

How Do Good People Get To Heaven

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[0 : 00] Well, over 500 years ago, this fellow here, Martin Luther, nailed his 95 theses, theses, or statements on the church doors at Wittenberg, Germany.

Because he wrote them in Latin, and most of the people didn't know Latin. But eventually they were translated and passed around, and a huge firestorm was started as a result of what he did that day. But what most people don't know is that a year before that time, Martin Luther began to preach in the old town chapel there in Wittenberg.

It was just an old, run-down, tiny little space. The pulpit was some old scraps of wood thrown together to make a place that he could stand behind and hold his Bible.

And he was preaching through the book of Romans, verse by verse, and it was something that was in its day revolutionary. People didn't do that.

[1 : 21] And it really started to cause some comeuppance, and people started paying attention and started coming and listening to him preach.

He preached on weekday afternoons at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Not on Sunday mornings. That was reserved for Mass.

So on weekdays at 1, he would preach verse by verse through the book of Romans, and people would come.

And eventually there was a man there well-known in the town by the name of Mullerstadt, who said this concerning Martin Luther's preaching.

This monk, he said, will put our doctors, all our doctors of theology, to shame. He is building on the words of Christ, and no one can resist that word.

[2 : 20] There was something unique about what he was doing. Also during this time, a fellow by the name of Erasmus had completed his last edits on his Greek New Testament, which was, again, quite remarkable because everybody was working with Latin New Testaments, not Greek New Testaments.

And, of course, the New Testament letters and Gospels and so on were all written in Greek, in Koine Greek, common language Greek.

And so this was also quite revolutionary that people could then begin to learn the Greek language and then read the New Testament in its original Greek format.

And this, again, Martin Luther marveled at. He got a copy of Erasmus' edition of his Greek New Testament and came across this verse.

And I'm going to show it to you first out of an English translation from the Latin Vulgate, how the Latin read at the time that Jesus, and it's a familiar passage to us as we've been going through the Gospel of Luke, but this is in Matthew's account.

[3 : 39] But from that time, Jesus began to preach, this is the beginning of his earthly ministry, due penance for the kingdom of heaven has drawn near. And, again, this is taken, translated from the Latin, not from the original Greek.

And that phrase that's highlighted there, due penance, was quite remarkable, so that by the time Martin Luther got a hold of Erasmus' Greek New Testament and was able to read it for himself, something in his mind and in his heart clicked and changed.

Because the English translation from the Greek reads, instead of due penance, it is the word repent. And they mean two different things, but there is no word for the Greek word metanaeo.

It is not found in Latin. There's no Latin equivalent to it. And so when these Catholic scholars translated into the Latin, they gave it as a translation of due acts of penance or due penance.

Penance is a completely different definition. It is trying to do something to account for my sin. And it's trying to do something to pay for my sin in response to my sin.

[5 : 12] And it's a completely different meaning. The word repent means to actually change your mind, to go from one way of thinking and to turn from that way of thinking to a different way of thinking.

It's not a religious term. It just means you're going in one direction and you change your mind, and now you're going in a different direction. That's all repentance means.

It just means to change your mind. And again, while that's happening, so you got Luther preaching in the chapel in Wittenberg through the book of Romans.

You have Erasmus' Greek New Testament that's just been released. And now, thirdly, this fellow showed up in Wittenberg.

His name is Johann Tetzel. And he looks a little unusual, but he showed up and this man was a friar who had been sent out directly from the Pope in Rome to sell what were known as indulgences.

[6 : 22] Indulgences were simply little slips of paper that people would buy. And when they dropped their coin in the collection bucket, their sins would be forgiven.

They would have to spend less time in purgatory. And even you could buy these indulgences to pay for the sins of people that you knew who had gone on, who had already died, and you can buy an indulgence and lessen their time in purgatory so that they would get into heaven all the more quickly.

This corrupt theology that began to be spread during this time that basically you could buy forgiveness.

And the jingle that Tetzel made famous in his day was this, as soon as the coin in the coffer rings, a soul from purgatory springs.

And so people would pay money, pay good money for indulgences to either have their own sins forgiven or the sins of past loved ones who had gone on and died.

[7 : 42] The Pope had sent him out to raise money for the completion of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

And just so have it, my wife and I were in Rome last summer and we got to visit St. Peter's Basilica behind us there. Another view of it here, this vast, incredibly, the architectural wonder of this place, of this facility, the corruption that built it.

And on this idea, this false teaching that my sins could be forgiven simply by paying a certain amount of money and having my sins forgiven.

500 years later, here we are. And this same theology persists. Last year, the year that we were there in Rome was considered a year of Jubilee.

And during the year of Jubilee, according to the Roman tradition, this is once every 50 years, on five basilicas there in and around Rome, there were special doors that were locked during the 50 years.

[9 : 08] No one could use those doorways for 50 years. But during the year of Jubilee, you could go through, you could pass through these doors and these basilicas.

This is the one at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, people passing through this door. Here is another one on the right there. You can see some people gathered at the doorway there.

This is at what's known as St. Paul's Outside the Wall in Rome. This is where they believe St. Paul or Paul, the Apostle Paul, was put to death, beheaded for his faith, for his preaching of the gospel. And people, what they were taught, what the Pope would teach and what the church teaches is that if you pass through one of these doorways during a year of Jubilee, all of your sins are forgiven just by passing through that doorway.

It's a pretty good deal, isn't it? My wife and I, we passed through the door there at St. Peter's Basilica. And we were like, ooh, I say that in jest.

[10 : 26] I'm joking when I say that, but it is a sad point of theology, a point that is being taught that people can actually believe.

And the sad thing is that you can see the seriousness on people's faces as they would dip their hand in what they would consider the holy water and do the sign of the cross and then pass through the door and have so much earnestness on their face because for them it was such a serious moment not realizing that they were being sold a bill of goods.

But it's not just Roman Catholics that I want to pick on today. I want to be an equal opportunity picker honor. So, liberal Protestant denominations that basically teach the idea of just got to be good enough.

Just be a good person and that's good enough. God's going to let you into heaven. It's the same kind of concept, the same kind of teaching. Even in false religions, in Judaism, in Hinduism, in Buddhism, Islam.

Let's not forget the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses. And even those that wear a Christian label like the Church of Christ or Seventh-day Adventism, they teach that salvation can be won simply by being good enough, by doing a certain number of acts.

[12 : 00] If you follow these steps, if you do these things, then you can, you too can be accepted into heaven. You too can gain entrance into heaven if you're just either a good enough person or you follow the steps that we tell you to take and then you will be good enough.

And it's just a lie. It's so contrary to what Jesus clearly taught in Scripture. The passage that we're looking at today, the passage, the story is of the rich young ruler.

It's told in all three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. And each account gives us a little bit more detail than the others. We find out by putting the pieces together of the three Gospels that this man is a young man, that he is a ruler of some sort.

We don't know what kind of ruler. Is he a religious ruler there in their Jewish society, or is he a representative of the city government, of Roman government?

We don't know. But we know that he's young and that he's a ruler and we also find out that he is a very wealthy young man. And this very wealthy young man approaches Jesus with a question.

[13 : 21] And it's the question that religion asks. If you've been around, you know that I think of religion as a dirty word and because religion teaches that you can do enough good things, you can climb a high enough ladder that you can somehow attain to God by your own goodness, by your own good deeds, your own good works.

So a ruler asked him, good teacher, what must I do? And that phrasing of the question betrays his mindset.

It's a religious mindset that says, what must I do? What is something that I can do? What steps do I need to take?

What do I have to add to my list of things, of accomplishments? What must I do? It's not the first time Jesus was asked this question. And it's not the last time many people ask this type of question.

What must I do? In Luke chapter 10, we read probably a few months back now of a lawyer who came to Jesus and asked the same question, teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

[14 : 44] Almost word for word, except that this young man adds an extra word to the question by addressing Jesus as good teacher.

The lawyer in chapter 10 just addressed him as teacher. This young man addresses him as good teacher. What must I do to inherit eternal life?

And Jesus picks up on that title, the word good, and addresses that part of his question first.

Jesus said to him, why do you call me good? Because no one is good except God alone. The word here, good, means an inherent goodness.

It's a goodness that's built in. It's intrinsic. It's a part of the identity of that person. And Jewish theology at the time taught that only God himself is considered good.

[15 : 49] He's the only one who's thoroughly good, who is perfect in that way. And so when this young man comes and addresses Jesus as a good teacher, good teacher, Jesus capitalizes on that, grabs that, and says, why do you call me good?

Because no one is good except God alone. And it's as if Jesus is asking, okay, by recognizing that I am good, are you also then recognizing that I am God?

That I am the promised one? That I am the Messiah? Perhaps, young man, you're getting it. Of course, Jesus knows that's not what's at hand.

He's just using this phrase. And we'll notice as we go forward that the young man doesn't answer Jesus' question, why do you call me good?

We don't know if there is an emptiness of time there between when Jesus asked this question and what Jesus says next.

[16 : 56] But Jesus then goes on to address what really is the issue for this young man. And he does it by listing these commands.

You know the commandments. And of course, this young man would have been religiously trained and knew that the Ten Commandments do not commit adultery.

I want you to notice that he skips a few. Doesn't do them in order. And he skips a few. He skips the ones particularly addressing our relationship to God.

He's interested in the commandments that are concerned with our relationships with one another.

He says, you know the commandments. Do not commit adultery.

Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. There's one that he leaves out. One of the Ten Commandments, four deal with our relationship with God.

[17 : 57] Six deal with our relationships with each other. And he's listed five of them, but he's left the sixth off. The one about covetousness, about coveting other people's stuff.

But do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother. And I want to ask you guys now too, how are you doing with this list? This is just half of the Ten Commandments, by the way.

How are you doing with this list? Okay. You might say, well, there's some on here that I haven't done. Maybe. I don't know.

But really, how are you doing? If we could climb into your brain and listen to your thoughts from your whole life, have you ever responded in anger towards someone or called someone a fool? I've confessed. I've looked at my television set and called someone a fool. Have you ever looked at a woman to lust after her?

[19 : 08] Have you ever told a lie? And if anyone here would raise their hand and say, no, I've never told a lie, I would know that you are lying now.

We've all done it. We've all sinned. We've always honored father and mother. But I want you to notice now the response of this young man.

He said, all these I have kept from my childhood, basically. Last week, or two weeks ago, actually, we looked at the story just before this about Jesus saying, don't hinder the little children, the babies even, from coming to me.

And this young man is saying, no, even from that point forward, I've kept them all.

I've done them all. This guy was the child I never was. He's the child I never had.

[20 : 22] Some parents, you might be able to relate to that. This guy is toned off. This guy knows the laws of God, but he doesn't know himself.

He doesn't see it. He doesn't pick up on it. He, he, I was, driving in my car yesterday, and I, came across the song that began to play.

And, it's, it's, it's an old song. I was listening to some, some classics from, from back in the 60s and 70s, apparently.

And, it's a song called Spirit in the Sky. Anybody know that song? By Norman Greenbaum. Some of you, some of you are like, oh, your, your hair has just grown out by five, six inches.

And, I, I, I know the song. I, you know, I, I remember it. I hadn't heard it probably for decades. But, I'm familiar with the song, and, and, but, but not really the lyrics.

[21 : 35] And so, I fervently paid attention to the lyrics because he, he said some things early on that caught my attention. I was like, this pretty good song. So, when I die, and they lay me to rest, gonna go to that place that's the best.

Well, he's talking about heaven, right? He's gotta be. He goes on, and he says some other stuff that's like, okay, that sounds like he's, maybe you've been smoking something.

Um, and he says this, prepare yourself, you know it's a must, gotta have a friend in Jesus.

And I thought, that's not bad. Prepare, be prepared. You gotta have a friend in Jesus. So, you know that when you die, he's gonna recommend you, I hadn't heard it put quite that way before, so that you, so that when you die, you know that when you die, he's gonna recommend you to the spirit in the sky.

And I thought, well, okay, his understanding of heaven's a little off, but you know, okay, I'll forgive that. I like this. And then you get a little further ways down.

[22 : 45] Some of you know where I'm going with this. Some of you know exactly where I'm going with this, because he, he says this next line, and I thought, I gotta hear that again. I can't believe he just said that.

I must have heard this wrong. He said, never been a sinner. I never sinned. I got a friend in Jesus, and I thought, I'm not so sure.

Not so sure. Norman was this close, actually. Did you say pretty good for a Jewish guy?

Yeah. He is a Jewish guy. It is interesting. I read a, I went and looked it up, and I read an interview that he did about, he said, sounded like a good idea to know this Jesus guy.

He obviously didn't, but, oh, well. Still a good song. Well, with some very big caveats. So this guy, this rich young ruler is obviously self-deceived, thinking he's, he's good.

[24 : 08] I'm a good person. How many people today would say of themselves, I'm a, I'm a good person. I'm a good person.

I'm a good person. And yet, at the same time, I'm a sinner. I have sinned, not like old Norman. And yet, I'm a good person. Can those things go together? I'm a sinner. I'm a good person. And yet, how many people would, would say that, at least they're a good person by their own standards. Their, their standard of judgment, their standard of, of saying, yes, I'm a good person, is not God's law. It's, it's a comparison of their own standards, or they're looking at how they compare to other people, of their choosing.

And they're, they're trying to, to figure this out. And it, it doesn't really add up. The deception of human goodness.

[25 : 14] You, you, you have this on your notes. We'll pause in the story here for this. Human goodness can never compare with God's goodness. it just, it just can't.

It's, we're, we're obliterated. If we try to compare ourselves to God and how good God is. Romans 3, 10. and as I read this, I want to think about Martin Luther preaching through the, the book of Romans in that little chapel verse by verse.

And as he comes across these passages and how he's presenting this and, and how he's, he's impacted. So completely by, by what Paul is teaching here in the book of Romans, as it is written, none is righteous.

No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside together. They have become worthless.

This is really good for the self image of self esteem movement, isn't it? They have all together become worthless. No one does good. Not even one.

[26 : 25] So how are you feeling now? You feel like a good person? I'm a good person. No, no, you're not. And then how about this from Isaiah?

Isaiah 64. All of us have become like one who is unclean. All our righteous acts are like filthy rags. Every good thing that we think we do, when we're trying to earn God's favor, favor, when we're trying to earn forgiveness, when we're trying to, to merit, to be good enough that God will finally accept me.

If I'm just good enough, and God looks at it and says, no, it's like filthy, filthy rags. And then of course, Jesus really clears this up for us in the Sermon on the Mount when he says this.

You therefore must be, what's the word? Perfect. How you doing? How you doing? If, if, if the, if the definition of goodness is based on perfection, how you doing?

And it is, by the way, it is. No. Human goodness always, here's a familiar way of saying it, falls short of God's holy law.

[27 : 51] And some of you might think, it seems like there's a Bible verse that says something like this. Romans 3.23, just a little bit later from what we read earlier. For all have sinned, and because of that sin, fall short of the glory of God.

Here's the standard. Here's God's perfection, God's glory. And we all fall short of that. We, we, we can't reach that.

We can't, we can't attain to that. Well, then what's the purpose of the law? Well, the law does a really good job for us. In telling us how we stand with the law.

That's the purpose of it. Paul says it this way in Galatians three. So then the law was our guardian until Christ came. The word guardian here, there's not a good English word for this, this Greek word.

It's, it's, there's, there's no, if I tell you the Greek word, it won't sound like a English translation. There's just, there's no way to really good translate this. The King James uses the word schoolmaster.

[28 : 58] The NIV uses the word tutor. Well, this particular person, this guardian wasn't a teacher, wasn't a headmaster of a school, didn't really even serve as a tutor.

What they did is, is they were a servant in the household, given charge over the children in wealthy homes. And they would be like the supervisor of this child.

So the parents wouldn't take care of the kids, right? This, this guardian, this schoolmaster, this, this tutor, how it's translated here is in charge of this kid to make sure that what they're learning is, is right.

And it's true. They, they wouldn't be doing the teaching. They would just be making sure that whoever is teaching them, was doing a good job, was teaching the right kind of stuff. It would be like if you didn't have to go to work, but instead you could go spend your day shadowing your kid at school. Imagine if you could do that.

[30 : 02] So the, when the teacher said something stupid, I've heard sometimes that happens, not all the times, but sometimes you could say, wait a minute.

That's not correct. And you could make sure that your child was correctly taught by others. That's, that's the purpose of the law.

The law was given to us to show us that we couldn't do it. Right? Because if we didn't have the law, how would we know that we sinned? It's the law who makes us realize, Hey, I blew it.

I've sinned. Right? The law says, Oh, you can't steal. So me walking out of the store with that product that I didn't pay for, that's theft. That's stealing. I can't do that.

And it's the law that, that tells me that, that teaches me that, that I'm guilty. So that's the purpose of the law. But here's the problem with that.

[31 : 04] The law serves like a chain. So you, if you could break the loud, the law down, there's, there's over 600 commands in the old Testament, but if you could break them down just into the big 10, and I like being in the Midwest because I can say the big, although the big 10 is like all over the country now.

So even the, even the West coast is in the big 10. Now that blows my mind. I'm just means I'm old, but I can say the big 10. So if you could, if you could break all the, the law into the, the big 10, it serves like a chain.

Like if I'm holding onto the bottom of that chain and, and that chain is at the top anchored to heaven. And, and my only hope is keeping that law, holding onto that law.

Whoever who keeps the whole law, but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. If I, if I blow it in one of those links, each of the 10 commandments is a link in the chain.

If I blow it in one link, that chain's not helping me. I'm done. I'm toast. So if I've ever told a lie, if I've ever had something more important in my life than my relationship with God, I'm done.

[32 : 23] Again, I ask, how are you doing? How are you doing with your relationship with the law? The law is very good at telling us and pointing out we can't do it. We can't.

This young man didn't get that. Oh, I, I kept it all since I was a kid. Really? Human goodness then deceives us about our true heart condition.

Where our heart is really at. Cause I'm a good person. I mean, if you were to take a microphone out onto the street and, uh, let's say we're going to go down to the, we're going to, we're going to go later, later on to the, to the beach for a baptism.

Let's say we go down there to the Stearns park and there's a crowd down there and we do our microphone thing. You guys have seen that on, on shows and such where you do your, Hey, uh, how are you guys doing with the 10 commandments?

And you stick a microphone and boy, you're going to come up with some really interesting answers. I would think. So people are deceived about their own true heart condition.

[33 : 28] and here's, here's Jesus teaches us about this. And in, in the parable of the, the soils, and he talks about one of those soil conditions as for what fell among the thorns.

Uh, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way, they're choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life. The things of this world, the cares, the riches, the, the pleasures, the desires that we, we get caught up in that.

Do you and I, do we ever, do I ever get caught up in, in the cares of this life and what this life affords?

Of course I do. We all struggle with that. Absolutely. The question is, are we going to allow that to choke out what God has, has born within us?

But that's the struggle that, that we have. And then first Timothy six, nine puts it this way, but those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

[34 : 44] And so I, I imagine that most of us sitting here today are like, well, I don't want to be rich. You can't. I am. I'm, I'm, my name is rich, by the way.

How you doing? Different thing. But a lot of folks would say, I don't want to be rich. I just want to have enough.

Don't you know, it's the same thing. It really is the same thing enough that you don't have any worries enough that you know that I'm not going to have to, if something breaks, I don't have to worry about it.

I, I can fix it. I can, I can live with ease. If there's something that I want to buy, I can just write a check. I can pay for cash. I can, that's, that's all I'm looking for.

Right? So many people live in week to week, paycheck to paycheck. And so the desire is just to get beyond that. And it's the same thing.

[35 : 49] The people that Jesus was speaking to, they live not week to week or paycheck to paycheck. They live day to day. So when Jesus told them to pray every day for their daily bread, he meant that.

We, we don't normally, we, we struggle with that concept, praying for daily bread, because we go to the grocery store and we buy a week's worth, or we go to, we go to the, the, the, the, the, the Costco's or the Sam's clubs, and we buy like three months worth at a time, you know, we buy the barrel of barbecue sauce.

And we got enough, you know, to last the whole summer. And, and we don't, we don't think like that. The struggles that we have with finances.

Let's get back to our story, shall we? So verse 22, he's just said, yeah, I've done all these things since I was a kid. Yeah, I'm, I'm good.

I'm good. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, notice Jesus isn't doing the Romans road or the four spiritual laws, or one of these evangelistic tracks, you know, that, that people will sometimes use.

[37 : 13] And of course he's Jesus. So he's perfect in the way that he witnesses to people. Right? I'm not, I stumble over my stuff. I don't know their hearts like Jesus does.

So I can't do that. So we can't feel bad if we don't do it like Jesus does. But he says, one thing that you still lack, Jesus knows this man's heart.

One thing you still lack, sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor, distribute it to the poor.

That, by the way, that phrase, sell all that you have and distribute it to the poor.

It's all one word in Greek. There's no English equivalent. You have to use a whole sentence basically to translate it. And you will have treasure in heaven.

And then when you've done that, come and follow me. I want you to notice, Jesus, Jesus doesn't really answer the question about how to get in.

[38 : 19] He's telling him, if you'll do this, you'll have treasure. Notice that Jesus is focused. First, he focuses this young man on where his heart is.

His heart is on his stuff. His heart is on his bank account. His heart is on all the stuff that he has, his inheritance, his estate, his everything that he's developed or that he's been given.

And so Jesus keeps the focus there. And he says, listen, if you'll just sell all that stuff and give it away and then come and follow me, that you're going to have so much treasure in heaven.

If you, if you would do that. And you'll notice, we're going to get there in a minute. He actually says that to the, to the, to Peter and the other guys, that that's how it works.

And, and, look at this, sell all that you have, distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven and come and follow me.

[39 : 29] It's not that, listen, it's not that Jesus is giving him one more thing to do. Okay. Don't misunderstand that.

And there are some who do, who would, who would look at this passage that Jesus says and say, okay, he's just giving him one more thing to do that. If he, if he literally went out and sold everything and gave it all away and then came and followed Jesus, then he could get into heaven.

It's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is pointing out his heart condition. And what he's pointing out is proven to be true in the response of the young man.

But when he heard these things, he became very sad. Because he was extremely rich. He walked away. He walked away.

He walked away sad. Because for him, holding on to what he had was worth more than all of eternity could afford him, could bring him.

[40 : 42] And he wasn't going to do it. He knew he wasn't going to do it. What is that? What is that about this, this man?

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said this, how difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. Why?

Why is it hard for us today? And it goes back to the same thing, the thorny soil, the cares of this world, the things that this world offers, the pleasures, the desires that we have for the things of this world, the things that we can sink our teeth into, the things that we can hold on to, that are tangible. We don't want to give that up. We want to hold on to it. And so it's difficult for us to do that.

Then he says this, for it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. Now, a camel was the largest animal that Jewish people would have been familiar with seeing.

[42 : 05] This proverb is actually an older proverb. It comes from the Jewish Talmud, that the parts that were written while they were in captivity in Babylon and in Persia.

And the original, the original little tale, as it were, spoke of an elephant because that was the largest animal in that part of the world.

An elephant, it's, an elephant can't go through the eye of a needle before a rich person would ever get into heaven.

And that's, that's the story. And, and of course the people respond, well, how's anybody going to get in? Who could be saved? And we might ask the same question, who can be saved?

And it is impossible. It's impossible for us. It's impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, right? You can't do it.

[43 : 10] Just like it's impossible for us to get into heaven. We can't, we can't do it. Right? You, you can't do it.

I can't do it. It's impossible for me to get into heaven. I can't, I can't do it. You can't do it.

You cannot get into heaven. You, you cannot do it. There's one who can do it for you, but you, you cannot do it.

And of course, Jesus confirms that thinking when he says, what is impossible with man is possible with God. It is only through what Christ has done for us.

That we can attain heaven, that we can be saved. It's the only way. It's only through Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life.

[44 : 09] No one can come to the father except through him. He is the only way that we can be saved. Only way. So the question becomes then, and this is where we step aside for a moment again in our story and go back to some of our blanks here.

Why is it so hard? Why, why is wealth such a hindrance to salvation? And I think there's several reasons.

Here's, oops, I just went back on the one. Wealth can create a sense, first of all, of independence. independence. I can do it on my own, right?

Because people who are wealthy can do it themselves. They can, they've built up a sense of security, a sense of independence.

Their wealth affords them that. And because of that, that's how they think. I've done this financially. If I'm independent financially, I can think of that way spiritually as well.

[45 : 26] I'm fine. I'm fine on my own. Wealth can create a spirit of self-confidence. I did this. I accomplished this.

I can handle this myself. Wealth can give us that, that mindset. Wealth can create a false sense of wisdom. Often, when I, when I speak with someone who has means, they have wealth beyond what most people have.

This idea comes through in the way that they speak. Because they've accomplished so much, because they've earned so much, because they've attained to all that they have attained to.

They feel like they've got things figured out. They've got the world figured out. They've got spirituality figured out. They know how it works. And wealth can give that false sense of wisdom in that way.

And then finally, wealth can also create a superiority complex. Complex. I believe that I'm better than. I believe that I'm better than.

[46 : 43] I believe that I'm better than. They wouldn't say that. But they might, would think that. I'm better than these people who, who need God.

Yes, because of, of their life. They need, they need the crutch of, of religion. They, they need the crutch of, of God. I, I, I'm fine.

Thank you. I've got it figured out. And, and here's a couple of passages that, that kind of, uh, demonstrate this. This is Proverbs chapter 30.

And this is a, boy, this is really good. This really says that remove, this is basically a proverb stated in prayer format. So this is a prayer and this is an excellent prayer for us.

Remove far from me, falsehood and lying. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord?

[47 : 47] And we have everything that we need. I don't need God. I've got everything I need. And we get to the place of saying, who is the Lord? That's a dangerous, dangerous place to be.

And of course, Jesus taught us this in the sermon on the Mount. Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God.

It's only poor people, by the way, who get to heaven. Rich people don't. And when I talk about poverty and riches here, I'm not talking about dollars and cents.

I'm talking about a spiritual truth. The poverty of recognizing, I'm bankrupt. I've got nothing.

And my only hope is in what Jesus Christ has already done for me. So one more little side track that we're going to take here before we finish our story.

[48 : 58] And that is this. All right. If that's what's happening with money, what does the Bible teach us about money? How we handle it? How we use it?

Because money can be useful. Matter of fact, we actually take offerings, right? It's not a part of our service, but we do. That's a part of it.

We use, I get paid in dollars and cents. You know, we use financial things. So what's the role of finances? And here's what the Bible teaches us about this.

And I've got some scriptures that are listed there, and I won't go through any of those. You'll have to do those on your own. But these statements are based on what you find in those passages of scripture.

One is do. These are the things to do. Work hard for it. Absolutely. The Bible does teach diligence at work. The Bible doesn't want us to go to work and slough off and just get by.

[49 : 56] We ought to have a good work ethic. That's a good godly thing to have. Secondly, we need to give it systematically. And this is where some might would teach the concept of tithing.

Tithing is an Old Testament principle. It's an Old Testament law. The New Testament goes beyond that, and it calls it systematic giving. It's basically the idea of where you are fed in terms of spiritually in the local church.

Those who are faithful and teaching the word of God are due what they deserve from their efforts and their work.

And so it's our responsibility then to support that. And so we give systematically. And so rather than a tithe, it's the idea. It's not an obligation.

People that give here, for instance, do it not out of a sense of obligation. We don't want you to do that. To give out of compulsion is the word that's often translated in 2 Corinthians.

[51 : 02] But do it with a sense of joy, with a sense of cheer that I get to do this, not I have to do this. That it's done regularly the first day of the week.

That it's done proportionally according to how God has blessed. And so that's going to be different for every one of us. And you have to determine between you and the Lord what is the right amount for me to give to the local church where I am fed.

But that's a part of it. The scriptures do teach that. Third, to spend it judiciously. Sometimes instead people would supply the word here willy-nilly.

Spend it willy-nilly. That's not a good plan for your finances. So be judicious in the way that you spend your money. Save it and invest it wisely. That's a biblical principle as well.

And by the way, some of the people, some of our heroes of the faith were people who had tremendous means.

[52 : 09] Tremendous wealth. Job, Solomon, David, Abraham. These are all characters that we read in the scriptures who had tremendous wealth.

So God is not against the idea of you being wealthy. It's what are you doing with that wealth? Nothing wrong with having it.

It's what are you counting on? And then the idea of also then being generous with it. When people that you see are in need, that you're willing to do that.

Now here's some don'ts when it comes to our finances. Don't love it. Don't love money. We're going to talk about that in a moment too, what that looks like to love money.

It's not a good thing. When you start to love money or the things that money can get you, that's becoming a god for you, an idol for you.

[53 : 09] So you have to be careful with that. Don't put hope in it. Well, I've got a bank account and I've got a house and it's paid for. And so my security comes from my bank account and my paid for home.

And I've got my 401k or my pension. And that's where my security is found. No. No.

Your security is found in Christ alone, not in your finances. So great that you have those things, but not what you put your trust in or your hope in.

Don't be consumed by it. Some people can be so focused on getting more and more and more and having more and more.

It dominates how they treat their other relationships. And so we have to be careful with that as well. Don't be enslaved by it.

[54 : 10] This can speak to the idea of debt. But because of my desire for more, I outspend my income.

And so these are the things. Now, where we get in trouble is in modern idolatry. And I use the word modern there on purpose because when we think of idols, we think of like, you know, some bull looking thing and people are worshiping some cow or some pagan god or idol or whatever.

And I don't know of anybody who does that. Maybe you do. Do you know of people who worship like a golden calf today? I haven't met that person yet.

I've met plenty of people who worship money or who worship their children or their stuff or their hobbies.

So we have to be careful about that. So modern idols are usually good things. Money can be a good thing. But if we turn it into a god thing, then it becomes a real issue.

[55 : 19] And that's what we have a tendency to do, to take something that really by itself is spiritually neutral. Money is neutral.

And we can either do good things with it or we can turn it into an idol and try to make more of it than what God intends. And that's when it becomes very damaging to us.

And then when it comes to worship, worshiping an idol, worship is basically what we love and what we pursue the most with our heart and with our actions.

So what's taking up your time and your effort and your finances and add it all up and you can figure out. You can look at someone's calendar, you can look at someone's checkbook and kind of see what are they worshiping?

What do they care about? What are the things that really have their attention? And so back to our story, verse 28.

[56 : 24] So Peter said, see, Lord, we have left our homes and followed you. So the rich young ruler is gone off the scene. He's sad. Jesus has said, you know, how bad, how difficult is it for someone of wealth to enter the kingdom of heaven?

It's like a camel going through and the eye of a needle. It can't happen. It's impossible. How can anybody be saved? Well, it's impossible with man, but it's possible with God. And then Peter chimes up and says, see, we have left our homes and followed you.

And Jesus responds to that by saying this. 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, who will not receive many times more in this time and in the age to come eternal life.

Now, again, we have to interpret what he says here according to the time that they're in.

Remember, Jesus is preaching a message.

The kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. Right? I can't drum this thing, but the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is standing right in front of them.

[57 : 45] Are we living in that day today? We are not. Jesus is not standing right in front of us, saying the kingdom of God is at hand. We are not preaching the gospel of the kingdom today.

We're preaching the gospel of grace. Now, prophetically, there's coming a time when we will return. Not us in the church age. We won't be.

But after the church is gone, during the tribulation, the message that will be preached during that time is the kingdom of God is at hand. The kingdom of God is at hand. Matter of fact, it's less than seven years away.

It's coming. It's time. It's at hand. And so that message will be returned to. But they were looking at the kingdom of God right in the face.

And they didn't recognize it. They didn't accept him. They rejected him. And so from that perspective, are we able to say it was appropriate for them?

[58 : 53] Because if Jesus was ushering the kingdom of God, which could have happened, it would have been appropriate to leave your family, to leave your children, and to go and enter the kingdom.

And they would have come with you as well if they had been saved. But we're not living in that day and age today. So be aware of that when he says this.

So it's not appropriate for you to just leave your wife and leave your kids and come set up camp here at the church and empty your bank accounts and bring them and lay them here at the steps here and say, here, you get everything.

No, that's not appropriate. You have responsibilities to your wife and your children. And the New Testament teaches you that. But during this particular time, when the kingdom of God was at hand, that would have been an appropriate thing to do, to drop everything.

You got a funeral to take care of it? Let it take care of itself. Remember he said that earlier.

Remember? Oh, I've got a bull to go look at. No, you let that take care of itself because the kingdom of God is at hand.

[60 : 14] And so you come. And we're on our way to Jerusalem. And that's what the whole point, the second half of Luke is all about. So be aware of that.

Now, before I let you go, I want to answer this question. The question of the young ruler, the question of the title of our message, how do good people get to heaven?

I would be remiss if I didn't answer this question for you. So here we go. Here's the answer. It's real simple. Good people are saved by, first of all, abandoning the idea that they're a good person, abandoning trust in their own goodness.

You ain't got none. Right? And then turning, the word for repent, turning from their sin. I recognize my sin.

It's eaten my life alive. I don't have any choice. I'm a sinner. I don't want to be. I'm helpless.

[61 : 18] I'm helpless. And trusting in Jesus Christ alone to save us. That's the answer. My prayer for you today is if you've never done that, if you've never abandoned your own goodness, by all means, you ain't got any, so why are you holding on to it?

And turn from your sin. It's what's killing you. And put your trust in Christ alone. Because only he can save you.

There's no religion. There's no other religion. And if you're trusting in the religion of Christianity, that too is a poison.

Any kind of religion. People have turned Christianity into a religion. Don't fall for that. The only hope that you have is in Christ alone.

You cannot earn it. You cannot merit it in any way. Give that up. And trust in him alone. Let's pray.

[62 : 34] Lord, we thank you for what really is a simple message. It's not about religion.

It's not about being good enough. It's not about trying to earn it. I can't. It's not about having the right religion, following the right steps.

Lord, there's nothing that I can do to inherit eternal life. There's nothing any of us can do to inherit eternal life.

It's already been done. And you did it through your son, through Jesus. Jesus. When he died on that cross in our place, he took our place, took what we deserved.

And he rose again from the dead. Proved it was all true. And that salvation is found only in Jesus Christ.

[63 : 52] Through him alone. I can't earn it. I can't be good enough. my only hope is to let that go and to trust in Christ alone.

Christ alone. Thank you, Lord, for this simple message.

Thank you that a child can understand it. I thank you that I can understand the simplicity of this message.

And woe to anyone who wants to add to it woe to anyone who wants to say, no, you got to also do this and do that in order to be saved.

You got to add this and add that in order to be saved. No, no, no, sir. What witchcraft that is.

[65 : 08] It's the Christ alone. May that be the cry of our heart. May that be the message of our lips.

May we go from this place not only believing it and accepting it for ourselves, but proclaiming it to so many who need to hear it.

Teaching it to our children, to our families, witnessing to its truth to the people that we work with, that we go to school with, that we do life with.

Lord, it is in you alone that we place our trust. I pray for those here today or those who are watching online, Lord, that you would impress upon them that we cannot do anything to earn it.

I'll say it over and over again. My heart needs this message of the gospel every day.

I can't earn it. I can't live this Christian life in my own strength. I need Jesus.

[66 : 28] He is my only hope for eternal life. He is my only hope for this day. We love you and we praise you, Lord, and we thank you.

We ask all of this now in Jesus' name. Amen.