

• *Luke's version of a lengthy conversation on the theme of goodness*

A ruler asks Jesus a question. He calls Jesus 'Good teacher' and, before the ruler has a chance to ask his question, Jesus holds up the conversation to talk about 'goodness'. The ruler is speaking rather flatteringly and Jesus uses the occasion to teach something about Himself. The gospels always give only compressed summaries of what they report. Here we presumably have only a summary of what was originally a lengthy conversation. Matthew tells us that the conversation also involved a discussion of 'doing some good thing' to inherit God's blessing^{□1}. Mark's Gospel and Luke's Gospel tell us about the discussion of Jesus Himself^{□2}. Our concern is Luke's version. Quite likely the original conversation included a good deal of talk about goodness and what it involved.

1. The ruler is invited to think about Jesus Himself

• *Good teacher – flattering talk*

• *Jesus responds by inviting him to think more deeply about goodness*

1. **The ruler is invited to think about Jesus Himself.** He begins in this flattering way, '*Good teacher...*'. Jesus is known for His goodness and kindness. The ruler draws attention to his admiration for Jesus by the way in which he speaks to Him. But has he thought much about this? It is true that Jesus is a genuinely good person. How many genuinely good people are there on planet earth? It all depends on how you think of goodness. But obviously Jesus is in a category all of His own. He is entirely unique in His kindness. There is no one like Him at all. '*Why do you call me good?*' says Jesus. It is an invitation to think more about Jesus **Himself**. The ruler wants a piece of advice from Jesus. The answer Jesus will give will include the requirement: '*follow me.*' If the ruler is to enter into everything God has for him, it will mean getting involved with Jesus Himself.

2. The ruler asks a question about 'inheriting'

• *Inheritance is a much bigger concept than justification*

• *It refers to reaping from God everything that He has to give us*

2. **The ruler asks a question about 'inheriting'.** This is a vital word in biblical language. 'Inheriting' is more than justification by faith. 'Justification' is by faith only. The tax collector in Luke 18 was 'justified'^{□1} without being told to do anything about the Mosaic law! The Pharisee spoke of matters mentioned by the law (adultery, tithing)^{□2} but was not accepted by God. If the ruler of Luke 18:18 had asked, 'What must I do to be saved?' – referring to the earliest phrase of salvation – Jesus would have said something like 'Come to me, and have life' or would have told a parable like that of the prodigal son^{□3}. But Jesus is being asked a much bigger question about 'inheritance'. 'Inheritance' is an altogether greater concept. It refers to reaping from God everything that He has to give us. Our 'good works' do come into this! Paul says that those who 'sow to the Spirit', by the way in which they live, reap back from the Spirit eternal life^{□4}. It is this 'reaping back' that is meant by the word 'inherit'. It is the same as having treasure in heaven^{□5} and it is the same as 'entering the kingdom'^{□6}. The disciples call it being 'saved'^{□7} – but it is **reaping** salvation that is in view, the occasion when we inherit reward from God. This is clear from the way Jesus answers the disciples' question of 18:26. He goes on to speak of **reward**: receiving many times over the reward of houses or brothers or sisters or mothers or children or lands that have been left behind. This is not speaking of justification by faith only; it is speaking about reward that comes by living for God. This was the ruler's question in the first place.

□1 see
Matthew 19:16-30
□2 see Mark
10:17-31

□1 18:14
□2 18:11, 12

□3 Luke 15:11-32

□4 Galatians
6:8
□5 see 18:22
□6 18:23-25
□7 18:26

• *It includes the reward that comes by living for God*

3. Jesus answers the question

This man must

(i) Go beyond the law – surrender his wealth

(ii) Join Jesus' ministry team

3. **Jesus answers the question.** How do we enter into everything God has for us? Jesus replies that the young man must keep the law^{□1}. He has done that, he says^{□2}. Jesus does not dispute his keeping of the law, but he goes even higher than the law! The man must (i) go beyond the law and do things that the law never mentioned. Jesus has a special command for him that was never mentioned in the law of Moses. Jesus is asking him to surrender his wealth^{□3}. It is not in the law of Moses, nor does Jesus ask this from everyone. But this is what the young man is being asked to do. (ii) The young man must personally join Jesus' ministry-team. 'Come, follow me'^{□4} is quite literal. Jesus wants the young man to abandon what he has been doing before and join Jesus in ministry. It will lead to the man's 'inheriting' – finding treasure in heaven.

□1 18:20

□2 18:21

□3 18:22

□4 18:22

4. Wealth is a hindrance to inheriting God's purposes

• *The blessings of final salvation take the grace of God*

• *Sacrifice will be rewarded*

• *Wealthy people have to experience a miracle*

4. **Wealth is a hindrance to inheriting God's purposes.** The young man is stunned^{□1}. He had not imagined that Jesus would speak about abandoning his wealth. And he had never thought much about the **tenth** commandment! The ruler leaves Jesus, and Jesus gives a warning about wealth. It is almost impossible for anyone who is wealthy to enter fully into God's plans for their lives^{□2}. This amazes the disciples. Who can ever get to the blessings of final salvation^{□3}? It takes the grace of God, says Jesus^{□4}.

□1 18:23

□2 18:24-25

□3 18:26



□4 18:27

The event leads Peter to ask about the rewards that the disciples will receive^{□1}. He is given encouragement. Those who have sacrificed material things for the sake of 'inheriting' the rewards of the kingdom will be abundantly rewarded in this life and eternally^{□2}.

□1 18:28

□2 18:29-30

Wealthy people have to experience a miracle. Humanly speaking it is impossible for their wealth not to ruin their lives. But the things impossible with men and women are possible with God. The miracle is possible. God can give us such grace that we experience God's kingdom – but wealth does not help us in this matter!

		<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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