



THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT

Preaching and Teaching Resources

ADRIAN ROGERS





Three Strikes and Your Out

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Three Strikes and Your Out

SERMON REFERENCE: Mark 10:17-27

LWF SERMON NUMBER: #2151

There's a real problem we may have today of trying to live outwardly good lives without ever finding a new life in Christ. Mark 10 tells the sad story of the rich young ruler who, when given the opportunity to follow Jesus, turned away. This story offers four insights to help avoid striking out at the opportunity to follow Christ.

First, proud men at their best are sinners at their worst.

This man in Mark 10 was quite proud of his achievements; he was eager, full of strength and the vigor of youth. Outwardly, he was morally clean; he knew the commandments and had kept them in his youth. But Jesus taught him something he didn't expect: the young ruler, in himself, was not good, and also Jesus Himself is God.

Second, God's perfect law condemns man's sinful pride.

God is a holy God with holy laws; the purpose of the law is to show us our need for Christ. God's grace means nothing to us until we first see ourselves as sinners in the sight of a holy God. Adrian Rogers says, "When a man has been wounded by God's law, then he's ready for the healing balm of salvation."

When Jesus asks the rich young ruler to sell everything he has, give it to the poor, and follow Him, the reality of the man's depravity was exposed. He was unwilling to do this because he loved his money more than he loved God and his neighbor. Jesus showed him the futility of trying to behave himself into Heaven; all he had was a superficial knowledge of his own goodness.

Third, Jesus teaches no man can serve two masters, but he must serve one.

In order to follow Jesus, we must turn from our idols to serve the living God. This turning is called repentance, which means to change your mind and change your life.

Finally, Jesus teaches him that whatever master a man chooses will master that man.

Adrian Rogers says, "Faith is not merely nodding a head to a series of theological facts about Jesus; it is enthroning Jesus."

LIFE APPLICATION

Every man has three opportunities to go to Heaven:

1. Pass away before the age of accountability (infants)
2. Keep the commandments perfectly -- never sin (impossible)
3. Come and follow Jesus.

If you fail to do this, that's three strikes, and you're out.



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1) INTRODUCTION

- a) There is a real problem in that people attend church, they listen to sermons, but they are never radically, dramatically and eternally changed.
 - i) They have religion, but they have never met God.
 - ii) The church may be full, but the people are often empty.
 - iii) They go through the motions, they try to live a good life outwardly, but they have never truly found a new life.
 - (1) They've never been converted.
- b) Mark 10:17-27
 - i) In the Gospel of Matthew, we learn that this man that came running to the Lord was a rich, young ruler.
 - ii) Today's message will deal with four specific things that come directly out of this passage in the Gospel of Mark.

2) PROUD MEN AT THEIR BEST ARE SINNERS AT THEIR WORST (Mark 10:17)

- a) The rich, young ruler was proud of his achievements.
- b) Outwardly, he had much to be proud of and much that we would admire.
 - i) He was eager.
 - (1) He came running.
 - (a) Mark 10:17
 - ii) He was full of strength and the vigor of youth.
 - iii) He was enthusiastic.
 - iv) He was humble.
 - (1) He knelt before Jesus.
 - (a) Mark 10:17
 - (2) Jesus was a peasant prophet from Galilee, and this man was a rich, young ruler.
 - (a) He had position, possession, power and prestige, and he had it at a young age.
 - (b) Yet, he publicly knelt before Jesus.
 - (i) Many today will go to Hell because of their pride.
 - 1. They don't want anyone to know that they have needs in their lives, so they don't go forward to give their hearts to Jesus when an invitation is given.
 - v) He was discerning.
 - (1) He knew that there was something different about Jesus.
 - (a) Mark 10:17
 - (2) He knew worth and goodness when he saw it.
 - (a) There are people today who cannot discern goodness, even in the Lord Jesus.
 - (b) There are cynics who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.



- vi) He had his mind on spiritual things.
 - (1) His question was, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
 - (2) Mark 10:17
 - (3) What are you really interested in?
 - (a) Most people are only interested in tomorrow and the humdrum round of life.
- vii) He was morally clean.
 - (1) Mark 10:19-20
 - (2) Outwardly, he did not steal.
 - (3) He did not commit adultery.
 - (4) He did not lie.
 - (5) He did not take God's name in vain, and he kept the Sabbath.
 - (6) He would have made a wonderful neighbor.
 - (7) He was someone you could trust.
 - (8) He was a man whom you would not have been afraid for your children to be around.
- viii) He was successful.
 - (1) He had success at an early age.
 - (a) Matthew 19:20-22
 - (2) He would have been made treasurer in the average church today.
- c) Mark 10:18
 - i) Jesus was teaching this young man that he himself (the young man) was not good.
 - ii) Jesus was also teaching him that Jesus Himself is God.
 - (1) Jesus is God.
 - (2) If He is not God, then He is not good.
 - (a) In this verse in Mark, Jesus said that there is none good but God.
 - (3) Don't flatter Jesus or merely tip the hat to Jesus.
 - (a) You must bow the knee to Jesus.
- d) Romans 3:10-12
 - i) No one has ever been saved until he has seen that he is a lost sinner in the sight of a righteous and holy God.
- e) Exodus 34:7
 - i) God is a God of mercy.
 - (1) God forgives.
 - ii) God is love, and He is justice.
 - (1) If you take part of the truth and try to make that part of the truth all of the truth, then that part of the truth becomes an untruth.
 - iii) God does forgive, but He will by no means clear the guilty.
 - (1) If God were to clear the guilty, then He would become guilty.
 - (2) When a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned.
- f) Jesus taught this young man that proud men at their best are really sinners at their worst.
 - i) Many people ask why bad things happen to good people.
 - (1) There are no good people.
 - (a) Mark 10:18



- ii) The worst form of badness is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.
 - (1) The Lord Jesus taught that prostitutes and crooked tax collectors were going to Heaven before the Pharisees because they had their self-righteousness as a substitute for God's mercy.
 - iii) No matter how nicely we may live, none of us live as well as this rich, young ruler; and yet, Jesus told him that there is none good but God.
 - (1) Mark 10:18
- 3) GOD'S PERFECT LAW CONDEMNS MAN'S SINFUL PRIDE (Mark 10:19-21)
- a) Mark 10:19-21
 - i) God is a holy God, and He will have holy laws.
 - ii) Jesus is not teaching salvation by commandment-keeping.
 - (1) He is actually teaching the opposite.
 - (2) Jesus is teaching this young man that he is not keeping the commandments like he may think he is.
 - b) Commandment-keeping has never saved anyone.
 - i) Galatians 2:16
 - ii) The law, the Ten Commandments, cannot save anyone.
 - iii) The purpose of the law is to let us know that we're sinners.
 - (1) Romans 3:20
 - iv) Jesus used the law to teach the rich, young ruler that he was a sinner.
 - c) It is by the law that we have the knowledge of sin.
 - i) God gives us the holy law so that we can see that we're sinners in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.
 - d) Sin is breaking God's law.
 - i) 1 John 3:4
 - e) Jesus talked to this young man about keeping the commandments because God's grace will mean nothing to a person until he sees himself as a sinner.
 - i) Romans 3:20
 - ii) Little children are ready to be saved when they see that they are sinners in the sight of a righteous and holy God.
 - (1) Not just naughty or disobedient to mom or dad, but a sinner in the sight of a righteous and holy God.
 - f) Luke 5:32
 - g) The law doesn't save us, but it gets us ready to be saved.
 - h) There are two reasons why many people don't have any concept of salvation:
 - i) They've never seen the absolute holiness of God.
 - (1) Mark 10:18
 - ii) They have never seen themselves as a sinner in the sight of a righteous and holy God.
 - (1) When a person has been wounded by God's law, he is then ready for the healing balm of salvation.



- i) The rich, young ruler had a superficial knowledge of the law.
 - i) He said that he had kept the law from his youth.
 - ii) Romans 7:14
 - (1) Everything we do in the material, or outwardly, may look right; but the law is spiritual.
 - (a) It deals with the heart.
 - (b) Matthew 5:27-28
 - (c) Matthew 5:21-22
 - j) Mark 10:21
 - i) One of the commandments is, "Thou shalt not covet."
 - (1) Exodus 20:17
 - ii) The rich, young ruler was covetous.
 - iii) He had an idol in his life.
 - (1) His god was gold.
 - iv) The rich, young ruler said that he had kept the whole law, but in reality, he had broken the whole law.
 - (1) Matthew 22:35-39
 - (a) This sums up the whole Ten Commandments:
 - (i) Love God and love your neighbor.
 - v) The rich, young ruler wasn't willing to sell everything and give it to the poor and follow Jesus.
 - (1) He loved his money more than he loved God.
 - (2) He loved his money more than he loved his neighbor.
 - (a) The spirit of this young man had broken all Ten Commandments by failing to do this one thing.
 - k) The Lord Jesus was not teaching that we can buy our way into Heaven by selling everything we have and giving it to the poor.
 - i) He was giving this man a revelation of his own heart.
 - ii) Jesus was showing this man that he was guilty of the sin of covetousness.
 - iii) James 2:10
 - iv) The Lord Jesus was showing him the futility of trying to behave himself into Heaven.
 - (1) The rich, young ruler had a superficial knowledge of his own goodness.
 - v) Jesus was teaching the impossibility of salvation by commandment-keeping.
- 4) NO MAN CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS, BUT HE MUST SERVE ONE (Mark 10:21-22)
- a) Mark 10:21
 - i) This young man had an idol in his heart.
 - (1) This idol was his wealth.
 - b) Mark 10:23-24
 - i) Jesus is not saying that a rich man can't be saved.
 - (1) Mark 10:27
 - ii) "That trust in riches."
 - (1) Whatever a person trusts in is his god.



- c) Anything we love more, serve more, trust more, or fear more than Almighty God is an idol.
- d) The rich, young ruler had a false god.
 - i) Matthew 6:24
 - ii) This man needed to repent in order to have eternal life.
 - (1) He needed to repent of idolatry.
 - iii) 1 Thessalonians 1:9
- e) You cannot go to Heaven by keeping the commandments, and you cannot go to Heaven by having an idol in your life.
 - i) You must turn from that idol to God.
 - ii) This turning is called repentance.
 - (1) This is where many people miss salvation.
 - (2) They think that they can hold on to their gods and just add Jesus as one more god.
- f) There are many Scriptures that deal with repentance:
 - i) Mark 1:15
 - ii) Mark 6:12
 - iii) Acts 2:38
 - iv) Acts 3:19
 - v) Luke 24:46-47
 - vi) Acts 17:30
 - vii) Acts 20:21
- g) Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life.
 - i) If you have an idol in your life, to repent means that you forsake that idol and turn from that idol and now follow Jesus Christ.
 - ii) Have you repented?
 - (1) Have you turned from the idols in your life and made Jesus Christ Lord?
 - (2) Luke 13:3
 - (a) No repentance, no redemption.
- h) No one can serve two masters.
 - i) Matthew 6:24
 - ii) You cannot hold your god of greed with one hand and your God of grace with the other hand.
 - iii) You have to turn from idols to serve the living God.
- i) There are many people have joined churches who have never really repented of their sins.
 - i) There has never been a change of mind.
 - ii) They simply wanted to acquire eternal life, just like the rich, young ruler.
 - iii) The Bible never says to accept Jesus as your Savior.
 - (1) It says to receive Christ as your Lord.
 - iv) Mark 10:24
 - (1) If you are not trusting Jesus, then you're not going to make it to Heaven.
- j) No one can serve two masters, but he must serve one.
 - i) Jesus is calling us to follow Him.
 - (1) Mark 10:21



- 5) WHATEVER MASTER A MAN CHOOSES WILL MASTER THAT MAN (Mark 10:21)
- a) Mark 10:21
 - i) When Jesus told him to sell what he had and give it to the poor, that meant to forsake his old master.
 - b) Repentance and faith are related.
 - i) When we turn from sin, we turn to Jesus.
 - ii) The rich, young ruler's sin was greed.
 - (1) He had to turn from it and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - (2) He needed a new master.
 - (a) Mark 10:21
 - c) Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?
 - i) Romans 10:9
 - ii) Faith is not merely agreeing to theological facts about Jesus; it is enthroning Jesus.
 - iii) Have you come to the place where you realize that there is none good but God?
 - (1) Mark 10:18
 - iv) You cannot have a false god in your life.
 - (1) Repent of your sin.
 - (2) Mark 10:21
 - d) Mark 10:22
 - i) Jesus gave the young man a choice.
 - ii) The Lord Jesus was not talking about losing everything, but about finding everything.
 - (1) He was talking about having treasure in Heaven.
 - e) The rich, young ruler chose to go back to his idol.
 - i) And now he is lost for all eternity, and he doesn't have his treasure.
 - (1) He has his false god that will torment him for all eternity.
 - ii) Jesus let him go.
 - (1) And He will let you go, also.
 - f) Whatever a person chooses will master that person.
 - i) Give your heart to Jesus, and Jesus Christ will master you.
- 6) CONCLUSION
- a) There is a decision before you.
 - b) Every person has three opportunities to go to Heaven:
 - i) He or she can die before the age of accountability.
 - (1) Little babies who die go straight to Heaven.
 - ii) Keep all the commandments absolutely perfectly.
 - (1) Never sin anytime or anywhere in thought or in deed.
 - (2) This is only theoretical because no one has ever done this, and no one ever will.
 - iii) Follow Jesus Christ who died upon the cross for you.
 - c) The rich, young ruler had reached the age of accountability, he could not keep the commandments, and he failed to give his heart to Jesus Christ.



- d) If you will receive Jesus Christ as your Lord, He will save you and keep you saved.
- e) Acts 16:31
- f) Do you know Jesus personally? If not, you can pray to Him today by asking Him to come into your life.
- g) Call upon Jesus today. Repent (turn) from your sins, and turn to Jesus. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and acknowledge Him as Lord of your life.
 - i) Romans 3:23
 - ii) Romans 10:9-10
 - iii) Romans 10:13
 - iv) John 3:16



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Find God's Word, Mark chapter 10. And in a few moments we're going to begin reading in verse 17. There is a problem, a real problem, and that is that people attend church, they listen to sermons, they join churches, but they are never radically, dramatically, eternally changed. They have religion, but they've never met God. Many churches today are filled with baptized pagans. They have been vaccinated. Are you listening? Vaccinated with a mild form of Christianity and they've never caught the real disease. And so the church may be full, but the people are often empty. They come, they go through the motions, they try to live outwardly a good life, but they have never really, truly found a new life. They've never been converted.

Now with that in mind, I want you to look at the passage of Scripture here in Mark chapter 10, and I begin in verse 17 on through verse 27, "And when He was gone forth into the way," Now the "He" refers to the Jesus Christ Himself, "there came one running, and kneeled to Him." And by the way, Matthew tells us that this was a rich, young ruler. "There came one running and kneel to Him, and asked Him, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said unto him, 'Why callest thou Me good? There's none good but one, that is God. Thou knowest the commandments, 'Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and mother.'" And he answered and said unto Him, 'Master, all these have I observed from my youth.' 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.' And he," that is, the rich young ruler, "was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, 'How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, 'Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' And Jesus looking upon them saith, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God, for with God, all things are possible.'"

Now there're four things that I want to lay on your heart under, we're talking about three strikes and you're out, and that will make sense when I get to the end of the message. But there're four things that I want to lay on your heart that come directly out of this passage of Scriptures.

Number one, proud men at their best are sinners at their worst. Now put that down in your heart. Proud men at their best are sinners at their worst. Now you may not see it on the surface, but this



man was quite proud of his achievements and outwardly he had much to be proud of. As a matter of fact, outwardly he had very much that we would admire.

First of all, I like his eagerness. The Bible says he came running. He's full of the strength and the vigor of youth. And I like enthusiasm. I know there're some folks who come to church on Sunday morning, I can see a sign hanging around your neck right now that says, "Please do not disturb." You are not enthusiastic about the things of God. I love people like this man who had this vibrant enthusiasm.

And not only was he enthusiastic, he was humble. I mean, he comes and he kneels before Jesus. Now Jesus was a peasant prophet from Galilee. This man was a rich, young ruler. He had position and he had possession and he had power and he had prestige, and he had it at a young age. And yet there he is, out there in the broad open way, kneeling before the Lord Jesus Christ. And again, I like that. There are a lot of people, who are going to go to Hell because of their abominable pride. They don't want anybody to know that they have any needs in their life. And so when the invitation is given, they'll look around to see if any of those old sinners are going to go forward and give their heart to Jesus Christ.

Another thing I like about this man is this, that he was discerning. He knew there was something about Jesus that was different. And so he said to Jesus in Mark 10:17, "Good Master, Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He knew worth and he knew goodness when he saw it. Now we have a lot of people who cannot even discern goodness, even in the Lord Jesus Christ. They're cynics who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Something else I like about this man was that he had his mind on spiritual things. He didn't say, "What must I do to make a killing in the stock market? What must I do to have pleasure and ease?" He asked this question, again in Mark 10:17, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" What are you interested in? I mean, really, what are you interested in? Most of us are not interested in going to Heaven or trying to miss Hell. We're just interested in tomorrow and the hum-drum round of life. Here was young man who asked a very vital question: "I want to know about eternal life."

And I'll tell you something else that's very admirable about him. Outwardly he was morally clean. Jesus said, "Do you know the commandments?" He said, "Lord, I've kept them from my youth up." And outwardly he did not steal, he did not commit adultery, he did not lie. He wasn't taking God's name in vain. He kept the Sabbath. All of these things, he honored his father and his mother. He would have made a wonderful neighbor. This was a kind of a man you could trust when you go away on vacation to look over your things. He was a man that you would not be afraid for your children to be around. He's morally clean. He'd have made a great associate in business. If you were looking for a business partner, you'd say, "Boy, this is the young man. He's got it all. Hey, he knows how to manage things. And he has morals, he's trustworthy.

I'll tell you something else about him. We're just talking about his good points. When you think about it, there's so much to admire. He was successful. I mean, he had success, folks, and he had it at an early age. And again, Matthew 19 verse 20, Matthew said that he was, "A rich young ruler." Do you know, if he had of joined the average church in America they would have welcomed him in and you



know what they would have done? They would have made him church treasurer. They would have made him church treasurer. They'd say, "Look at this guy. He belongs in Who's Who. He belongs on the front of Forbes magazine. And he's just a wonderful young man."

But Jesus did not praise him or pet him or flatter him. Jesus seems to treat him kind of roughly. Look in Mark 10 verse 18 and see what the Lord says to this man in verse 18. He says, "Jesus said unto him, 'Why callest thou Me good? There's none good but one and that is God.'" Now Jesus is teaching him in this one sentence two things. Number one, Jesus is teaching this young man that he himself is not good. Jesus is teaching this young man that he himself, the young man, is not good. This young man thought he was quite a good boy. And Jesus said, "Look, there's none good but God."

The second thing Jesus was teaching this young man is that Jesus Himself is God. Now those of you who just want to tip the hat to Jesus and not bow the knee to Jesus, let me tell you this about Jesus. Jesus is God! And if Jesus is not God, Jesus is not good. How do I know? Jesus Christ Himself said so. Jesus said in Mark 10 verse 18, "There is none good but one, and that's God." Put it down big, plain, and straight. Don't just flatter Jesus. Don't just tip the hat to Jesus and say, "Jesus is a nice fellow." You don't tip the hat, you bow the knee. Because Jesus said, "There is none good but one, that is God." And what Jesus was saying in this one sentence, "I am God and you're a sinner. I am God. And you are a sinner. There is none good but one, and that is God."

And by the way, you might want to put in your margin Romans 3 verses 10 through 12, "As it is written, There's none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Now I want everybody to say silently, but in your heart, "Not even me. Not even me. I am a sinner." Nobody, nobody, nobody has ever been saved until he has seen that he is a poor, lost sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. Now this man is talking about eternal life and Jesus shocks him and says, "There's none good but one, that is God."

You know, there're people who join churches today like they're doing God a wild favor. They come down the aisle and join churches. They are religious, but they have never seen the holiness of God and their own sinfulness and the wrath of God against sin. Here's another verse, Exodus 34 verse 7. It speaks of the character of God. And it says, "He's the God visiting the iniquity of the fathers among the children, upon the children's children until the third and fourth generation." Well, let me back up and give that whole verse. "Keeping mercy for thousands," thank God for that, "forgiving iniquity and transgression in sin," thank God for that. But now listen to this, "And will by no means clear the guilty." God is a God of mercy. God forgives. But the Bible also says that He will, "By no means clear the guilty." Do you know what that means? It means that God is love and God is justice. Now we hear much today about the love of God. God is love. God is love. God is love. And that is true. He is a God of mercy. But that's not all of the truth. And if you take part of the truth and try to make that part of truth all of the truth, then that part of the truth becomes an untruth. God is a God of mercy. God does forgive iniquity. But the Bible says that God will, "By no means clear the guilty." Don't think that somehow when you stand before God, God is going to look at your sin and God's just going to say,



“Oh, that’s alright. That’s alright.” Listen friend, if God were to clear the guilty, God would become guilty. I hope that sinks in. If God were to clear the guilty, God would become guilty. God would topple from His throne of holiness. If God were to countenance sin, if God were to overlook sin, if God were to bypass sin, then God becomes a sinner. Do you know what they say in a court of law? “When a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned.” “When a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned.” God Himself would become a sinner if God let sin go by. And so what is Jesus teaching this young man? Jesus is teaching this young man that proud men at their best are really sinners at their worst.

You know, there’re people writing books today with titles like this, *Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?* Come up close I want to tell you something. There are no good people. There are no good people. You say, “Who do you think you are?” Just a preacher preaching what Jesus said, who said, “There’s none good but one, and that’s God.” That’s what the Lord said! You see, no man, no woman, no boy, no girl has been truly converted until he sees himself a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. “There’s none good but one and that is God.”

Now why did I say that good men at their best are sinners at their worst? “Why didn’t you say that bad men are sinners at their worst?” Because the worst sin, the worst sin, the sin of all sins, the worst form of badness, is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. The worst form of badness is human goodness. Jesus said that prostitutes and crooked tax collectors were going to Heaven before the Pharisees because they had their self-righteousness as a substitute for God’s mercy. And so I want to say to any person in this building today, no matter how nicely you may live, none of you live as well as this rich young ruler. And yet Jesus looked him straight in the face and said in Mark 10 verse 18, “There is none good but one, and that is God.” The worst form of badness is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. Have you got that? That’s the first thing I want you to see. I want you to see this, that proud men at their best are sinners at their worst.

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see. God’s perfect law condemns man’s sinful pride. Look if you will now in verse 19 of this same chapter again. Mark chapter 10 and verse 19 through 21, “Thou knowest the commandments,” Jesus now is beginning to talk about commandment-keeping to this man to help him to see that he’s a sinner. “Thou knowest the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do no kill, Do no steal, Do no bear false witness, Defraud not, Honor thy father and thy mother.’ And he answered and said unto Him, ‘Master, all these have I observed from my youth.’ 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 thy cross, and follow Me.’” Now if God is a holy God, it follows as night follows day that that holy God will have holy laws. Now listen to me very carefully, because if you’re not listening carefully, you’re going to miss the whole thing. Jesus is not, underscore that, is not teaching salvation by commandment-keeping. He is teaching just the opposite, but you have to pay attention to see what Jesus is teaching. You see, the Bible teaches that you’re not saved by keeping the commandments.



But yet this young man said, "How do I have eternally life?" And Jesus begins to refer him to the commandments.

Now what Jesus is teaching this young man is, he is not keeping the commandments like he may think that he's keeping the commandments. Now commandment-keeping has never saved anybody. Put in your margin Galatians 2 verse 16, "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by the faith of Jesus Christ." The law, the Ten Commandments, cannot save anybody. While the Ten Commandments do not save you, they are an essential element in evangelism and salvation. What is the purpose of the law? Why does God give us the law? To let us know that we're sinners! Romans 3 verse 20, listen to it, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin." God gave us the law to let us know that we're sinners. And Jesus is using the law right here to teach this young man that he's a sinner. And so Jesus begins to talk to him about the commandments. Now you may think that you're pretty good until you come up hard against God's law.

When Joyce and I were on our honeymoon, we were driving down US 1 near Daytona Beach. And I had just come through a small little town there and was driving along about 45 miles an hour and a policeman pulled me over. He said, "Young man, you're breaking the speed limit." I said, "Sir, I'm not breaking the speed limit; I'm only doing about 45 miles an hour." He said, "The limit here is 35 miles an hour." I said, "Well, why don't you put up a sign that says the speed limit is 35 miles an hour?" He said, "We put one up." I said, "I didn't see it." "Well," he said, "it's back there about a mile. I suggest that you go turn around and go back and take a look at it, would you?" And so I did. And he let me go. But you see, it was by the law that I had the knowledge of sin. God has His commandments. And so many times we're just driving along thinking we're doing quite all right. But you see, God gives us the holy law so that we can see that we're sinners in the sight of a righteous and a holy God.

After all, what is sin? There're many definitions of sin. Let me give you one of the best in the Bible. First John 3 verse 4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." That's what sin is. Sin is just breaking God's law. Now, why did Jesus give this young man an illustration? Why did Jesus talk to this young man about keeping the commandments? I'll tell you why. God's mercy, God's grace will mean nothing to a man until first of all he sees himself a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. And God gives the law so that we might see that we're sinners. Remember this, "By the law is knowledge of sin," Romans 3 verse 20.

Now, and by the way, those of you who have little boys and girls who want to come forward and be baptized. You say, "Pastor Rogers, when is my child ready to be saved? When is my child ready to give his or her heart to Jesus Christ?" When they see that they are sinners in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. You know sometimes parents will make a big mistake. They'll get a little child and they'll say, "Do you believe in Jesus? Do you love Jesus?" "Yes, I do." "Are you willing to trust Jesus as your personal Savior?" "Yes." "Do you believe He died for your sins on the cross?" "Yes I do." "Well Pastor, my child is ready." Not necessarily. You can get a child to give assent to all those propositions without ever seeing that he or she is a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. You ask a little child if they love Jesus, they'll say, "Yes." You ask them if they love Bambi, they'll say, "Yes." No,



no. When a child sees that he or she is a sinner. Not just naughty, not just simply has disobeyed dad or mom, but a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. That "There's none good but one, and that is God." Then that little child's heart will cry out for a Savior. They don't have to have a Ph.D. in sin or theology in order to be saved, but they have to see themselves as a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God! And so must you! And so the law is given that we might see in the sight of God that we are sinners. Because nobody is saved until they see this. Jesus said in Luke chapter 5 and verse 32, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The law doesn't save us, but friend we know one thing, that the law gets us ready to be saved. So many don't have any concept of salvation because number one, they've never seen the absolute holiness of God. "There's none good but one, that is God." And they have never seen themselves therefore as a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. And when a man has been wounded by God's law, then he's ready for the healing balm of salvation.

Now this young man had a superficial knowledge of the law. And Jesus said, "You know the commandments?" He said, "Well, I've kept them from my youth up." But let me give you a verse that's interesting. Romans chapter 7 verse 14 the Bible says, "The law is spiritual." That is, everything that you do in the material, or the outward way may look all right, but the law is spiritual. It deals with the heart. For example, Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5 verses 27 and 28, "The law says, don't commit adultery. But I say, that when you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery with her already in your heart." Now there're some people say, "Well, I've never committed adultery," but God may have written down adultery in His records in Heaven. The law says, "Thou shalt not kill." But in Matthew 5 verses 21 and 22, Jesus said, "If you're angry with your brother without a cause you're guilty of breaking that commandment." See, the law is spiritual.

Now this young man had not seen that. So he said, "Yep, I've kept them all. I've had no other gods before me. I have not had any idols. I've not made any graven images. I have remembered the Sabbath day to keep it holy. I've not taken God's name in vain. I've honored my father and my mother. I've not killed. I've not committed adultery." Ta, da, da, da, da, da.

Now Jesus, like a skilled surgeon, watch this, He's about to take a scalpel, and lance a putrefying boil. Jesus said, "Okay. All right young man. There's one other thing; just one thing. Sell everything that you have. Give it to the poor! Come and follow Me! You'll have great riches." Mark 10 verse 21. One of the commandments says what? "Thou shalt not covet." Exodus 20:17. And this man was covetous. This man had an idol in his life. His god was gold. His creed was greed. Actually, you see, he said he kept the whole law. He had broken the whole law. Luke 12 verses 30 and 31, on an occasion a lawyer came to Jesus and he said, "Jesus, what is the first and great commandment?" And Jesus said, "Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. And the second is like unto it. Love your neighbor as yourself." And what Jesus did in that sentence, He just summed up the whole Ten Commandments. Love God and love your neighbor. That's what the Ten Commandments are all about. And now when Jesus said to this rich, young ruler, "Okay, you're a law keeper. Sell everything you have; give it to the poor. Come and follow Me!" he wasn't willing to do that. Number one; he loved his money more than he loved God. And number two; he loved his money more than he



loved his neighbor. Do you see it? I mean, in reality, the spirit of this young man had broken all Ten Commandments by failing to do this one thing!

Now what Jesus is teaching here is that, He's not teaching that you can go to Heaven, you can buy your way into Heaven by selling everything you have and giving it to the poor. What Jesus is doing is giving this man a revelation of his heart. Jesus is showing this man that he's guilty of the sin of covetousness. And really, James 2 verse 10, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all." What Jesus is showing this man is the futility, the futility of trying to behave himself into Heaven! All he had was a superficial knowledge of his own goodness.

And so Jesus is revealing that to this man, that no one is kept or saved by commandment-keeping. He's not teaching salvation by keeping the commandments. He's teaching the impossibility of salvation by keeping the commandments.

Now here's the third thing. Jesus is teaching this young man that no man can serve two masters, but he must serve one. No man can serve two masters, but he must serve one. Look in Mark 10 verse 21, "And 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,'" now watch this, "and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

Now, why did Jesus make this request to this young man? Why did Jesus say that to him, He hasn't said to me, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor." Most likely He's not said that to you. Why did He say that to this young man? This young man had an idol in his heart. An idol. I-D-O-L. A false god. You say, "Well, Adrian, how do you know that he had an idol in his heart?" I'm going to show you in a moment. And what was this idol? This idol was his wealth, his gold. You say, "How do you know that?" Well, look if you will in Mark 10 verse 23 and 24, "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto His disciples, 'How hardly,' how difficultly, 'shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!'"

Now He's not saying that a rich man can't be saved. Because He says later on that he can be saved. "With God all things are possible." But notice in verse 24, "And, and the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them," now watch this very carefully, slow down with me, "Children, how hard it is for them," now underscore these next four words, "that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." "That trust in riches." Whatever a man trusts is his god. Say "Amen." Whatever a man trusts is his god. Anything you love more, serve more, trust more, fear more than almighty God is an idol. Do you see that? This man had an idol. This man had a false god. "No man can serve two masters," but he must serve one. And what this man needed to do in order to have eternal life was to repent. Repent of what? Idolatry! First Thessalonians 1 verse 9 speaks of, "How ye turned to God from idols to serve the true and the living God."

Now this turning to God from idols, whatever the idol is in your heart and in your life, and it may not be money. But I'm telling you, one god is enough for everybody. Jesus said in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters." That's what Jesus said. But friend, he must serve one.

Now if you have some other god in your life, in order to be a Christian, in order to go to Heaven, you cannot go to Heaven by keeping the commandments, and you cannot go to Heaven by having



an idol in your life. You must turn from that idol to God. Now this turning is called repentance. And here's where many people miss salvation. They hear a preacher preach and they want to go to Heaven, so they just think that they can hold on to their gods and just add Jesus in as one more god. But you must repent.

And I'm going to give you a bunch of Scriptures that deal with repentance. I've copied them down because we don't have time to turn to them this morning. But you may want to list the references. Listen to them. Mark 1 verse 15, Jesus came "Saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.'" "Repent ye and believe the Gospel." Mark 6 verse 12, "And they went out and preached that men should repent." Acts 2 verse 38, "Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.'" Acts 3 verse 19, "Repent ye therefore and be converted." Luke 24 verses 46 and 47, "He saith unto them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name.'" Acts 17 verse 30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at: but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." Acts 20 verse 21, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

What is repentance? Repentance just simply means a change of mind. It comes from two Greek words. Meta noyia. It means a change of mind. I'm going this way. I'm serving this god. I have this idol in my life. I repent. I forsake that idol. I turn from my god of gold and I come and I follow Jesus Christ.

Now here I want to ask you a question. Have you repented? Have you repented? I'm not asking "Are you a member of a church?" I'm asking "Have you turned from those idols in your life and made Jesus Christ Lord?" On the authority of none less than Jesus Christ Himself, I want to say to you, Luke 13:3, "Except you repent, ye shall all likewise perish." No repentance, no redemption.

What is repentance? Repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life. Now I'm not teaching salvation by commandment-keeping. But I am teaching that, "No man can serve two masters." You cannot hold your god of greed with one hand and your God of grace with the other hand. You have to turn from idols to serve the living God. And the problem in so many churches: that people have joined churches and they have never really repented of their sin. And I dare say, many people today have never really repented of your sin. There has never been a change of mind. You have wanted to acquire eternal life just like this rich young ruler did. And some preacher said, "Well, if you'll just accept Jesus as your Savior, you'll be saved." The Bible never says "Accept Jesus as your Savior." Never! The Bible says, "Receive Christ as your Lord, as your Lord." He is your Savior, but He must be your Lord. "No man can serve two masters!" And Jesus said, "How hard it is for those that trust in riches!" Whatever you trust, if you're not trusting Jesus, you're not going to make it to Heaven.

Now this rich, young ruler would have been happy to accept the message that's preached in the average church today, the feel-good religion, and give him a little religiosity, baptize him, take him



into the church. Now Jesus is not teaching “works righteousness.” But He is teaching that, “No man can serve two masters,” but he must serve one. Jesus is saying, “You come and follow Me.”

Now here’s the fourth and the final thing I want you to see today. Whatever master a man chooses will master that man. Whatever master a man chooses will master that man. Again, look if you will in Mark 10 verses 21 and 22. Jesus says here, “One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, give to the poor,” that is, forsake your old master, “thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow Me.”

Now we talked about repentance in the last point. Now we’re talking about faith. Because you see, repentance and faith are Siamese twins. When you turn from sin you turn to Jesus. This man’s sin was greed; he had to turn from it, and he turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. This man needed a new master. Jesus says, “Come and follow Me.”

Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Answer that question. Now don’t answer it the way that you’re supposed to answer it. I mean supposed to answer it to look good. Because this is in your own heart. Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Romans 10:9, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead thou shalt be saved.” Faith is not merely nodding a head to a series of theological facts about Jesus. It is enthroning Jesus.

Now folks, your eternal destiny depends upon this. Don’t fight with me now mentally. Ask yourself, “Have I seen what Jesus tells this young man?” Mark 10:18, “There is none good but one, that is God.” You cannot have a false idol in your life. Repent of your sin. “Come and follow Me.” “Take up your cross and follow Me.” Is Jesus Christ the Lord of your life? Look if you will in Mark 10 verse 22. It’s one of the saddest verses in the Bible, “And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”

Jesus is giving this man a choice. And Jesus now had struck a vital nerve. I see this young man, watch him. He begins to breathe hard. I see him as he bites his lip. He thinks about all that he has and all that he’s been trusting in for so long. He sees Jesus Christ over here, and he sees eternal life, and there’s a choice. And the demons of Hell begin to whisper in his ear, “Don’t be a fool. Don’t be a fool. Don’t give up all of this. You’ll be a fool.” The Holy Spirit says, “Give your heart to Christ. You can’t be saved by keeping the commandments. And you can’t keep your wealth, either. Jesus is not talking about losing everything. He’s talking about finding everything. He’s talking about having treasure in Heaven. Give your heart to Christ.”

The perspiration breaks out on his brow. “Shall I go this way? Or shall I go this way?” Finally, he says to Jesus, “No, no, no!” And he turns back to his god! His idol! Demons shout with glee! Angels weep! Who knows what this young man might have been? He might have been another Timothy. He may have been another apostle Paul. He might have been in God’s Who’s Who, but now he’s in



“Who’s Not.” And he’s in Hell, and he doesn’t have his treasure! He has his false god that will torment him for all eternity. And Jesus let him go. And He’ll let you go also.

Whatever master a man chooses will master that man. You give your heart to Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will master you. You come and follow Him, and there’s the decision before you.

“Pastor, why’d you call the sermon: “Three Strikes and You’re Out?” I’ll tell you why. Every man has three opportunities to go to Heaven. Number one, he or she can die before the age of accountability. And if you die before the age of accountability as a little baby you go straight to Heaven. Did you know that? Heaven has a lot of little babies in Heaven. I’ve got a little baby boy in Heaven. He didn’t know how to talk before he stepped over into Heaven. But I’ve got a little baby named Philip; I’m going to meet him there, because he never came to the age of accountability. Can you understand what I am saying right now, can you? All right, then that’s strike one for you. You are at the age of accountability. All right, you are. So, so you missed that opportunity to go to Heaven.

Now here’s another way to go to Heaven. Are you ready? Keep the commandments absolutely perfectly. Never sin, anytime, anywhere, in thought or deed! Keep all the commandments. But that’s only theoretical. Because nobody’s ever done that and nobody ever will. That’s what Jesus is teaching this man. Theoretically, if you kept the commandments, you could go to Heaven. Theoretically you could. But actually, nobody ever has. Is there anybody here who would dare stand up and say, “I’ve never sinned one time in thought, word or deed?” Anybody? Nobody. Strike two, strike two.

There’s one more opportunity for you to go to Heaven and that is to come and follow Jesus Christ who died upon that cross for you. And if you fail to do that folks, I want to tell you, “Strike three and you’re out,” you’re out. This young man struck out. He was accountable. He could not keep the commandments and he failed to give his heart to Jesus Christ.

If I could sit in that seat this morning for you, get up out of that seat and give my heart to Jesus Christ on your behalf I would, but I cannot. I’ve preached as best as I know how. And I am telling you, friend, that if you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, He will save you and, bless God, He will keep you saved just like He’s kept me saved. The Bible says sweetly, plainly, simply, sublimely in Acts chapter 16 and verse 31, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be,” what’s that next word? “Saved.”

Father God, I pray that many today will come to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Why don’t you pray a prayer like this? “Dear God, don’t let me trust my own goodness. I refuse to trust my own goodness. Lord, I know that I’m a sinner. I know I cannot behave myself into Heaven. I know that I must turn from any idol in my life and give my heart to Jesus Christ to make Him Lord. And I choose You, Jesus, as my Master. I cannot serve two masters, but I will serve You, Lord Jesus, as my Lord and my Savior. Come into my heart, forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray it from your heart. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Were you sincere? Were you? Then I want you to tell Him this, “Lord Jesus, I will not be ashamed of You. I will confess You openly and publicly as my Lord. I will not



be ashamed of You. And Lord, I'll do it today." Tell Him that, "Lord, I'll do it today. In Your name I pray, Amen."



PO Box 38300 | Memphis TN 38183-0300 | (901)382-7900