

INTRODUCTION

YouTube is a widely successful internet business. The website was created in February of 2005 as a platform for video sharing. A little more than a year and a half later the site was sold to Google for \$ 1.65 billion. As of this year one billion hours of content are viewed on YouTube every day. It is now the second most visited website. Guess who is number one? One reason for the huge popularity of YouTube is because many of the videos are quite useful. Besides listening to sermons and music I also go there to look for DIY (do-it-yourself) contents. Nowadays you can find instructions on YouTube for doing anything. If you have enough confidence you can follow the videos to accomplish any task. Thanks to those clips I learn how to fix car and computer, do home repairs, compare products before buying and even clean tough stains. I am a timid person and far from handy. But it is quite rewarding to follow the tips in the videos to get things done. While human beings can achieve certain things we are incapable in many ways. We ride on an airplane but we cannot fly like a bird. We have submarine but we cannot live under water like a fish. In Mark 10 a young man wanted to go to heaven by DIY. Later he learned that it was an impossible mission. The story is also recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. This man is described as a ruler in Luke. He was young, rich and powerful. But he was a humble and sincere guy. He knelt before Jesus and addressed the Lord as a “good teacher.” He did not come to test Jesus like the Pharisees. He was looking for a true answer for eternal life. In their conversation, Jesus corrected the misunderstanding of this man. Salvation cannot be attained by DIY. Today, many people, even some Christians are confused about how to have eternal life. We need to go back to God’s Word and hear what the Lord has to say to us. We shall see that salvation is a great accomplishment; so great that only God can accomplish it for us.

EXPLANATION

1. The Futility of Men’s Effort 人努力的渺茫

Let us first consider the futility of men’s effort in getting eternal life. This young ruler presented his question to Jesus in **verse 17**: ...“Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” In the Bible, receiving eternal life, entering the Kingdom of God and being saved all refer to the same thing. We call it becoming a Christian. Notice how this fellow phrased his question. He asked Jesus what he had to DO to inherit eternal life. It is just like an employee works 40 or 50 hours to earn his salary, or a student studies hard to get an A. Jesus showed his wisdom in His answer. He followed the logic of this guy. Jesus replied in **verse 19**: “You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” Jesus was quoting from the Ten Commandments. “Do not defraud” others can be understood as an application of the last commandment about not to covet others’ possessions. Defrauding others can be a means to steal from others. This young man did not only know the Law, he also followed it. Continue to read in **verse 20**: “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” He might not be bragging about himself. He was just telling the fact. The gospel of Matthew adds some detail to the young man’s answer. He asked Jesus: “What do I still lack?” He truly wanted to know what

else he still had to complete in order to receive eternal life. Jesus admired the sincerity of this person. In [verse 21](#) Jesus went on to challenge him: Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Jesus loved this man. You may have similar feeling about a family member or a good friend. “This is such a nice guy. How good it will be if he/she becomes a Christian?” Jesus wanted to correct the misconception of this young man. He loved God. But did he love his wealth more than God? Also, if he wanted to earn his salvation by following the Law then he had to do so perfectly. What was his reaction to Jesus’ request? [Verse 22](#) tells us: At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. He did not want to give up his money to follow Jesus. The problem is not money, but it is the dependence on money. Let us be clear: is money a blessing from God? Absolutely! Many Bible characters like Abraham, Job or David were super rich by any standard. However, Jesus’ disciples and Paul had to rely on others to support their livelihood. Can we conclude that God loved them less? No, God just blessed them in a different way. We all need money to survive. But we can easily treat money as our security blanket. Jesus told us in [Matthew 6:21](#) that: “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” No one would deny that truth. Many people spend great effort to make money and save money. But as useful as money is, it cannot buy our way to heaven. The problem is the same whether it is pride over one’s wealth or strict obedience to the Law. If abiding by the Law can gain entrance into heaven, then Paul would be a champion. Hear his resume in [Philippians 3:4-6](#) – 4 ...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 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. Humanly speaking, Paul got it all! Family background? Check. Circumcision? Check. Prestigious education? Check. He even helped capture Christians. But Paul’s perspective completely changed after God saved him. He continued in [verse 7](#): But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. Paul saw all those qualifications as worthless in comparison to the desire to follow Christ. If good work cannot earn one’s way to heaven, then why did God give the Law to Israel in the first place? God told us the foundation for the Ten Commandments in [Exodus 20:2](#): “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.” Then in verse 3 and following are the commandments. All those rules became meaningful because of God’s relationship with His people. Obeying the Law by itself can never achieve the relationship. It is exactly like your house rules. You require your kids to do chores or go to bed by 10 o’clock. But your neighbors’ kids can never become your family members by meeting those requirements! Rules cannot create a relationship. Rules validate the relationship. Relying on men’s effort to earn salvation is futile. Many people believe that they will go to heaven because they think they are good enough. Only good people go to heaven. Right? Based on which Bible verse? The Bible never says that God saves us because we are good. We are saved because we are bad. We are wicked inside and out! Some people mistakenly think being saved is like dressing up a cute baby. The kiddo looks good already by wearing just a diaper. How much better if he/she wears some beautiful clothes? That is not what the Bible teaches. If you fail to realize how sinful you are, then you will never be grateful to God for His salvation. You will only pat yourself on the shoulder, saying: “Good job! You deserve it.” People also completely miss the point if they think that accepting Jesus is all about going to heaven. They only want the final result, but not any relationship with God. No wonder a lot of so-called Christians never come back to the church after they are baptized. They think that attending worship is optional. Bible becomes a decoration

on their book shelves. Don't ask them to serve or make money offering either. Anything between them and God is strictly business. They do their part and expect God to do His part.

2. The Vitality of God's Grace 神恩典的大能

The truth is, salvation is a great accomplishment; so great that only God can accomplish it for us. Men's effort is futile in earning salvation. We can only be saved because of the vitality of God's grace. The rich young ruler did not get the answer he had expected. He walked away with a sad face. Jesus' disciples was shocked. They asked the Lord in **verse 26**: ...“Who then can be saved?” In any culture, people with money and power can get what they want. Therefore, the disciples wondered if a person like the wealthy guy could not be saved then who else could. Jesus responded in the **next verse**: Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” The answer is clear: God decides who will be saved. Remember there were two criminals who were crucified along with Jesus? One of them ridiculed Jesus that He was unable to save Himself. The other convict admitted that death penalty was what he deserved. Then he asked Jesus for mercy. Remember how Jesus replied this second criminal? **Luke 23:43** reads - Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.” Jesus was saying: “I declare that you are now saved. We will go to heaven together.” What could this prisoner do in exchange for God's favor? Nothing! He was hanging on the cross. He did not even say a prayer to ask Jesus to come into his heart or go to a church to get baptized. Nothing! We are just like that convict before we know Christ. We are bound by our sins. Paul says in **Ephesians 2:5** that: (God) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved. We are like a piece of dead meat before we receive Christ. Can a piece of meat jump around and serve you? Of course not! The meat will serve your stomach once it is fully-cooked. It is God who infuses new life into our dead bodies. But salvation has to come with a commitment to follow Jesus. By this time the disciples gradually understood Jesus' explanation. In **verse 28** Peter said to the Lord: ...“We have left everything to follow you!” Matthew added some further detail to Peter's words – “What then will there be for us?” Unlike the young ruler these disciples had surrendered all they had to follow their Master. The four fishermen gave up their business, and Matthew the tax collector also left all his money. Peter wondered how Jesus would reward them for their obedience. Jesus answered Peter in **verses 29-30** – 29 “I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields - and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.” Jesus promised to repay His followers a hundred times. That does not mean that if we give up our home we will get 100 houses back. Jesus was talking about spiritual things. Anyone surrenders his/her home will be accepted into others' houses, and they will become one family. Many of us can testify that very often church family is even closer than our own biological family. We live in the same city. We encourage each other with God's Word, and share our burdens with prayer. Notice among the blessings Jesus also included persecution. Jesus reminded His disciples about the cost of following Him. At the Last Supper, Jesus also told His disciples it was not an easy path. He said in **John 15:18-19** – 18 “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. 19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” Don't be surprised if people do not like you simply because of what you believe. They did the same to our

Lord! Jesus set up an example for us to follow. He left His glory in heaven and came into our world. He was persecuted by the religious and political leaders. Yet He submitted to the Father's will, to the point of dying for us on the cross. God calls us to follow Jesus' footsteps. Obedience is a hard lesson because we like to be our own boss. We want to keep both the treasures of this world and the blessings of eternity. A children Sunday school teacher was sharing the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man lived in luxury. Lazarus was a beggar who fed on the crumbs fell off from the rich man's table. Both persons later died. Lazarus went to heaven but the rich man ended up in hell. After telling the story the teacher asked her class: "Who wants to be the rich man?" No one raised their hands. Then she continued: "Who wants to be Lazarus?" Everyone raised their hands except one boy. The teacher asked the kid: "Eddie, who do you want to be?" The boy was very confident in his answer: "I want to be the rich man now, and I want to be Lazarus when I get to heaven." Is that your desire too? Many people want to enjoy the goodies of both worlds. Isn't that how we are taught? You work hard in this life so that you can afford all the material possession. Who wants sacrifice and suffering? If you think that accepting Christ is all about for your own gain then you are reading a wrong Bible. Jesus concluded his message by saying in **verse 31**: "But many who are first will be last, and the last first." The order of things in God's Kingdom is the direct opposite to this world's priority. Those who depend on what they have in this world – the rich, famous and powerful – will be the last in heaven if they do not know Christ. In contrast, those who humble themselves before God, regardless of how much they have, will be precious in God's eyes.

CONCLUSION

Jesus told us in this passage that salvation is a great accomplishment; so great that only God can accomplish it for us. Men's effort is futile. We can never reach heaven by our own strength. But God's grace is vital. Only through Jesus Christ can a person receive eternal life. The rich young ruler could not be saved by his wealth and good work. I can think of another person in real life with similar background. Ka-Ping Tin is a well-known philanthropist in the Chinese circle. By coincidence, Mr. Tin will celebrate his 99th birthday tomorrow. He had a humble beginning. He started his business from nothing and became successful in the field of chemical engineering. He made a lot of money. Mr. Tin could have enjoyed a lavish lifestyle. Instead, he gives away 80% of his wealth. He even established his own charitable foundation. He built about 300 schools in China. He also donated money to build roads and bridges in his home province of Canton. He received a long list of awards and honorary degrees for his contributions. There is even a star somewhere in the universe named after him. Who can find any fault in such a perfect man? Mr. Tin proudly claimed: "I live with a clear conscience. I am not ashamed to say that I am a good person." Mr. Tin is rich and he does many good things, but he is spiritually broke by God's standard. His wife and children are all Christians, and they had been praying for Mr. Tin's salvation for a long time. Finally, by God's grace he accepted Christ in 2013. Mr. Tin shared in his baptism testimony: "In the past I didn't think that I need Jesus. Now I know I'm a sinner in God's eyes. A person can only become righteous by receiving Jesus into his/her heart." This senior gentleman understood that it was impossible to work his own way to heaven. When we put the focus on ourselves we can become prideful. We ask: "I am qualified to go to heaven, so why not me?" Only when we humble ourselves before God then we can be thankful of His mercy. We say to God: "I am unworthy to go to heaven, Lord, why me?"