

Mark 10:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

Analysis

After the rich young ruler departed, Jesus looked at His disciples and said: 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!' (Πῶς δυσκόλως οἱ τὰ χρήματα ἔχοντες εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελεύσονται). The adverb 'hardly' (dyskolōs, δυσκόλως) means with difficulty. Wealth doesn't disqualify from salvation, but it creates obstacles: self-reliance replacing dependence on God, material comfort dulling spiritual hunger, possessions competing with Christ for supreme affection. The young man's wealth prevented him from following Jesus (vv. 21-22). Jesus generalizes from this example—wealth often hinders salvation. This isn't prosperity gospel (wealth as blessing) but warning that riches tempt toward self-sufficiency, the opposite of childlike dependence (v. 15). Paul warned that 'love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Timothy 6:10). Riches aren't evil, but trust in riches is deadly.

Historical Context

First-century Jewish theology often equated wealth with divine blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Proverbs 10:22). The rich were considered righteous; poverty suggested divine disfavor. Jesus inverted this, warning that wealth hinders salvation. The disciples' astonishment (v. 24, 26) reveals how radical this teaching was. Wealthy Jews could afford temple sacrifices, synagogue donations, and almsgiving—external religiosity that seemed meritorious. Yet Jesus taught that wealth often blinds to spiritual need. Early church practiced radical generosity

(Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37), with wealthy members supporting poor. James condemned favoritism toward rich (James 2:1-7) and pronounced woe on wealthy oppressors (James 5:1-6). Church history shows ongoing tension: medieval asceticism versus modern prosperity gospel. Jesus' teaching remains clear: wealth tempts self-reliance, making kingdom entrance difficult.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does wealth create obstacles to salvation by fostering self-reliance, material comfort, and divided affections?
2. What does Jesus' warning about riches teach about the dangers of prosperity gospel theology?

Interlinear Text

καὶ ἐκπορευομένου αὐτόν εἰς ὁδὸν προσδραμὼν εἰς
And when he was gone forth him into running one
G2532 G1607 G846 G1519 G3598 G4370 G1520

καὶ γονυπετήσας αὐτόν ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν Διδάσκαλε
And kneeled him and asked him Master
G2532 G1120 G846 G1905 G846 G1320

ἀγαθέ τί ποιήσω ἵνα ζωὴν αἰώνιον κληρονομήσω
Good what shall I do that life eternal I may inherit
G18 G5101 G4160 G2443 G2222 G166 G2816

Additional Cross-References

Romans 2:7 (Eternal Life): To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:

Acts 2:37 (Parallel theme): Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

Acts 20:32 (Parallel theme): And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Acts 9:6 (Parallel theme): And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

Acts 16:30 (Parallel theme): And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

Matthew 25:34 (Parallel theme): Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

Matthew 17:14 (Parallel theme): And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,

Luke 10:25 (Eternal Life): And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Daniel 6:10 (Parallel theme): Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.