

AM I LOST?

It's a question that every sincere and serious Christian has asked themselves. Does Jesus' return terrify us? Are we ready to meet our Maker? You read about Paul's confidence in **2 Timothy 4:6-8**, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have **kept the faith**. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, **will award** to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have **loved** His appearing." Do you "hear" his voice? What does it sound like? Timid? Shaky? Doubtful? What does his face look like? Is he putting on a front? Or is he at peace . . . ready to depart? Let me first say that I, of course, cannot answer that question for you. We'll remember Paul's words to the saints in Corinth, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I **do not even judge myself**. For I am **not aware of anything** against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore **do not pronounce judgment before the time**, before the Lord comes, who will **bring to light** the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the **purposes of the heart**. Then each one will receive his commendation from God." **2 Corinthians 4:1-5.**

I'm pretty sure I've shared this before, but I still remember my dad saying, "The beautiful truth is that God knows your heart. The terrifying truth is that God knows your heart." We can all relate to that, can't we. My desire is to share with you my understanding of how to approach this question. It doesn't make it right - you need to do your own study and come to a conclusion. This is the result of how I understand God's word, in totality, based on my level of knowledge. I think there's one example that does a good job summing up what you may be struggling with. Seeing it played out may help you determine where you're at and what God expects.

Matthew 19:16-22 (Inserting wording from Mark & Luke in italics or parentheses)

And behold, as He was setting out on His journey, a man (ruler) came running up to Him and knelt before Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why do you ask Me about what is good? There is only one who is good. (Or, Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.) If you would enter life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You know the commandments. You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" After hearing this, Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing. If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." When the young man heard this and was disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful (became very sad), for he had great possessions (was extremely rich).

- **No one is good.** Jesus is clearly trying to make a point before continuing the discussion. Think about this. Jesus is pro-obedience. He doesn't want to distract from that, but he needed this man to hear something. *You're not good. No one is good. Only God is good. Do you hear that?*
- **What good deed is required?** Okay, so you get the point. No one is good except God alone, but let's get back to the question and answer, right? Before we do that, can I ask one question? What's was the motive behind the question? Why ask? Have you every had the same thought? I want to be clear: I can't read his mind, but it makes you wonder. Can I suggest what I think are a couple of reasonable options?
 - Could he have thought there a was major act or some unique truth he could hear or perform that would merit entrance into the kingdom?
 - Could he have felt he was lacking something and was looking for validation. Have you ever talked to someone, knowing there was a short coming on your side, but hoping your loved one would confirm you in your mess? You're probably not liking where this is going, because you're thinking, "This is supposed to encourage me and this is going down hill quickly. He WAS lacking something! And I feel like I'm lacking something and I'm NOT getting in, am I?" If so, hold on for a second. Let's continue to look as this man before we make any final application.
 - Let me be clear: I do believe that he was sincere in the sense that he was honestly asking, because the Holy Spirit found it necessary for you to know that Jesus loved him. This stands out in the text and I think you're supposed to take something from it. However, there is a warning: Having the love of Jesus doesn't mean *you're* completely ready to follow Him as we read.
- **For Your Consideration:** I don't want to make something out of nothing, but I don't want to miss anything either. There seems to be something missing from Jesus' answer. When we consider the 10 commandments (what Jesus references), we typically see them in two categories. The first 4 point towards our direct love of God (serve Him only, do not make any idols, do not use His name in vain, and remember the Sabbath). The last 6 point towards our love of neighbor (honor your parents, don't kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, and don't covet your neighbor in any way). When Jesus responds, He doesn't even mention any of the first 4 commandments - like having no other gods before Him), and He doesn't include not coveting your neighbor. It seems that, for a guy who has made wealth his God - who could be very susceptible to coveting (or perhaps he didn't struggle with that since he had so much) Jesus would have mentioned those. Seems like he would have specifically said, right at the beginning, do not love money more than God. Matthew's account actually add's Jesus' words, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus was definitely about to give him an opportunity to love his poor neighbors, wasn't He? Perhaps that's a hint.
- **Getting what He asked for?** Yes and no. If he was looking for some great task . . . he definitely received it. However, this is not to say that Jesus was looking to give him an item to check off the salvation box. Actually, Jesus was looking to remove a god in his life so he could follow God alone. "Give up the god you worship and come follow Me. Come follow God. This is not what the man was looking for.
- **Did he not know that he had a love of money?** Listen, many people make the argument that he had no clue, because wealth was seen as a blessing from God at that time. Also, considering the apostle's reaction, they argue they thought the same way, so it wealth would't have been on anyone's radar. They may be right on! However, would you know see within yourself a "love of

money?" It's one thing to think, "Perhaps God has blessed me with money because He finds me faithful." It's another to think about how much you love material things - how you long for them. Are we saying we don't notice this heart within us? This is where you need to be honest with yourself. I don't know, generally speaking, that we're unaware of such faults. Do I believe we can become numb to sin? Well, of course. But I don't think that good people, who are seeking to love the Lord, don't have the ability to see major obstacles that stand between them and the Lord. We may try to ignore them, but that's generally not the case. This is a man who grew up among the Jewish nation. He wasn't ignorant of God's word. He'd heard them from childhood into his youth. He should know. Do you know that about yourself?

- Side note: Many times we see such zeal from "babes" in Christ, yet they can also stress out because they're not where they want to be yet. Do you think that matters to God? Do you think He takes into account where you're at? "Increase our faith" was the prayer of the apostles. They were apostles! Don't you think that babes need to time grow? Don't they need time to move from milk to meat? Don't they need time for their faith to increase? You know they do. The scriptures confirm it and life has taught you that principle. It isn't unique to Christianity.
- **What would you give up for Jesus?** Listen, at the end of the day, this man was told by Christ what he needed to do . . . and he walked away from Jesus. We can debate whether this man was aware of his love for money before talking to Christ, but we can't deny that Jesus made it clear by the end. I would also hope that we could agree that we typically know if there's a big problem in our relationship with the Lord. His word has been clear, and more than likely, someone has said something to us.
 - This is a funny conversation to have with your kids. We talked about riches. We asked if they knew anyone who was rich. Jace said, "Jerry." I asked, "who's Jerry?" He shrugged his shoulders and said "I don't know" in a tone and matching face which seemed to say "I don't know, you're the one asking the questions!" He just figured there's a rich Jerry out there somewhere. Actually, I did meet him, but his name was James. I kid you not - I may have talked to the richest man I've encountered in my life. Owns over 800 properties including commercial land. Invested in big companies like Amazon, Microsoft, Apple, etc. when their stock first opened to the public. He's about to buy a \$50,000,000 yacht, but whatever. It was interesting talking to him. I'll just leave it at that. I told the kids that night that I didn't feel jealous. Truly. I didn't "wish" I had that kind of money. In fact, I asked him, "What do you do with that kind of money?" That seemed to stump him a little. Seemed to, but maybe it didn't. I told the kids that we have Jesus. We have each other. What more could we want or need? So, we began to ask each other what we'd give up for Jesus. Jace's weak point is his Nintendo Switch. I think he'd like to keep at least one game. Cadence decided to plead the fifth when it came to her iPad. Braelyn said asking to give up her favorite doll was crossing the line (really, her words). They asked me if I would give all our money away if Jesus asked me to. I answered, without hesitation, "yes" and I meant it. But, there were other things they didn't know to ask about. What about you?
 - I don't believe we all have something that is keeping us from eternal life. I certainly hope that's not the case. I bring this up, because we can be overly sensitive regarding our salvation. Listen, we all have things to work on, but I sure hope we're not all walking away from God in some area of life. Does that make sense? Here's what I'm getting to today: those who will not inherit eternal life are not those who fail, but those who fall away. Not those who can be weak, but those who walk away.

Brethren, do you not think God notices those who walk away vs. those who are flawed, but faithful?

Matthew 19:23-20:16 The rest of the story

- Jesus goes on to encourage His disciples that though this man is not (at the present at least) entering the Kingdom of God, with God all things are possible. That is - with the help and the grace of God it is possible.
- The disciples had left everything to serve Jesus. It's because of their love and trust in Him that they would inherit eternal life.
- He then goes on to give the illustration of the laborers in the vineyard. It's not about how long you work. It's ultimately dependent on the love and grace of God.
- This is KEY when asking big questions. Remember - harmonize God's word and be honest with yourself!