

## Lesson 6      3 December 2017

### "Who Then Can Be Saved?"

**Lesson Scope:** [Luke 18:9-43](#)

*References in brackets refer to Luke 18 unless otherwise stated*

#### **Lesson Focus**

The events of this lesson unfold in the same general setting as the previous few chapters. Jesus continues teaching His disciples and the ever-present critical rulers. The ritualistic Old Testament worship provided plenty of opportunity for those who sought acceptance with God through personal performance. But in this lesson Jesus shows the futility of trusting in oneself for justification.

Man tries futilely in his own power to climb out of the ruin that sin imposes on him, only to find himself selfish and proud. This in turn produces a demeaning attitude toward those around him.

Once again, Jesus' love and compassion for children shines forth in stark contrast to those reaching for the ranks of importance. Humility is essential for man to see his need of salvation. "Who then can be saved?" from verse 26 can only be answered by Jesus' words in verse 27: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

Natural man is self-righteous and self-sufficient. The kingdom of God, however, consists of those who humble themselves and leave all to follow Jesus.

Many religions of our day promote a "good works" salvation. Be sure to emphasize that good works and morals outside of Christ's blood cannot save mankind. Also, for a believer to have assurance of salvation, he must exercise the righteousness of God in his daily life. When studying the Pharisee and the publican, consider that the story of the prodigal and his elder brother reflects the same attitudes.

Jesus' call for mankind to become as little children does not mean becoming childish but rather exemplify an attitude of humble teachableness. Make the teaching on riches practical to our daily lives. Be careful not to promote the teaching of non-accumulation. Remember, possessing riches does not keep a man out of heaven, but a man possessed by a love of riches will not enter heaven. This is a very fine line and must be

handled with care lest we become judgmental.

**Lesson Aim:** To present involvements of a righteous life.

**Theme Verses:** [Colossians 1:12-13](#). Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

## Lesson Text

### Abasing Self

[Luke 18:9-17](#) And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: <sup>10</sup>Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. <sup>13</sup>And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. <sup>15</sup>And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup>But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. <sup>17</sup>Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

### Attaining Heavenly Treasure

[Luke 18:18-32](#) And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? <sup>19</sup>And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none *is* good, save one, *that is*, God. <sup>20</sup>Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. <sup>21</sup>And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. <sup>22</sup>Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have

treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. <sup>23</sup>And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. <sup>24</sup>And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup>For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. <sup>26</sup>And they that heard *it* said, Who then can be saved? <sup>27</sup>And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. <sup>28</sup>Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. <sup>29</sup>And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, <sup>30</sup>Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. <sup>31</sup>Then he took *unto him* the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. <sup>32</sup>For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

## **Questions for Study**

### **Abasing Self**

1. Contrast the attitudes of the Pharisee and the publican.
2. Is it prideful to have assurance of righteousness in our lives? Explain.
3. How can we avoid a better-than-thou spirit?
4. What traits do little children have that entitle them to the kingdom of God?

### **Attaining Heavenly Treasure**

5. Explain the "one thing" that the ruler was lacking.
6. How does God make the impossible possible?
7. What are some indications of an unbalanced view of riches?
8. Does "leaving" earthly things guarantee eternal life?

## **Analyzing the Passage**

Jesus' teaching method to the Pharisees in this parable was very direct. Their self-righteous attitudes caused them to despise others. Prayer is effectual with an attitude of openness and contrition rather than self-justification.

"The kingdom of God" (18:16-17) is a spiritual kingdom, representative of eternal life. The subjects of this kingdom possess humility, faith, and

dependence on God. Thus little children are among its ranks. Jesus says in Matthew 18:3, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In 18:19, Jesus was not challenging the ruler for calling Him good, but He was testing his sincerity. He knew the young man's deepest need and touched that when He told him to sell all that he had.

The camel and needle of 18:25 is best explained as a literal needle and a literal camel, because Jesus clearly said it is impossible with man. Man stripped of his trust of self and riches becomes a candidate for the kingdom.

## **Principles and Applications**

### **Abasing Self**

1. The self-righteous cannot attain to the righteousness of God (18:9-12). Man's greatest attempts to save himself always end in condemning himself. Good works are the fruit of faith rather than a substitute for it. Faith alone can access the provisions of Calvary. "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

2. The path to justification includes recognizing one's sinfulness and pleading for God's mercy (18:13-14). A sinner must first realize his position in contrast to the holiness of God. Once he understands God's holiness, he must reckon with his helpless, sinful state. Only through the blood of Christ can he find cleansing for his sins and pardon before God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

3. Childlike humility and trust are essential to holy living (18:15-17). Children are highly receptive and unassuming. Jesus implies that man with an open, humble heart, not depending on his own presumed goodness, belongs to the kingdom of God. In order for man to receive salvation, his self-centered attitude must be changed into an attitude of unworthiness.

### **Attaining Heavenly Treasure**

4. Living righteously involves not only a good moral life, but also a surrendered, devoted heart (18:20-22). A first step to salvation is justification before God. But this step must be followed by sanctification, which involves daily surrender and devotion to God's work in our lives. "Yet

lackest thou one thing" (18:22) implies that what the ruler lacked was an unhindered relationship with God.

5. Earthly affections must be crucified in order for man to be sanctified (18:24-26). How can man expect to receive the power of God if he is unwilling to sacrifice his life totally to God? "Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

6. That mortals can partake of salvation is a miracle of God's grace (18:26-27). His is the provision, and His is the call. To those who receive Him, He also gives power to become His sons (John 1:12). "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit ... into your hearts" (Galatians 4:6). Through Him, we are made heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

7. The rewards of righteous living are everlasting (18:28-30). God's ultimate blessing to His true followers is eternal life. It will be a state of everlasting bliss. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1).

8. Jesus was willing to surrender everything to bring salvation to all mankind (18:31-33). As Christ's surrender brought the victory, so we also surrender our lives to gain the victory. He was spit upon and spitefully entreated, yet He endured it all to save a sinner such as me.

### **Important Teachings**

1. The self-righteous cannot attain to the righteousness of God (18:9-12).

2. The path to justification includes recognizing one's sinfulness and pleading for God's mercy (18:13-14).

3. Childlike humility and trust are essential to holy living (18:15-17).

4. Living righteously involves not only a good moral life, but also a surrendered, devoted heart (18:20-22).

5. Earthly affections must be crucified in order for man to be sanctified (18:24-26).

6. That mortals can partake of salvation is a miracle of God's grace (18:26-27).

7. The rewards of righteous living are everlasting (18:28-30).

8. Jesus was willing to surrender everything to bring salvation to all mankind (18:31-33)

## Answers to Questions

1. Contrast the attitudes of the Pharisee and the publican.

The Pharisee "stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are," showing attitudes of pride and self-sufficiency. The publican, "standing afar off" with bowed head, "smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner," thus demonstrating humility and contrition.

2. Is it prideful to have assurance of righteousness in our lives? Explain. No, assurance of righteousness is not prideful. "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." Humble assurance does not place oneself above others; we are all sinners saved by grace.

3. How can we avoid a better-than-thou spirit? We need to understand that Christ's love was the same for all mankind. Avoid placing each other on differing levels on the basis of race, past life, or personal stigma. Be redemptive and not reproachful to those that fall.

4. What traits do little children have that entitle them to the kingdom of God? An attitude of humility is essential to all mankind. Being receptive to truth is necessary to know God's righteousness. Children do not depend on their own presumed goodness to belong to the kingdom of God.

5. Explain the "one thing" that the ruler was lacking. It was not the selling or the good feeling of distributing to the poor. What the ruler was lacking was a sincere devotion to God.

6. How does God make the impossible possible?

The only way man can experience the impossible is through the blood of Jesus Christ. God accepts man on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, not on the basis of man's good deeds. It is an act of God's grace.

7. What are some indications of an unbalanced view of riches?

When we place more emphasis on earthly riches than on spiritual life. When church and spiritual life take second place to earthly things. When giving becomes an obligation instead of a privilege.

When we become forgetful of who the Giver is of all our things.

8. Does "leaving" earthly things guarantee eternal life?

The leaving of these things must be for the sake of gaining the kingdom. Acceptable self-denial is not done to promote self but to keep us focused on the eternal.

## **Summarizing the Lesson**

Entering the kingdom of God requires complete repentance and crucifying of self. Surrender to Christ is required not only to receive forgiveness of sins but also to live wholly in submission to His will. Anything less will bar us from God's kingdom.

## **Research Guide**

Study Matthew 19:16-29; Mark 10:17-30.