

Hard Sayings Of Jesus

Lesson 7

But he who carries his riches in his soul, and instead of God's Spirit, he who bears in his heart gold or land, and is always acquiring possessions without end, and is perpetually on the outlook for more, bending downwards he is fettered in the toils of the world,

I. This Week's Hard Saying

Matt 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven : and come and follow me. KJV

Mark 10:21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.

Luke 18:22 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. KJV

II. Why This Is Hard

- a. It was certainly hard for the rich young ruler who heard Him say it because he had a very different kind of view of **keeping the Law**.
- b. This particular individual was under no illusions as to what specifically Jesus was asking of him. It was not perceived as a mere semantic request; it was a real **requirement**.
- c. The young man was saddened because while he would have liked a different outcome, he knew within himself that the cost of discipleship was more than he was personally **willing to pay**.

III. Various Interpretations of Jesus' Meaning

- a. Jesus was giving this specific individual this condition and had no intention that it should be **generalized** to all of His followers.
 1. Clearly Jesus was a knower of hearts and he understood the **issues of wealth** confronting this man before he ever opened his mouth. He saw his devotion to his wealth rather than to God. Mark 2:8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts ? KJV
 2. Jesus had many occasions in speaking to others of means in which he **never** repeated this condition of discipleship. Luke 19:2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus , which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. KJV
 3. The core issue determining discipleship was never money, property or possessions per se. Rather, Jesus' concern was for the issues of the **heart** that would make one a disciple or keep one from it. Matt 15:18-20 But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart ; and they defile the man. 19 For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20 These are the things which defile a man: KJV
 4. There is no question that Jesus meant this condition to be applied to this individual, however, the application of His meaning goes well **beyond** this one individual.
- b. Jesus gave this specific individual this condition and He did intend that all His followers should do **likewise**.
 1. Jesus knew that earthly wealth and possessions would be a **hindrance** to people who would be His disciples and therefore commanded them to leave those things behind and come and follow Him. Luke 18:24-28 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! 25 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.26 And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? 27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all , and followed thee. KJV
 2. The Christian community of Jerusalem in their initial fervor **understood** this requirement and lived it out accordingly. Acts 2:44-45 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. KJV

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3. The renunciation of worldly possessions has long been a part of the practice of Christian asceticism and it has been viewed as an act that would take one to the “state of perfection”. Matt 19:21
 4. However, Aquinas believed that poverty has no intrinsic goodness, but is good only because it is useful to remove the obstacles which stand in the way of the pursuit of spiritual perfection.
 5. The problem of this view is that it has led many to act out of the power of the flesh, a kind of will worship, that completely missed the mark of Jesus’ intention. Col 2:20-23 Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, 21(Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22 Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? 23 Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh. KJV
- c. Jesus gave this specific individual this condition, intending that all His followers should be willing to rid themselves of any burden that might impede their Christian walk. Heb 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, KJV

III. Thinking It Through

- a. Discipleship is an enablement of the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the believer at conversion. Luke 18:28 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.
- b. Andrew Murray says it this way "My heart's desire and delight, oh God, is absolute surrender, but I cannot perform it. It is impossible for me to live that life." Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. KJV
- c. Through the enablement of the Holy Spirit there is no limit to which one would go in securing one's grasp on things that are eternal and the leaving behind those things which are temporal. Matt 13:45-46 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: 46 Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. KJV
- d. This emptying of oneself of worldly trappings is necessary because worldly things tend to hold us back from giving ourselves from the heart. Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. KJV
- e. Clement describes it: "The Lord bids him banish from his soul his notions about wealth, his excitement and morbid feeling about it, the anxieties, which are the thorns of existence, which choke the seed of life" Matt 13:22 He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. KJV
- f. Such emptying is evidence that one is trusting Christ. Having done so, we put ourselves totally in his hands so that earthly things become unimportant by comparison. Matt 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. KJV
- g. In this state we learn contentment with such things as we have which is the opposite of the covetousness that drives so much of ones' carnal appetites. Phil 4:11-13 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. KJV
- h. Jerome describes this abandonment as proof of our love: "He commands him to follow, not with steps of the body, but with devotion of the soul, which is the effect of charity (agape love)." Matt 22:37-38 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38 This is the first and great commandment. KJV

V. Application

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- a. *“Selling all that you have is not an outward act which others have done, but something else, something greater, more godlike, more perfect. It is the stripping off of the passions from the soul itself and from the disposition, and the cutting up by the roots and casting out of what is alien to the renewed mind”*. Jerome

To what extent have you sold all to follow after Christ?

What trappings of this life do you continue to hold onto?

What is your response to the Holy Spirit regarding these things?

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Mark 10:21; Luke 18:22

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- b. _____ says it this way "My heart's desire and delight, oh God, is absolute surrender, but I cannot perform it. It is impossible for me to live that life."
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