

Expository Thoughts On Matthew - Matthew

19:23-30

by J.C. Ryle

Transcript

The first thing that we learn in these verses is the immense danger which riches bring on the souls of those who possess them. The Lord Jesus declares that "a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven." He goes even further. He uses a proverbial saying to strengthen his assertion: "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." Few of our Lord's sayings sound more startling than this; few run more counter to the opinions and prejudices of mankind; few are so little believed; yet this saying is true, and worthy of all acceptance. Riches, which all desire to obtain, riches, for which men labor and toil and become gray before their time, riches are the most perilous possession. They often inflict great injury on the soul; they lead men into many temptations; they engross men's thoughts and affections; they bind heavy burdens on the heart, and make the way to heaven even more difficult than it naturally is. Let us beware of the love of money. It is possible to use it well, and do good with it; but for one who makes a right use of money, there are thousands who make a wrong use of it, and do harm both to themselves and others. Let the worldly man, if he will, make an idol of money, and count him happiest who has most of it. But let the Christian, who professes to have treasure in heaven, set his face, like a flint, against the spirit of the world in this matter. Let him not worship gold. He is not the best man in God's eyes who has most money, but he who has most grace. Let us pray daily for rich men's souls. They are not to be envied, they are deeply to be pitied. They carry heavy weights in the Christian course; they are of all men the least likely so to run as to obtain. (1 Corinthians 9:24). Their prosperity in this world is often their destruction in the world to come. Well may the Litany of the Church of England contain the words, "In all times of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us." The second thing that we learn in this passage is the almighty power of God's grace in the soul. The disciples were amazed when they heard our Lord's language about rich men. It was language so entirely contrary to all their notions about the advantages of wealth that they cried out with surprise, "Who then can be saved?" They drew from our Lord a gracious answer: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." The Holy Ghost can incline even the richest of men to seek treasure in heaven. He can dispose even kings to cast their crowns at the feet of Jesus, and to count all things but loss for the sake of the kingdom of God. Proof upon proof of this is given to us in the Bible. Abraham was very rich, yet he was the father of the faithful; Moses might have been a prince or king in Egypt, but he forsook all his brilliant prospects for the sake of him who is invisible; Job was the wealthiest man in the East, yet he was a chosen servant of God; David, Jehoshaphat, Josiah, Hezekiah were all wealthy monarchs, but they loved God's favor more than their earthly greatness. They all show us that nothing is too hard

for the Lord, and that faith can grow even in the most unlikely soil. Let us hold this doctrine fast, and never let it go. No man's place or circumstances shut him out from the kingdom of God; let us never despair of anyone's salvation. No doubt rich people require special grace, and are exposed to special temptations. But the Lord God of Abraham, Moses, Job and David is not changed. He who saved them in spite of their riches can save others also. When he works, who shall let it. (Isaiah 43:13)? The last thing that we learn in these verses is the immense encouragement the Gospel offers to those who give up everything for Christ's sake. We are told that Peter asked our Lord what he and the other apostles, who had forsaken their little all for his sake, should receive in return. He obtained a most gracious reply. A full recompense shall be made to all who make sacrifices for Christ's sake: they shall receive a hundred fold and shall inherit eternal life. There is something very cheering in this promise. Few in the present day, excepting converts among the heathen, are ever required to forsake homes, relatives and lands on account of their religion; yet there are few true Christians who have not much to go through in one way or another if they are really faithful to their Lord. The offence of the cross is not yet ceased: laughter, ridicule, mockery and family persecution are often the portion of an English believer. The favor of the world is often forfeited, places and situations are often periled by a conscientious adherence to the demands of the Gospel of Christ. All who are exposed to trials of this kind may take comfort in the promise of these verses. Jesus foresaw their need, and intended these words to be their consolation. We may rest assured that no man shall ever be a real loser by following Christ. The believer may seem to suffer loss for a time when he first begins the life of a decided Christian; he may be much cast down by the afflictions that are brought upon him on account of his religion. Let him rest assured that he will never find himself a loser in the long run. Christ can raise up friends for us who shall more than compensate for those we lose; Christ can open hearts and homes to us far more warm and hospitable than those that are closed against us; above all, Christ can give us peace of conscience, inward joy, bright hopes and happy feelings, which shall far outweigh every pleasant earthly thing that we have cast away for his sake. He has pledged his royal word that it shall be so. None ever found that word fail: let us trust it and not be afraid.

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