

04-29-12

Series: God's Economy

God's Economy (11)

Pastor Eddie Idefonso

[Matthew 19:16-22](#)

(Continuation from 04-22-12)

The Doctrine of God's Economy How to Obtain Eternal Life ([Matthew 19:16-22](#))

At first one might wonder what kind of message Jesus was trying to give this man who came to Him. The truth is summarized in Jesus' statement on another occasion:

[Luke 14:33 \(NASB\)](#)

³³ "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

Some years ago a young man asked me, "Sir, you wouldn't know how I could have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, would you?" Taken somewhat by surprise by his openness and seeming readiness for salvation, I told him that he needed to receive Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. He said, "I'd like to do that," and we prayed together and rejoiced in his decision. So he was baptized and began attending services. But some months later I was extremely disappointed to discover that he had developed no interest at all in the things of the Lord and was living in such a way that it was apparent he had not been transformed. He soon disappeared from the church and has never returned.

Anyone who has done much personal witnessing has encountered persons who make a profession of faith in Christ but whose subsequent lives show no change in attitudes or behavior. And when they indicate no love for God and Christ, no interest in the Bible, in prayer, or in the fellowship of God's people, there is no good reason to believe they were ever saved.

Our Lord gave this young man a test. He had to make a choice between Christ and his possessions and sin, and he failed the test. No matter what he may have believed, because he was unwilling to forsake all, he could not be a disciple of Christ. Salvation is for those who are willing to forsake everything.

The incident recorded in [Matthew 19:16-22](#) gives insight into how some people who show great interest in the gospel never come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. This young man went away from Christ not because he heard the wrong message or because he did not believe but because he was unwilling to admit his sin, forsake all that he had, and obey Christ as Lord.

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The Request to Jesus

Matthew 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

From [verse 20 \(Mateo 19:20\)](#) we learn that the **one** who **came to Him** was a young man, and from [verse 22 \(Mateo 19:22\)](#) that he was wealthy.

Luke informs us that he was also a ruler ([Luke 18:18](#)), probably a ruler in the synagogue, an especially honored position for a young man.

Luke 18:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

He was a religious leader—devout, honest, wealthy, prominent, and influential. He had it all.

Matthew 19:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ And someone came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"

Behold (KJV, NKJV) And (NASB) suggests how unusual and unexpected it was that he would admit he lacked eternal life and come to Jesus to find it.

Several factors are clear as we analyze this unique encounter. First, He came genuinely seeking **eternal life**, motivated by his sense of need for a true spiritual hope. The term *eternal life* is used some 50 times in Scripture, and always refers primarily to quality rather than quantity. Although **eternal life** obviously carries the idea of being an everlasting reality it does not refer simply to unending existence. Even ancient pagans knew that mere unending existence would not necessarily be desirable. According to Greek mythology, Aurora, goddess of the dawn, fell in love with a young mortal named Tithonus. When Zeus offered to provide anything she wished for her human lover, she asked that he might never die. The wish was granted, but because she had not asked that Tithonus remain forever young, he continued to grow older and more decrepit. Instead of being blessed, he was cursed to perpetual degeneration.

If, as **William Hendriksen** insightfully observes, "'life' means active response to one's environment," then **eternal life** must mean active response to that which is eternal, namely God's heavenly realm. Just as physical life is the ability to live and move and respond in the physical world, **eternal life** is the ability to live and move and respond in the heavenly world.

Eternal life is first of all a quality of existence, the divinely-endowed ability to be alive to God and the things of God. The Jews saw it as that which fills the heart with hope of life after death. The unsaved person is spiritually alive only to sin. But when he receives Christ as Lord and Savior, he becomes alive to God and to righteousness

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(Romans 6:1-13). That is the essence of **eternal life**, the **life** of God's own Son dwelling within.

The young ruler could not have understood the full meaning of what he asked for, but he realized there was an important dimension to his present life, religious and prestigious as it was that was missing. Despite his high standing in men's eyes, he knew he did not have the God-given peace, rest, hope, assurance, and joy of which the psalmists and the prophets spoke. He may have sensed that he needed a closer relationship to God than he had. Simply by asking that question of Jesus he showed himself to be beyond the hypocritical religiosity of the scribes and Pharisees. He recognized a deep spiritual need that, for all his religious efforts, was unfulfilled. He knew he did not possess the life of God that satisfies here and now and gives hope for the life to come.