

## WHO THEN CAN BE SAVED?

**“And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible”** (Mark 10:26-27).

IN MARK CHAPTER 10 we find the story of the rich ruler who came to Jesus asking Him, **“Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”** (Mark 10:17). Notice that this young man came at the right time, when he was still a young man, and he came to the right Person, the Lord Jesus. Evidently he came in the right spirit, for he hurried up to Jesus and knelt before Him. And he had the right purpose in mind, for he asked the Lord about eternal life. Of course we see that this young man wanted to DO SOMETHING to “inherit eternal life,” and when the Lord Jesus had answered him, he turned away saddened and grieved, unsaved and unblessed. In verse 25, Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of Heaven. And so our subject is found in verse 26, **“Who then can be saved?”**

In order to bring this subject out properly, we must ask four questions and answer them as quickly as we can. There are a people who can be saved, and there are others who cannot be saved. Those who hope to be saved must bow to the terms set by our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is LORD in this matter of the salvation of a human soul. There were many people in John chapter 6 who turned away and walked no longer with the Lord Jesus—these were evidently people who could not be saved. The rich young ruler in our text is evidently another such character. He came face to face with Divine Truth and with the Son of God who is the Truth in person, and yet he went away sorrowful. Remember, the Lord will never compromise with you—if you are ever saved, you must be saved on the terms of the Gospel as set forth by our Lord. You must come to repentance before God and true, saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I tell you that repentance is the death agony of the soul! It means to turn to God from your idols and forsake everything and follow the Lord Jesus all the way. And unless you experience this, you will be another like the rich young ruler who “cannot be saved.” Thus it is very important that we see how God saves sinners, what kind of sinners He saves, and when and how He saves them.

**I. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF SALVATION?** Let me briefly enumerate several things.

First, *salvation means ease*. The people of this world are not at ease and never will be, until God does a deep work of grace in the soul. Sin causes people to be restless and miserable, and so you can never be at ease while living in sin. When God saves you, the storm that you experienced on the inside is changed into a great calm, but then the storm moves to the outside of you. A saved man has peace in his heart, but he faces great storms, trials, temptations and persecutions on the outside. Your peace and tranquility of heart is real, but the storm rages in life because Satan and his demons and all wicked men and women will oppose you and your Christian life.

Second, *we see that salvation means safety*. No man or woman is safe in sin. There is great security in Christ for every believer, but it is only for those who are truly in Christ. No man can have any assurance or security while walking in the way of sin and rebellion, according to the course of this present world. So you don't have safety until God has done a true work of grace in your soul, whereby you are established on the Rock which is Christ Jesus. Then you are safe, and you will experience sanctification and growth.

Thirdly, *salvation means soundness*. No man is at ease, no man is safe, and no man is sound until he has been soundly converted.

Next, I would inform you that *salvation means deliverance*. Ah, listen! Salvation is deliverance, and it lasts for the entire Christian life. There will never be a time as long as you are in this world when you do not need deliverance from many, many obstacles. If we were to try to

enumerate them, we would be here all day. Salvation is an actual experience, an actual deliverance at the beginning, and daily deliverances by Divine Grace all the way through.

Fifthly, *salvation is preservation*. You are preserved by God and you persevere in the faith of God's elect. Your preservation in Christ Jesus is by the Spirit of God. He keeps us moving on in the good way, and at deliberate speed.

Sixth, salvation is *to be redeemed from all earthly ills*. There are many ills that we encounter as we travel in our walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. ***"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all"*** (Psalm 34:19).

In the final place, note briefly that *salvation means to obtain a better resurrection*. Now this is not saying that you will have a better or more proper resurrection than another saint, but the "better resurrection" is the life we have in Christ Jesus both spiritually and when our bodies are raised from the graves out yonder at the return of our Lord. Many are the afflictions of the people of God, but they do not turn from the way of truth to avoid troubles and obtain temporary deliverance—rather they look forward to that ***"better resurrection"*** (Hebrews 11:35), ***"the resurrection of the just"*** (Luke 14:14). That will be the consummation of their salvation in Christ the Lord. The wicked also are to be raised at the coming of the Lord, but they will experience a resurrection unto condemnation. Notice the two distinct qualities of resurrection. We are turning to Daniel 12:2, ***"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."*** And there you can truly see that the person who is saved has a ***"better resurrection"*** coming down yonder at the end of this age.

**II. HOW YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.** Our Lord deals with the false ways of salvation or false hopes in many places, especially here in our text (Mark 10) and in the great Bread of Life chapter (John 6). Ways that a person cannot be saved? There are many, and I wish we had time to take up all that He tells us in John chapter 6. Please read it at your leisure, but at this time we must stay with our passage in Mark 10. Notice five important distinctions about ways that cannot save you. We want to let the Bible say exactly what it means here. Don't get into the habit of dissecting the Scriptures. When you dissect anything, you kill it. Remember in the study of biology some of us were assigned the task of dissecting a frog. And you learn a lot about the frog, his circulatory system, muscles, etc. But there is a distinction between dissecting something and analyzing it. When you take your penknife and dissect or cut the Word of God, you merely kill its effects; you cannot kill the Word. But let us analyze the Word and listen to what God is saying, comparing Scripture with Scripture.

First, *You cannot go to Heaven rich*. When you come to Christ, you come as a Hell-bound, bankrupt sinner. ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit"*** (Matthew 5:3). And if God saves you, He will give you this poverty of spirit. But the rich ruler had none of it. He was rich, and he loved his riches. In verses 23 and 25 of our text, ***"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! ... It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."*** Do not let the modern theologians explain this text away, but take it for what it says. All of your riches, your fortune, all that you are, must be placed on the altar for the Lord's use, and in that sense you cease to be rich. It is possible, then, that the Lord would tell you, as He told this young ruler, ***"Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor"*** (vs. 21). Since you have already committed it all to God, it makes little difference whether you actually have to give it up. Notice, our Lord did not tell this man to sell it and give the money to the church or to the priests or a religious institution. Perhaps there is a reason He demanded that it be given to the poor. This man had become rich by grinding the face of the poor. Riches are not forbidden in the Scriptures for many of the most godly men had wealth, but they did not obtain it by the abuse of the poor. God never sanctions that, but always urges His people to relieve the poor, the widows and the orphans. If you have ground the faces of the poor to obtain your wealth, you are going to Hell unless you give it back. In James 5 we gave God's word to those will ill-gotten riches: ***"Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries"***

*that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days*" (vss. 1-3). And God shows how they gained their wealth—by abusing and mis-using those who labored for them! The face of the Lord is against all such! Abraham, Lot, Job, David and many other Old Testament saints possessed great riches, but not at the expense of grinding the face of the poor.

Secondly, *you cannot go to Heaven with sin in your life*. And we talk about the security of the believer. I believe in this security; I accept the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. But, listen: There is no security and no assurance to any man who lives in the perpetual practice of sin! If you are saved, the love of sin has been broken in you. In John 8:24 the Saviour says, ***"Ye shall die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."*** And He warned them earlier that to die in their sins meant they would never come to that city where God's people will dwell eternally with the Lord! Did our Lord mean what He said? Was He ever frivolous in the things He taught? No. Listen: Our churches of today are filled with bastard "converts," and their preachers are giving them "security" while they live the same old life in sin. Such people are not saved! If you die in your sins, you can never come to Heaven.

Thirdly, I point out that *you cannot be saved with idols in your life*. No! All idolaters will be sent to Hell. In Revelation 21:8 we find at least eight kinds of people who are not going to Heaven. ***"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*** Notice that the idolater, though he profess to be a Christian, is on his way to Hell. But in 1 Thessalonians we find truly saved people have turned to God from idols. ***"How ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."*** A dear person called me recently and wanted to know how to get rid of idols and material things out of her life. I said, "Turn to God! Look to the Lord! How are you going to focus on God and on your idols at the same time?" And I think she saw it. Our Lord did not tell us to turn from idols first and then turn to God. No, He demands that we turn to God first, and He will take the place of all your idols! Speaking to the Lord's own dear people, the Apostle says, ***"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"*** (1 John 5:21), for there is always the danger that idols will creep into the lives of God's children. They always lurk in the background, just waiting to spring up—and none have more idols than those who never dreamed they had any!

In the fourth place, *you cannot be saved and go to Heaven with a compromise*. God will not save you in a compromise. Remember in the Book of Exodus, Pharaoh proposed four great compromises to the children of Israel, when Moses announced that they wanted to go into the wilderness to serve God. Had they yielded to Pharaoh's compromises, every one of the sons of Jacob would have died in Egypt. And you cannot listen to the Devil's compromises or you will be plunged into Hell! Notice what Pharaoh suggested: (1.) He said they could serve God in Egypt and that it was not necessary to completely leave the land. But Egypt stands for the world, and you cannot serve the Lord until you get out of the world and get the world out of you. (2.) Then Pharaoh said they might go out of Egypt, ***"only ye shall not go very far away"*** (Exodus 8:28). That's the voice of Satan to you who want to serve the Lord today—"Go on and serve God; go on and join the church and make that profession; but don't go all the way with God! Don't render obedience to Christ as absolute Lord!" (3.) Next Pharaoh tries to work a compromise whereby the men would go and serve God, leaving their families back in Egypt (Exodus 10:10-11). Leave the children behind, and eventually you will be coming back to the land to see your children. This is another temptation of the Devil—"Have your own personal religion, but leave out family religion. Don't try to force your religion on the members of your family!" (4.) Then Pharaoh attempts a final compromise in Exodus 10:24, ***"Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you."*** That is, go and take your families but leave your *business* behind in Egypt. So it is with the Devil—if he can

get you to go ahead with your religion but keep the Lord out of your business, leave your business in the world, and try to serve the Lord, then he has got you! You won't go all the way with the Lord, will not bow to the Lordship of Christ, and thus you miss true saving faith. You have a religious profession but no reality of salvation in Christ the Lord. And so, with your business life left to the world, it becomes a snare that will trap you. Had the Israelites left their cattle behind, surely they would have wanted to return to the land of Egypt. Pharaoh knew that the Israelites greatly prized their cattle. But what was Moses' response to this compromise? ***“Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind”*** (Exodus 10:26). You have got to leave Egypt and say “Good-bye” to Pharaoh and all the compromises with the world! There is no salvation in compromise.

Fifth, *you cannot take your household with you*. While every husband desires to see his family saved, and every housewife would like to know that all her children are safe in the ark, yet they must know that God saves each one individually and personally. You cannot carry along the entire family with you when you are coming to Christ! And, of course, I know that the Lord never saves two people in exactly the same manner—there are different methods and different trials of faith in this matter of the salvation of the soul. But it is not corporate salvation—some wives are holding back from following the Lord by trying to pull along an unsaved husband, and some husbands are hindered in serving the Lord fully while they try to make provision to bring along an unsaved wife. You cannot do it! You must come to Christ and put your husband, your wife, your children all on the altar. Put them in the hands of God and leave them there. You have to be separated from them. Face the fact that you cannot take anybody to Heaven with you; it's a narrow path; you must go there alone. In Genesis chapter 32 we find the great salvation crisis in Jacob's life, and we read, “And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day” (vs. 24). He was alone with God. And I tell you that you have to face God and God alone in this matter of the salvation of your soul; also in the filling of the Spirit and sanctification, you cannot bring along a friend or loved one; it's just you and God! Keep in mind that you cannot bring your household to God. Every mother ought to pray for her children and try to train them in the right way, but she cannot save those children. And you cannot take them with you—only God can regenerate them and bring them in!

When God saves you He moves you into a new kingdom and makes you to be at variance with your unsaved family members. Listen: ***“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me”*** (Matthew 10:34-38). Many people say, “Well, I know that JESUS would not divide or break up a home!” You are worshipping the wrong God, for that is just exactly what He does—He causes a great separation by calling you out of the world and unto Himself and leaving the rest of the family still in the world. It may be that He will call them in later, but it must be God that does the work, and we must recognize that it is a separating work. Now whenever you find a home where Mother and Dad and the children are all saved, then you find a little Heaven on earth. But where you find only one or two in a household that have been called by God's grace, and the others are still in the world, then there is a division as deep as Hell in that home.

**III. WHO, THEN, CAN BE SAVED?** That is our subject, and we come now more directly to look at it. Thank God and the Lamb, there is a people who can be saved, and who will be saved. They are the ones who bow to the terms of the Gospel and the Lordship of the Saviour. There is no other way. You cannot dictate to God what you will do or will not do. You do not come to Jesus as Saviour with the little frivolous attitude that you will make Him your Lord later on—no, you come to Him as Lord and then He becomes your Saviour. Oh, how many of these shallow preachers are seeking in our day to divide the Saviour and His salvation. They say, “Come to Him as Saviour now and it won't cost you

anything. You can deal with His Lordship later on.” But you do not divide the Christ of this Bible in any such way! He will dictate all the terms about your salvation, for He operates as absolute Lord—He will determine when you will be saved, how you will be saved, and all about your salvation. You will bow to His absolute authority as Lord or go to Hell! Our pulpits today are filled with preachers who are not telling people the truth—they are preaching salvation from Hell on the basis of your decision and not the Lordship of Christ. If all it takes to save is a little decision, then you ought to be able to do that without God. You don’t need Him to be Lord, for you are your own “lord.” But that is not salvation, although it is what we have in most all churches of today.

Perhaps we can find some definite answers to our question, *Who then can be saved?* in the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of Luke. There you have several things.

First, *you have a lost sheep. Our Lord saves the lost sheep.* He has some lost sheep, but not any lost goats. The Shepherd found the lost sheep, laid it on His shoulders and brought it all the way home. The sheep did not find the Shepherd. Ah, if you ever see salvation by sovereign grace, you’ll never be the same! Read Luke chapter 15 and you will see the truth of WHO our Lord saves and how He saves them.

Secondly, there was *the lost coin*. That coin was out of circulation and useless. So it is with a fallen sinner. He is not worth anything to God until he is found and brought back into union with God and put into circulation. Did that lost coin find its owner? No! The lady brought her broom and turned on the light and began sweeping. This is a picture of Holy Ghost conviction, when God turns the light on within a man’s soul, and then takes the broom of the Law and goes to sweeping, stirring up the dust and scattering all things until He finds that one which was lost. Then the sinner is restored, when God brings him back to his rightful owner, restores him in Christ.

Thirdly, we have a picture of *a lost son*. The Father here was looking and longing for His son to return. But the son had no interest in the Father. He took his money and wasted it in riotous living. When the money was all gone, he began to reflect, “In my Father’s house, there is food and much comfort. But here I am in the pen with the swine and have nothing to eat, and no man careth for my soul!” How true it was. This son was awakened by the Spirit of God to reflect and desire to return, and no man gave him anything. The world truly has nothing to give to an awakened sinner—what the sinner desires is that heavenly bread and that heavenly home. But the world can give a lot of pleasures for a season to the old alien sinner who has not desire for heavenly things. He feeds upon that which satisfies not. And so as this prodigal reflects back upon the Father’s house, he comes to the point of saying, ***“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee!”*** This is what the awakened sinner does; here he sees the dirt and filth of the pen where he lies, without God and without hope. Then by God’s grace and power, he does arise and return to the Father. Faith in action—he first resolved that he would go back to the Father; then he comes back, and finds the Father’s welcoming arms. “Oh, I have sinned,” he confesses, “and am no more worthy to be called thy son” (Luke 15:21). He was honestly and deeply convicted. “Oh,” he said, “I’ll be a servant; I’ll take the lowest place, if only I can be back under the care and protection of my father!” He was broken down, wasn’t he? But, listen: God does not receive him back as a mere hired servant, but as a “son.” He does not take him on probation and let him work his way back into favor with the Father. He was a son and it is by grace alone that he is restored to the place of Sonship. “Go and get the best robe,” says the Father. The provision for him is full and complete, a robe which is the symbol of the robe of righteousness, then shoes for his feet and a ring on his finger. That ring is the symbol of divine, eternal Love. Oh, the love of God for the returning prodigal, whom He has awakened and led back to the Father’s house of grace! They killed the fatted calf and began to make merry. This son went astray but is now returned; was lost and is found; was dead but is now made alive. What a glorious picture here of how God saves sinners!

**IV. WHAT WILL BE THE REWARD?** *“And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel’s, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life”* (Mark 10:29-30). Notice the people who have a great reward in the life to come also shall receive “an hundredfold now in this time.” Talk about going to Heaven! I have some of the joys of Heaven now! When God saves a man, He puts the kingdom of God inside of you, in the Person of the Holy Ghost. Your heart becomes the throne of God, and you have a foretaste of Heaven in the here and now. He is talking about spiritual rewards. Notice: **“houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions”**—it is going to cost you something to be a Christian, for Jesus says that just as the blessings are ours to enjoy now, so are the persecutions. When you come to the Lord and place all of your material things on the altar He gives it back to you with the persecutions of the world. And then the great reward of eternal life to come. “Oh,” you say, “I understand that we have eternal life now.” Well, you have it in the form of a **“good hope through grace”** (2 Thessalonians 2:16). But the full revelation of this eternal life for your spirit, soul, mind and body will only come out yonder after the resurrection. Then He brings you into the full possession of the eternal reward, and you will be complete in every detail by His saving and preserving grace. It is a threefold reward, and we give it to you briefly. Peter wanted to know what we would get as a reward when we have left all to follow the Lord (vs. 28).

First, *you are rewarded in this life*. Your reward in the future is great, but He talks about a hundredfold reward now in this life. When I came to God, He separated me from every friend I had, and all my possessions were laid on the altar before Him. But over the years, in serving Him, God has raised up for me not only one father and mother, but a hundred fathers and mothers in Christ. Also hundreds of brothers and sisters, and He has sustained me with all the money and possessions that I really needed. Rich rewards in Christ are experienced in this life. I’m telling you that I am rich and complete in HIM!

Secondly, *there is the reward in the world to come*. Eternal life in the world to come—how wonderful! This passage in Mark 10 contradicts almost everything you hear now. Eternal life is a quality as well as a quantity of life, and it is the most wonderful reward. As we journey along, pilgrims, sojourners and strangers, we are looking for that city not built by human hands. **“The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever”** (Psalm 37:18). Jesus said, **“Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be”** (Revelation 22:12).

Thirdly, and of course *your reward is the Lord Himself*. He said to Abraham, **“I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward”** (Genesis 15:1). Just as we know that “He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6), we rejoice to know that He gives us Himself and we will dwell in God for as long as the eternal ages roll! Give glory to the Lamb of God!

**In Conclusion:** Are you saved? Do you know Christ? Do you have the Inward Witness? Is the call of God upon your soul?

May the Lord help you to *know* that to be saved you must do business with a Living Lord, on His terms and within His own good time. If you have mere profession and don’t know this narrow way of grace and salvation in Christ, then you will have to die and plunge into Hell. May God help you all! *“Our Father, Oh, take this message and make it a blessing and spiritual food to all of the Lord’s people who may be in the wilderness at this hour. Take this word, O God, and seize upon their souls and bring them in to this wonderful salvation that we have in Christ, and if they are saved draw them into a closer fellowship with Thyself. For we pray in Christ’s Lovely Name. Amen.”*

**B. B. Caldwell** (1899-1976) — *Date originally preached, about 1971.*

*Transcribed from tape, very faithfully followed, with only slight editing to make it more readable, by W.W.F..*