

What is impossible with men is possible with God

What is impossible with men is possible with God (Luke 18-18-43)

We have been studying the gospel of Luke together. Today, we will study from the last half of Cp 18. The theme is “What is impossible with men is possible with God”.

1. What must I do?

18-23

¹⁸ A certain ruler asked him [Jesus], "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" ¹⁹ "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. ²⁰ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.' " ²¹ "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. ²² When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²³ When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth.

One man asked Jesus, “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” (v.18) As we look at his attitude in their conversation, we can see that he didn’t ask this question to show off his rightness. But he asked the question in order to learn from Jesus.

Since he was a child, he has been taught laws and has kept them. He has been strictly trained and well educated. He was brought up in a good family, a man of good conduct, commonly known as a good man. However, he was not sure if he could receive eternal life. So he earnestly asked this question.

It seems that he wasn’t just rich in a sense that he had a lot of money. But he also had enough things, effective tools, education, status, position and ability. If he wanted, he could have done anything without the help from others. And not just he could have, but he actually had been living like that so far.

However, there was something even he couldn’t do. He faced the situation where he knew what was right and good, but couldn’t do it. How to use our property or money: that is within our control. However, he found that he can’t actually use it as he knew he should. He came to the situation where he can't do what Jesus said. So, he thought he can't enter the kingdom of God. When he

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saw this, he became very sad.

24-25

²⁴ Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Here "eternal life" and "entering the kingdom of God" are connected.

There is an explanation about "eternal life" like this, "The promise of being with God forever."¹

The Bible doesn't teach reincarnation, or endless cycle of rebirth. The Bible doesn't say that when a person dies, he will be born again as a different person, or as a different animal. The Bible also doesn't teach when a person dies physically, his existence disappears. The soul continues to exist. In that sense, everyone is eternal being.

The question is, where does his soul, his essential being spend time after the physical death? It will either spend time in heaven, the kingdom of God, or it will spend time in hell, where it is totally cut off from God's love and blessings, justice and righteousness. And once the soul went to the place, it cannot change the place later. (Luke16:26) It will stay there forever.

This man asked how he could inherit eternal life, for he wanted to enter heaven, and spend eternity with God of grace and truth.

However, Jesus said it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for him, a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. No matter how hard it tries, a camel cannot go through the eye of a needle. So, it is impossible for him to enter the kingdom of God by his own strength, no matter how hard he tries.

2. What is impossible with men is possible with God

26-27

²⁶ Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁷ Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

¹ *Children's Ministry Resource Bible*, Nelson, 1993, p.1653

"What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Rom 8:3

³ For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

The law shows us what is right and what is wrong. There isn't any problem if people follow the law, do right and never do anything wrong. However, if people don't follow it, it is no use.

Apostle Paul said, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do--this I keep on doing." (Rom 7:19)

The law cannot make people right. But it is possible with God. God did it for us. That is the cross and resurrection of Jesus. (Rom 4:25)

When Jesus said to the man, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor. Then come, and follow me," I think Jesus knew that he couldn't do it. Jesus is showing him here a man cannot save himself, but God can save him. Jesus is leading him to the faith in God.

Apostle Paul also used to be like this serious man. He tried to live God's righteousness and earn the eternal life by observing the laws and rituals, and doing good deeds. However, when he encountered Jesus, his way of life was totally changed.

Paul shared his testimony:

Phil 3:5-9

⁵ If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ⁷ But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness

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of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

This great change happened in Paul's life was God's salvation, and the power of the gospel. "What is impossible with men is possible with God." And that is not only true for Paul, but it is also true for everyone who believes in Jesus. That is the good news!

"The motive for keeping the law was gratitude for what God had done for them in bringing them out of Egypt (Exodus 20:2). In keeping the law they would be imitating God (Levi 19:2)." "The law was given as part of God's blessing to his people, in the context of the covenant (Exodus 20). The law was intended for their good, to protect them from harm and to bring them prosperity and life (Deut 6:24). It was not a means of salvation, but a response to salvation."²

Trying to meet the condition for salvation, by giving this or sacrificing that. Trying to earn qualification to enter heaven by our own effort and hard work. They are wrong ideas. Those effort will never succeed, for they are impossible. But God has done this impossible thing for us by the cross of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. As we believe in the good news, and trust in Jesus, we follow him, and live in the personal relationship with him. That is how we live the eternal life.

28-30

²⁸ Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" ²⁹ "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

Giving or sacrifice cannot be the means of receiving. "We have left home and followed Jesus, so now it is our turn to receive good things and comfortable living". That is a false relief. "I gave up many things because I'm Christian, so I should be able to enter heaven." "I made a sacrifice, so God should bless me materially." They are the wrong attitude.

² Nicky Gumble, *Challenging Lifestyle*, Kingsway Publications, 1996, p.46

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1 Cor 13:3

³ If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.

If our giving and making sacrifices come from our love and trust in God and love and care for people, it is wonderful. That is, what Jesus talked about here.

In the midst of persecution and making sacrifice, we receive reward of glory. It is the same in the time of the Old Testament, in the time of the early church and in our time.

How are we blessed in Christ? Have you thought about that? Let's look at what the Bible says.

Eph 1:3

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

It is said "God has blessed us". So we have been in this blessing already. Now as we live on the earth, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. It's not the special reward only for those who has left home or family. But it is freely offered to all who repent and receive the gospel. That is the good news. And the amazing thing is that we will receive still more.

Eph 1:11

¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him. (NKJ)

God's blessing will not be limited on our time on the earth. After we finish our time on the earth, we will be received into the kingdom of God as His heirs.

How can we know this for sure?

In Eph 1:13, it is said that "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."

As we have been given the Holy Spirit, we call God Father. (Rom 8:15)

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This is not just how we call God, but it shows the reality of our relationship with God. In Christ, by the Holy Spirit, truly we are children of God. (Rom 8:16, I John 3:1) Therefore, the Bible urges us like this.

Col 3:1

³ Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

We were crucified with Jesus, buried with him, and we were also raised to life with him, given a new life so we would live eternal life being with God forever. (Rom 6:4-8) What is impossible with men is possible with God.

31-34

³¹ Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³² He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. ³³ On the third day he will rise again." ³⁴ The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

The disciples left their home and followed Jesus. But they still didn't truly understand about Jesus, the death on the cross and resurrection. Not only Jews, but also disciples could not get that the glorious Son of Man is the suffering servant.

3. What do you want me to do for you?

35-43

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see,"

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he replied. ⁴² Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."
⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Jesus asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" What is impossible with men is possible with God. God can do what he promised. If we believe so, what shall we do? What shall we ask for?

1) Active faith in him

When we don't receive the answer to our prayer as we expected, we are easily disappointed, and stop praying. We may think, "this prayer won't be answered." "Prayer actually doesn't work." "Perhaps it may be a sign for me to deal with it by other way, instead of prayer."

But if we know what is impossible with men is possible with God and God is concerned for his people, we will keep asking him.

This blind man heard Jesus is passing by. He shouted and asked "Jesus, have mercy on me!" The people around him tried to make him quiet. But he shouted even louder, asking Jesus to have pity on him.

In the situation where the prayer seems not to be answered, we should not lose heart but keep on praying to God. That attitude shows our hope in God is genuine, sincere, and true. That prayer shows we have no other to put our hope on, other than God.

We can ask God for active faith in him and not lose hope in him.

2) Open our eyes

If we believe what is impossible with men is possible with God, we will ask him to open our spiritual eyes.

Although Peter and other disciples left home and followed Jesus, they didn't really understand the main things about Jesus. Until their eyes were opened by Resurrected Jesus, they couldn't understand about the cross and resurrection of Jesus, which reveals His glory. But, this blind man asked Jesus to give sight. He received a sight, and followed Jesus, praising God.

Eph 1:18-19

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¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

We don't really understand God's goodness and his great power for us as much as we thought we know. In other words, the Lord is far greater and more wonderful than we know. His power for his people, us is far stronger and mightier than we think.

We believe what is impossible with men is possible with God. As we know how great he is, we ask him to open our eyes and to draw us closer to him so that we can see his glory close at hand.

3) Obey him

As we know what is impossible with men is possible with God, we will obey him.

Obedience is not about our hard work or effort. But it is our natural response to the Lord when we see his greatness.

Jesus gave sight to a blind man. After that, even though he was not called to follow, he followed Jesus praising God.

In Luke Cp 8, we see an incident at Gerasa. There was a man who had evil spirits and lived in the graveyard. Jesus set him free from evil spirits. He begged to go with Jesus. As he experienced the greatness of Jesus, he wanted to follow him without being told. The interesting part is what happened after that. Jesus didn't allow him to go with him, but he said "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." Then, guess what? He obeyed Jesus. No question, no complain, no negotiation. He just obeyed. Obedience is our natural response to the Lord when we see his greatness.

We can ask God like David prayed. "Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit." (Ps 51:13)

4) Rest in his presence

As we believe what is impossible with men is possible with God, we will rest in his presence.

Do you remember the beginning of today's passage? One man came to Jesus. He asked "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" He wanted to enter into the kingdom of God and be with God eternity. But he heard Jesus say it would be harder than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, which is impossible. He understood that there was no way to make it by himself.

"Who then can be saved?" "No one can be saved!" Jesus said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

God loves us, you and me. It is not because we can do great works. When we were still weak, while we were still sinners, although we were enemies of him, he still loved us. (Rom 5:6-11) The Lord sacrificed his own life and completed the reconciliation. He is inviting us to come back to him. He is hoping us to be with him in peace. It is impossible with men but it is possible with God. If we truly believe it, we will rest in his presence like a little child has perfect peace embraced in parent's arms.

"A father is delighted when his little one, leaving off her toys and friends, runs to him and climbs into his arms. As he holds his little one close to him, he cares little whether the child is looking around, her attention flitting from one thing to another, or just settling down to sleep. Essentially the child is choosing to be with her father, confident of the love, the care, the security that is hers in those arms. Our prayer is much like that. We settle down in our Father's arms, in his loving hands. Our mind, our thoughts, our imagination may flit about here and there; we might even fall asleep; but essentially we are choosing for this time to remain intimately with our Father, giving ourselves to him, receiving his love and care, letting him enjoy us as he will. It is very simple prayer. It is very childlike prayer. It is prayer that opens us out of all the delights of the kingdom."³

³ M. Basil Pennington, *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form*, Doubleday, 1980, pp.68-69, introduced by Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, Multnomah Books, 1990, pp.155-156