

TRULY SURRENDERED, TRULY SAVED

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In Jewish culture, salvation is attained by obeying the law to the letter. From childhood, Jews are already instructed about the law and the writings of the prophets and they need to know this by heart and practice it. And to do this is a mark of a good Jew.

In Mark 10:13-31, we see a rich, young ruler who said to Jesus that he had kept all the commandments since his youth. And people readily believed that claim to be true because of the notion that wealth is proof that a person is in right standing with God, ergo, he must be rich because he had found favor with God.

This young ruler was a good Jew and he knew it. But, Jesus, knowing everything, knew his heart and pointed out one thing that he lacked, one thing that would disqualify him from attaining eternal life.

21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." 22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

Why did this young ruler walk away disheartened? He had vast treasures – a large if not several large houses, many servants and slaves, fields of various crops, sheep, goats and other livestock. He would surely have these because Jesus knew the attachments these have on him. At first glance, it would seem that having great possessions was the problem.

It is true that material wealth is important and useful, and that they are not intrinsically evil. But our heart, which is very much prone to evil, would often give in to these and be ruled over by them. Here are some realities we know

about possessions –

1. Possessions can possess us.
2. Possessions reveal the true desires of our hearts.
3. Possessions can meet our needs but not bring contentment.
4. Possessions can bring happiness but not joy.

Desire for possessions, or materialism, is becoming more and more rampant. Just look at the number of shopping and delivery apps on our cell phones. Do we have Lazada, Shopee, Amazon and other such apps? How many items do we have in our add to cart and wishlist? Do we find ourselves wanting more stuff and buying more stuff that we don't even need?

Having more stuff gives us a false notion of living the good life. And "the good life" often competes with what the Bible calls the abundant life, which refers to life in Christ that is abundant in joy and strength in spirit, even if one is financially cash strapped. An abundant life is not the priority of the person who seeks the good life. That is why Jesus said, "Whoever loves his life shall lose it."

The Bible clearly says that the longings of the heart for wealth is the real problem. There are many verses that refer to money and possessions, how to handle them, and how they are not to compete with our love for God. The more familiar verses are, "The love of money is the root of all evil" in 1 Timothy 6:10 and "No one can serve two masters, no one can serve both God and mammon" in Matthew 6:24.

So what is the one thing that the rich, young ruler lacked? He lacked **the willingness** to forsake everything to follow Jesus. If he had that willingness in his heart, he would have joyfully said

"Yes!" and would even immediately give away his possessions. In Luke 19, Zacchaeus **volunteered** to give away his wealth out of sheer joy because of what Jesus had done for him (v.8). Generosity and joy in giving are marks of a **true** disciple of Jesus.

But it isn't just wealth that keeps people away from fully following God. It could be a relationship, a habit, an attitude, or even a pet sin. It could be our career, our dream, our influence, our gadgets, or our health. It is anything and everything that we cannot surrender to God, anything that we cannot willingly forsake to fully follow Jesus. And that is what the Bible calls an **idol**.

What is your idol?

Christmas is just around the corner. This is the perfect time to reflect on who Jesus is and what He has done for us. For all that He is and for all that He has done for us, are we willing to surrender ourselves and everything we have afresh to Him, thereby, making Him **truly** the Lord of our lives? That is the challenge for us today. May we be found faithful in forsaking our idols and living a fully-surrendered life. ✱

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