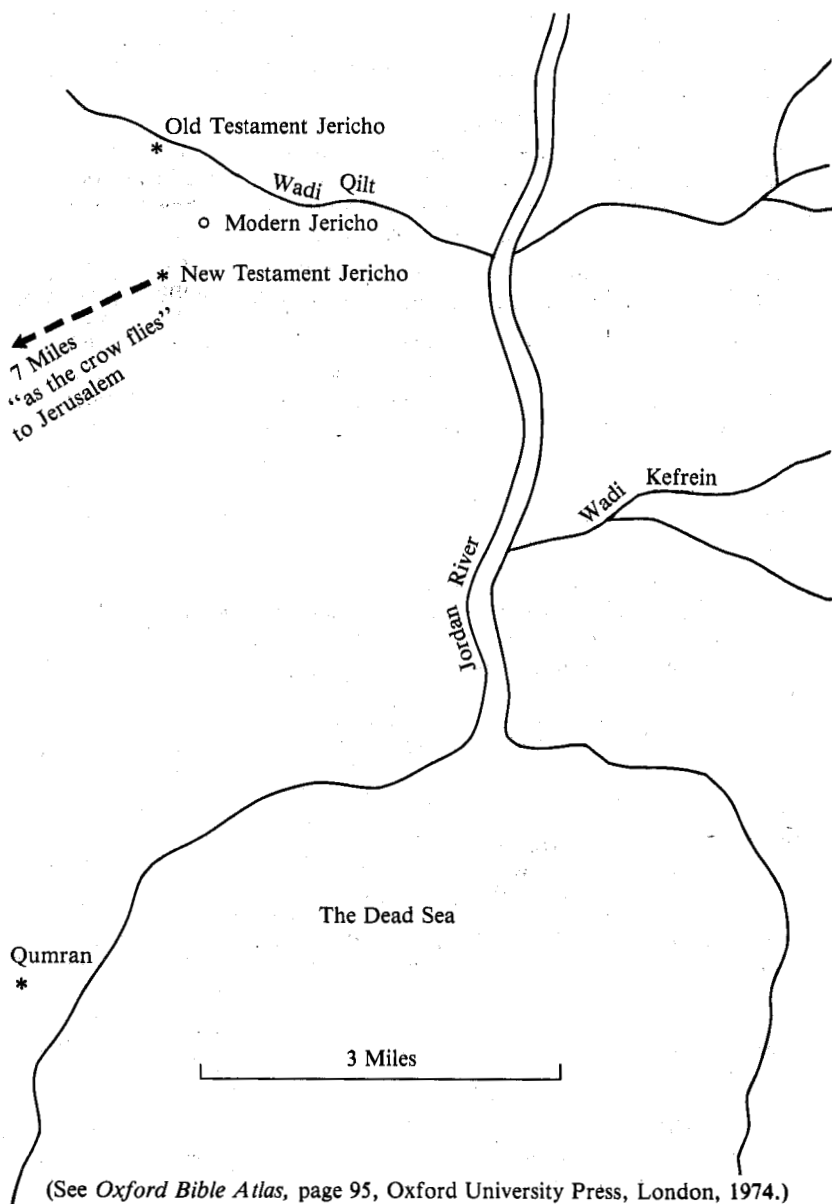
Another problem occurs when Matthew says there were two blind men (Mt. 20:30) while Mark and Luke mention only one (Mk. 10:46; Lk. 18:35).

- a. Solution #1: Remember the silence of one record is not, in itself a contradiction of what another affirms. The only way we could have the gospel writers *contradicting* one another is if they say "there was *only* one blind beggar. . . ." or "there were two blind beggars and *not* one. . . ."
- b. Solution #2: Mark and Luke mention only the one beggar because he was so forceful or singularly vocal and the leader of the two. As a matter of fact, Mark calls him by name!

Our reason for treating these details is that one of the "theories" used to "prove" that the Bible is inaccurate and therefore not inspired is called the "Two-Source Theory." In essence this theory says the gospel writers all copied from a common dual-source or from one another. Now if they copied from a common source, or from one another, why are they so different in so many details—not only here but in many other places?

Alongside the road between the two Jerichos sat the two blind men. One of them was named Bartimaeus. Hearing the multitude following Jesus passing by, he asked what was happening. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing through, he shouted, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." The Greek word for "cried" in v. 38 is *eboese*, the same word used to describe John the Baptist's preaching in Luke 3:4, ". . . a voice of one *crying*. . . ." It describes someone shouting to gain attention. Notice the beggar believed two things about Jesus: (a) that He could heal blind people; (b) that He was the messianic, "Son of David." Jesus was apparently teaching the multitudes as He walked along the road and the man's loud yelling for attention made it difficult to hear Him. Or perhaps the blind man had staggered blindly out in front of the multitudes as they walked along side Jesus and became a hindrance to their progress and was looked upon as a nuisance. Those in front of the crowd rebuked the beggar. The Greek word for "rebuke" is *epetimon*, and means literally, "threw their weight around." They spoke contemptuously, with a high-and-mighty attitude toward this handicapped person who was in their way!

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE



They told him to shut up. But the beggar cried out all the more. This time the Greek word translated "cried" is *ekradzen* and denotes a cry of great emotion, or a piercing, agonizing cry, a clamorous cry. Since the Greek verb is imperfect it means Bartimaeus kept on clamoring for Jesus to stop and show him mercy.

18:40-43 Compassion: Matthew tells us, of course, that both blind beggars were crying out to Jesus. Jesus stopped and gave instructions to bring the beggars before Him. Mark tells us that Bartimaeus threw off his cloak, jumped up, and came to Jesus (along with the other blind man). One must try to visualize the scene to appreciate the impact of this incident. Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He has just been speaking of the cross to His disciples. Not only have they refused to hear Him, they have audaciously sought appointments to positions of honor and power. Multitudes are pressing all around Him as He walks this Jericho road. He is concentrating on the culmination of the great, eternal plan of God's redemption about to be agonizingly worked out in His becoming sin for the whole world. He has only a very limited time left to teach the twelve apostles. Suddenly two ragged, handicapped, blind, beggars are screaming at Him, "Help us, help us, help us!" They were misfits in society, social outcasts, nuisances with nothing to contribute to His own burdens but more burden, but Jesus stops to help them. Jesus completely subordinated His own feelings—He thrust aside His own breaking heart, to help these two helpless men. No one else offered. None of the twelve spoke on their behalf! The multitudes were contemptuous of them. But Jesus saw in them a beauty and value He did not see in these others—*faith*. Jesus asked what He could do for them. Bartimaeus said, "Lord, that I may see again" (Greek *anablepso*, "see again"). Jesus ordered, "See again!" The Greek word describing Jesus' reply is *anablepson*, imperative mood, meaning Jesus gave the command, "See again." So the interruption was not really a burdensome inconvenience to Jesus after all. In fact, the faith of these two blind beggars in the midst of all the worldly-minded clamoring of the multitudes (and even of His own twelve apostles) served as a refreshing relief and spiritual encouragement to Jesus as He faced the cross. Jesus told the beggars, "Your faith has made you well." The Greek word translated "well" is *sesoke* and is from the root word which means "saved." The usual medical term used for healing in the Greek language is *therapeuo* (sometimes, *iaomai*). *Sesoke* (from, *Sodzo*) is sometimes translated, "made whole." Luke probably used *sesoke* because it is ambiguous enough to mean that the blind beggars had not only been cured physically by their faith, but also made spiritually whole, or "saved." Not only did the faith of these blind beggars give Jesus spiritual comfort, the miracle He performed for them caused the multitudes to glorify God and perhaps registered in their hearts more about His saviorhood than all the words He had been saying to them.

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

These men had just this one opportunity to be made whole. Jesus would not pass that way again. They had to avail themselves of this one opportunity in the face of probably contemptuous cries of, "Shut up," "Get out of the way," "Don't bother the Master," "Who are you that He should help you?" or others. But that did not stop their pleas—their cries—for help. And when invited by Jesus to ask, they got up and went to Him. These are the only kind of people Christ is able to help.

STUDY STIMULATORS:

1. The world's injustices tend to make people pessimistic. What does the Christian have to overcome that? Does it work for you?
2. Is it proper for Americans to thank God they are not like all the other people in the world who worship idols? Or would it be better for American Christians to pray, "God have mercy upon us. . . ."?
3. Why couldn't the Pharisee be justified? Have you ever been tempted to feel like the Pharisee?
4. What are some stumbling-blocks people put in the way of children or "childlike" adults which keep them from Jesus? Have you put any there?
5. Why did Jesus begin with the rich, young ruler by reminding him that only God was "good"? Do you think this is where most preaching today should center?
6. Why aren't law and love contradictory? How had the rich, young ruler kept the commandments? Do you keep the "spirit" or the "letter" of the law?
7. Why should the church be honest about the sacrificial life of discipleship to Jesus?
8. Why is it hard for a rich man to enter God's kingdom? Are you rich?
9. Do you think there are other great men of God who should be rewarded more than you should be? What is God's basis for rewarding labor in His vineyard?
10. Why didn't the disciples understand Jesus' crucifixion? Do you have trouble with the idea of vicarious atonement?—someone else dying for your sins?
11. What did Jesus get out of stopping to help some beggars? Have you?