

## **RADICAL: What the Gospel Demands**

The Gospel Demands Radical Abandonment - Part 3

Dr. David Platt

October 26, 2008



### **The Gospel Demands Radical Abandonment – Part 3 Mark 10:17-31**

If you have a Bible and I hope you do, let me invite you to open with me to Mark chapter 10. This is our last week, believe it or not, in this particular story of the rich man and Jesus. It's actually also our last week in this series. This radical series looking at what Jesus says it means to follow Him. We have been looking at the kind of sayings from Jesus that if we were to actually believe this is what He said, it would have radical implications for our lives. That if we were to follow what He has said, our lives would look radically different in the culture and in the church that we are a part of. And I think that's the question we keep coming back to. It's the question I keep coming back to in my own life and in my own leadership. Do I, do we believe this Book?

I mean, really, do we believe that Jesus said these things? Do we believe that what this Book says is true? Because if what this Book says is true, then there are over four and a half billion people in the world today, who are headed to an eternal hell because they do not have Christ and that in addition to 30,000 children who will die today of either starvation or a preventable disease. If these things are true then we do not have time to play games with our lives and with the church. If these things are true, we do not have time to play games with our resources and our possessions. God help us to be gripped by these realities. God help us not to ignore or resist these realities. We are a rich people. I know our economy is struggling, but even if you make \$1,500.00 next year, you'll be wealthier than 80 percent of the people on this earth.

If you have clothes to wear and food to eat and a house or apartment to live in and a reasonably reliable means of transportation, then you are among the top 15 percent of the world's wealthy, which makes these words from Jesus particularly appropriate. Mark 10:23,

*"Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!' The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God.'*

*"The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.' Peter said to him, 'We have left everything to follow you!'*

*"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 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. But many who are first will be last, and the last first'" (Mark 10:23-31).*

God, we pray that you would help us, help us to connect with what we now study. Help us to connect the holiness of your name and the worth of your name and your name exalted and what it means to live to exalt your name and not our own. God, we pray that you would help us by your grace, your Spirit, here to help us in the next few moments we have God, to sift through our thinking that is so culturally ingrained and so counter-Biblically ingrained. Help us to hear your Words fresh and give us grace not just to hear them but God we pray for grace to respond. God, we can do nothing today to change ourselves. We need you to change our hearts as we pray to you do it through your Word and the way that you get great glory, not just here but around the world in light of these needs around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

We've looked at six truths and we have four more to go. Now I know that along the way many people have been asking, "Okay, we see these truths, how do they look in our lives? How does this practically play out?"

There's a huge difference between Biblical truth and pastor's thoughts. Biblical truth is binding, what the Scripture says determines how we live. Pastor's thoughts, take them or leave them. The reality is, I'm guessing, most will leave them. The practical application that you will see there is not particularly popular in our culture today and not particularly easy to put into practice. They are the overflow, to be just perfectly honest, of Heather and I as we have wrestled through these truths and continue to wrestle through these truths. And so I wanted to put practical things before you.

You got truths, we're going to see the truths and then just going to kind of step aside for just a second after each one and say, practically, here's how I'd encourage you to put this into practice in your life.

### **A Radical Warning...**

#### **We desperately need to realize the deadly nature of our possessions.**

So, truth number seven. First one we're going to look at today in Mark 10, a radical warning. Here's the warning, we desperately need to realize the deadly nature of our possessions. "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God." The reality is most people in our culture and most of us in the church simply just don't believe Jesus on this one. They don't buy it. It's not hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God because we hear that and as we just said, we're rich people. We live in the wealthiest county in Alabama and where we gather together is nestled in one of the wealthiest communities in Birmingham, Alabama.

And what Jesus is saying, if we could bring this picture over to us, is it's hard to enter the kingdom of God from Brook Highland Parkway, it is hard to enter the kingdom. And we just don't buy it. We are accustomed to thinking, along with the church culture of which we're ingrained, thinking of possessions and money and wealth as blessings. But we do not think of it as barriers. Jesus is saying "You're rich, your wealth, your possessions—barriers, obstacles to entering the kingdom." Now, a question kind of raises to the top, Jesus is saying these things, but then you got a picture of the church after this. After Jesus leaves, is it still the picture in the New Testament church?

So I want you to hold your place here and I want you to go with me to 1 Timothy chapter 6. Go to the right. Feel free to use your table of contents if you need to. Go past 1 and 2

Thessalonians, you'll come to 1 Timothy chapter 6, and I want us to ask the question, "Does the New Testament church have the same stance on possessions that Jesus is giving us there in Mark chapter 10?" And I want us to see if there are any similarities or disconnects here. Is it hard for the rich in the New Testament church to enter the Kingdom of God?

Look at 1 Timothy 6:6 and see what Paul writes to Timothy and he's telling Timothy "Here's how you encourage the church of the New Testament." Verse 6:

*"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grief's" (1 Tim. 6:6-10).*

Now, notice and this is what often people notice and point out, "Well, it's not money that is the root of all kinds of evil. It's the love of money. And thankfully, we draw the conclusion that all of us are free from that, even though we have money." But we go to that and it's true, what Paul is saying and what Jesus is saying. Both Jesus and Paul, neither of them are saying that wealth or money is inherently evil; that wealth or money or possessions are inherently evil. And what Jesus is telling the rich man and what we're going to see unfold here in 1 Timothy 6, don't miss this. Jesus is not saying, nor is Paul saying that we need to give away wealth, money and possessions because they're bad. They're saying give away wealth, money and possessions because people are starving.

Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor. This is huge. That's why, when you get over to verse 17, Paul starts to talk to those who are rich, and this is what he said.

*"Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Tim. 6:17-19).*

This is a loaded passage.

These two passages together and the picture is Paul is saying; go back to verse 9. He says "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." That's people who want to get rich. This is not even talking about people who have achieved that, who are rich. This is even just the desire to be rich leads you into a trap that leads to ruin and destruction. Does it sound like Paul is warning about the deadly nature of possessions much like Jesus had done in Mark 10? Absolutely. So what is Paul saying then?

Back up to verse 6 he says, "Godliness with contentment is great gain." The people say "Well okay, well the important thing is that I'm content and I'm pretty content in the life that I live here in Birmingham. So, I'm good." But look at how Paul defines contentment. He said in verse 8 "But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that." Now that's a radically different contentment than the contentment we would've got. Paul says, bring it down; he says food and clothing here. Some of your translations says food and covering,

basically, he identifies basic necessities. He said food, shelter, clothing/covering and I have these and I'll be content with that. And then he says right after that, "Now those who want more, those who want to be rich, want more and more and more and more, that leads down the path of destruction.

### **The danger we face...**

So the picture that Paul's setting up is, those who want to indulge in luxury after luxury after luxury beyond necessity, go down a trap that leads to ruin and destruction. And here's the ruin and destruction. This is why Paul is warning about this, and it goes to verse 17 when he starts talking to those who are rich. It's the danger we face. First, riches cause us to become self-confident. Look at verse 17. "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant.*" Not to be arrogant.

Scripture teaches that possessions produce pride. When we make a new purchase, when we make this good investment, when we put in a big deposit, pride begins to swell in us and what happens is we begin to place our confidence in riches instead of putting our confidence in God. Now, most of us would say, "Well my confidence is not in riches. My confidence is in God." You know how you test that? Start telling folks to sell everything they have and give it away. And all of a sudden, the riches are starting to be taken off the table and insecurity in our hearts rises to the top. The deal is and not only do the riches cause us to be self-confident, but is that riches blind us to the depth of our self-confidence.

Riches blind us to the lack of confidence we have in God because we think we have confidence in God, but our confidence is in stuff and when it's stripped away, we realize that it's not just self confidence, but riches cause us to become self-sufficient. "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth*" (1 Tim. 6:17). Paul is saying it's hard for the rich to put their hope in God because they have so much other stuff to put their hope in. And this is true. We know this.

We know that we are prone, every single one of us, we're prone to enjoy gifts and disregard the Giver. We're all prone to this. And the reality is the more we fill our lives with gifts, more and more and more and more, the more prone we are to disregard the Giver. And the more we have a sufficiency in our lives and our security, and what we're able to earn, or put on the table, or acquire; and we find ourselves in the same situation that the church at Laodicea was in Revelation chapter 3. Remember that passage when Jesus says astounding words. "I would spew you out of my mouth." Why?

Listen to what He says to an apathetic, comfortable church that was affluent. "*You say I am rich.*" These were Jesus' words. "*You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked...So be earnest, and repent*" (Rev. 3:17,19). So he said you need to repent. He says, "*I stand at the door and knock*" (Rev. 3:19). This is Jesus knocking on the outside of the door of the church because the people have become so self-sufficient. This is the danger Paul is warning against. Your riches cause you to become self sufficient and self confident, and third, riches cause us to become self-centered.

So this is what Paul said in verse 18. He says, "*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.*" Now notice that Paul says the remedy for the danger of riches is giving. Because the reality is, riches cause us to want more riches and more riches and have more and more and begin to hoard. And he says, "If you want to fight that, from the core of who you are, then you give. Then you give generously. You become rich in good deeds." Here's how to avoid the deadly danger of possessions. Give them away. Be rich in you're giving.

Don't give your scraps anymore. That's what the rich man did, like in Luke. You give your surplus. You take the necessities that you live on, godliness and contentment, great gain, food and covering and then you give. You give abundantly. And this helps you avoid the deadly danger of possessions. This is exactly what Jesus talked about in the self-centered picture. What he said is what we've seen. Where your treasure is there your heart will be there also. We should not be surprised at our lack of giving extravagantly to the poor because we poured our possessions into our stuff in acquiring bigger houses and nicer cars and nicer clothes and more stuff and as a result, that's where our hearts are, not with the lost and the poor. Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.

### **The decisions we make...**

So, we come back to these choices. Now in the New Testament church that we've seen throughout the Gospels, the decision we must make. Two options: number one, we can live a life of selfish luxury that forsakes the poor. A life that is not content with food and covering, a life that wants more and more and more. A life that increases its standard of living every opportunity it gets. Jesus says "No, don't live like that." And Paul says "No, don't live like that. Possessions are deadly that way. They're dangerous that way. One option is a life of selfish luxury that forsakes the poor. Second option is a life of selfless love for the sake of the poor.

Now, it's at this point that we step back and many ask, one of the first questions that comes to our minds is, "Well what's wrong with luxuries? What's wrong with a nice house? What's wrong with a nice car? What's wrong with nice clothes? What's wrong with nice stuff? Is that inherently bad?" Now think about this with me, this is huge. It comes back to what we were just talking about a second ago. As long as we ask the question, "What's wrong with this?" Then we are reflecting exactly what Scripture is warning us against. And that is a self-centered mentality to our possessions.

We were reflecting "What's wrong with me having this and what's wrong with me having that? What's wrong with me having this?" And the only way we can ask that question is if we've turned a deaf ear to the needs outside our door.

Let me give you an example. John Wesley, now follow with me here. John Wesley, when he was in Oxford in college, his biographer writes,

"Wesley had just finished buying some pictures for his room, when one of the chamber maids came to his door. It was a winter day and he noticed that she had only a thin, linen gown to wear for protection against the bitter cold. He reached into his pocket to give her some money for a coat and found he had little left. It struck him that the Lord was not pleased with how he had spent his money. He asked himself 'Will thy master say, well done good and faithful steward? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money that might have screened this poor creature from the cold. Oh, justice, oh mercy. Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?'"

Did you catch what happened? He equated it. He saw...Were these pictures inherently bad that he had bought and was putting on his wall? Not inherently bad. Not inherently wrong, but it was wrong to spend money on pictures for his wall while a woman was freezing outside with no coat. Now, let's take Wesley's experience and let's transplant it into ours. Imagine taking a tour through your home or my home, for that matter, and look for unnecessary furniture, unnecessary wall hangings, unnecessary clothes in the closet,

unnecessary entertainment centers, unnecessary...And the list goes on and on and on and on. Are these things bad in and of themselves?

They're only bad if outside in your yard there are 500 children from Southern Africa whose bodies are malnourished and whose brains are deforming because they don't have a meal. Now it's bad to spend money on those things instead of them. You see, the only way we can ask the question "What's wrong with that?" is if we're ignoring the poor on our doorstep. You see the connection here? Which one are we going to live for? A life of selfish luxury that forsakes the poor or a life of selfless love for the sake of the poor? This is what Jesus is saying, what Paul is saying. Give radically to the poor because if you don't, then you'll be ignoring not only the needs of the lost and the poor, but you will overwhelm your heart with stuff and more and more and more and you may end up and miss the kingdom altogether. Deadly danger of possessions.

### **Practical Application...**

So, practically, here's my encouragement. Take it or leave it. My encouragement would be for families and individuals here, to identify the necessities and luxuries in your life. Necessities and luxuries, and be honest, then begin selling and giving away your luxuries for the sake of the lost and the poor. Now we'll go ahead and let you know this is not an easy process to walk through. It's a painful process because you're beginning to realize how little in your life is necessity and how much is luxury. And it's painful because all of these rationalizations and justifications begin rising up in your heart to explain away your luxuries.

What happens when we identify food and covering, basic needs, minimal wants, maybe minimal wants that are germane to this culture and then beyond this, begin to ask the question, do I need the kind of car I drive? Do we need the kind of house we live in? Do I need all the clothes that I have? Do we need all the stuff in the house that we have? Do we need this? Do we need that? And be careful because you'll start to ask, "Well what's wrong with that? Why can't I have that?" These questions are just exposing the self-centered plague in your heart that needs to be removed by Christ. And you'll begin to see that your life is full of excess and full of surplus that can be given away for the sake of the lost and the poor.

That leads to this second practical application based on your necessities then, set a simple cap on your lifestyle and then give away everything else. Set a simple cap on your lifestyle based on food and covering necessities. Decide this is what I, or my family needs to live on. Now you've got a cap and now you are going right against the grain of a culture that says the more you make the more you have in your life. That the more you make the higher your standard of living increases. Now the more you make the higher your standard of giving increases.

This is starting to sound a little more New Testament and you've got a cap and now you're freeing up anything that God grants above that cap to make the glory of Christ known among the lost and the poor. You say "Well is it wrong? Dave, are you saying it's wrong to have a lot of money, to make a lot of money, to make a good job?" No, it's absolutely right. Get the best job possible and make the most money possible because now God is entrusting resources to you, not for your self-indulgence, but for the sake of the lost and the poor around the world. Now this begins to make sense.

This is exactly where Wesley went in light of what he experienced. Listen to what his biographer writes:

"In 1731, Wesley began to limit his expenses so he would have more money to give to the poor. He records that one year his income was 30 pounds and his living expenses were 28 pounds, so he had 2 pounds to give away. The next year his income doubled, but he still lived on 28 pounds and gave 32 pounds away. And the third year his income jumped to 90 pounds. Again, he lived on 28 pounds while giving 62 away. The fourth year he made 120 pounds, lived again on 28 pounds and gave 92 pounds to the poor. Wesley preached that Christians should not merely tithe, but give away all extra income once the family and creditors were taken care of. He believed that with increasing income, the Christian standard of giving should increase, not his standard of living. He began this practice at Oxford and he continued it throughout his life, even when his income rose into the thousands of pounds, he lived simply and quickly gave his surplus money away. One year his income was over 1400 pounds. He gave away all but 30. He was afraid of laying up treasures on earth."

That's a great line.

"He was afraid... [He knew 1 Timothy 6 was real.] He was afraid of laying up treasures on earth so the money went out in charity as quickly as it came in. When he died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the miscellaneous coins that he found in his pockets and dresser drawers. Most of the 30,000 pounds he had earned in his lifetime, he had given away."

You say, "Well he didn't leave any investment behind?" He left thousands of souls following Christ behind. That's an investment. That's a major investment of someone's life. You transfer this over into current day's wages. There were times when Wesley was making \$160,000.00 a year and he was living off \$20,000.00 a year, in our culture. Is that weird? Sound extravagant? Just out there? No, it's godliness with contentment and it's great gain. And it's generous giving to the poor, willingness to share; it's rich in good deeds.

What if, what if we did this? I know people think that it's crazy, don't even think about it. What if we decided across this faith family that if \$50, or \$75, or \$100,000.00 salary does not necessitate a \$50, or \$75, or \$100,000.00 lifestyle, or a million dollar lifestyle, for that matter? What if we decided we were going to live and trust that God's going to provide, and we're getting food and covering, and then men will watch and then we're going to free up the resources that God has entrusted to us for the sake of the lost and the poor?

People say "Well that's radical." What if it's obedience? Think. The resources of heaven entrusted to us for the sake of the world. You say, "Dave, have you lost it? I mean, don't you think this is going to the extreme where we don't take care of ourselves and our families?" I don't think we're in danger of that. Of going to extreme in our giving that we are not providing for ourselves. And I would not hesitate to say that there's not one person in this room who will ever stand before Jesus, the judgment seat of Christ, and hear Him say, "You gave too much away. You should've spent more on yourself."

It's not going to happen. I promise you, it's not going to happen. Don't worry about erring too far in that direction. Let's say there's a deadly danger in our possessions for us and for the sake of the poor that we are indifferent to and so let's hit right at the root of that and let's give away. Let's do what Jesus told the rich man to do in Mark 10 and what Paul is telling the rich to do in 1 Timothy 6. That's the warning.

**A Radical Gift...**  
**Salvation is utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God.**

It leads to...Now this giving is the overflow of the gift in you. Eighth, a radical gift. Salvation, listen to this. Salvation is utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God. Come back to Mark 10. Salvation is utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God. So Jesus says it's hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven and then His disciples are amazed and so Jesus decides to repeat Himself, "*Children, how hard it is to enter 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 the kingdom of God*" (Mark 10:24-25).

Now here's where it gets really good. This verse, 25, may be one of the most abused verses in the New Testament because at this point, that's when people or preachers begin to talk about this gate into the city of Jerusalem. It was very, very thin. It was very, very small, kind of a side gate and in order to get through, if you were going to try and get a camel; it was called the eye of a needle, in order to get a camel through there, you'd have to take the load off the camel's back. You'd have to get the camel to kneel down and kind of crawl through there. And the only problem is it's not true. There's no gate like that.

People started telling stories like this either in the 9<sup>th</sup> century or the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some say. But regardless, for eight centuries, they didn't talk about this gate, including the first century when the gate would've been there. And so it makes for some really cool sermon illustrations because you got to take off what you're holding onto and you get down on your knees and I mean, you can hear the music playing and the invitation beginning at that point. The only problem is it's not true.

So, what is Jesus saying? And this is why it's important. We're not just trying to debunk great sermons from the past, but it's important because Jesus is not saying "It's really hard so you got to do this and this and this." He's saying it's impossible. He's saying, "Here's the eye of a needle. A little picture of the eye of a needle and you take a camel through that." Can you do that? Absolutely not. No chance. It's not hard; it's impossible. And Jesus is saying that's exactly it. It's impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven and for that matter, it's impossible for anybody to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is a picture here.

**God gives salvation to us.**

We could keep coming back to this over and over and over again. I want to come back to it today. There is nothing we can do to earn entrance into the kingdom, no matter how much we give, no matter how much we do this or that, we cannot earn entrance into the kingdom of heaven. We cannot earn salvation. Why, because God gives salvation to us. He gives it. He gives it. We're not working for our salvation. When we talk about these radical commands, we're not working for our salvation. Instead, God gives salvation to us.

Camp out here for just a minute. God does not sell us salvation. The kingdom can't be bought and He doesn't trade us salvation. Now this is huge. I want to pause for a second here, this is so key because Scripture obviously talks about and we've been talking about the cost of following Jesus. Now does that mean that we're sitting across the table from God and if we put enough money on the table, then He'll save us? It's not what Scripture's

teaching. We don't buy salvation. We don't trade for salvation. That would not be a wise business deal because we've got nothing to bring to the table to God. Nothing but sin.

So here's what happens. We sit across the table in our sin and God, based on absolutely nothing, reaches His hand of grace into our lives and He takes our sin and He removes it and in its place He puts the righteousness of Christ. I want to come back to this over and over and over again. The only way you or I stand accepted before God, at this moment, is because of this finished work of Christ on the cross that His righteousness bought for you and me. What happens is by His grace, He takes our heart and He removes our sin and He puts the righteousness of Christ in us.

Now as a part of that, as a part of new heart, this goes back to what we were talking about in the *Lifeblood* series a while ago, a new heart that doesn't desire sin, doesn't desire self, but desires Christ. He puts His Spirit in us that begins to flow from us in our lives in the way we live. And now what we are doing, giving to the poor or obeying Christ in any way, is not in order to earn salvation, it's not what we're putting on the table, but it's the overflow of Christ in us. It's still the work of God in our hearts. And the reality is now our giving is the result of His giving to our hearts. Does that make sense? Don't miss it.

Our giving is a result of His giving. Our giving is an overflow of what He is doing in our hearts and we need Him to do it. That's the whole point here in Mark chapter 10. These disciples are sitting there with their Old Testament foundations thinking, "If anybody could get into the kingdom, this guy can. Look at his riches. Look at his resume. This guy can get in." and Jesus says, "No, it's impossible for him to get in. He needs a radical change of his heart in order to come into the kingdom." And you need a radical change of your heart and we need a radical change of our hearts. And then what we give is still the result of His giving.

### **God enables sacrifice in us.**

So here's the beauty of it. God gives salvation to us and then when it comes to this whole picture we're talking about, when it comes to giving for the sake of the poor, not only does God give salvation to us, but He enables sacrifice in us.

Now this is where it gets really good. When we are talking about going and selling all your possessions and giving to the poor so you have treasure in heaven. How many of us in this room are really sitting on the edge of our seat thinking, "The sooner I can sell everything and give it all away, the better. All these things that I've worked for, all these things that I prize and acquired, I can't wait to get rid of them. We walk out of here with smiles on our faces every Sunday just so uplifted because now we get to give everything away"? That's really probably not the reaction that we've experienced over the last few weeks. Which shows us something – don't miss it – it's impossible to have that kind of reaction. It's impossible to manufacture a heart that doesn't want security and comfort in things in this world, but the good news is, our God is the great doer of the impossible. And He does it. He does it and takes our hearts and changes them.

People would say, "It's nuts to talk about these things in this culture in a church like this with all the wealth and possessions that are represented here. It's crazy to think that a people, individuals, families within the faith family are going to do these things. It's impossible, I would say." But God is the great doer of the impossible.

### **Practical Application...**

And this is where I want to take you practically to this picture. My challenge for you. This is a little bit easier than the other one. Each day this week my challenge is to set aside a

specific concentrated time alone and or with your family and pray. Really pray. Make sure we get that. Not routine, really pray and ask the Holy Spirit to change your desires and show you what He wants you to do, then begin to do it in His power one step at a time.

Here's the picture. When we see some of these truths, we've got to assume there's a tendency to almost be a little bit of shell shock; experience a little bit of shell shock. Some of these things that maybe we've never seen before in Scripture or haven't seen before in a long time in Scripture, coming to the top. I know it's been a sense, some of that way for me, looking at text that I've read before, but I've missed so much in them. You're walking along with the culture, living when it comes to money and possessions, like most of us are, including myself, as a pastor, living pretty much in the rat race that everybody else is living in. Maybe a couple little changes here or there, but all of a sudden, we come to texts like this and we're stopped in our tracks. We start to think, "What do I do? Where do I even begin?"

It's at this point where I want to encourage you at this point to fall on your knees, maybe literally say, "God, I don't know what to do and I don't know where to begin. But I know that anything I do or anything that begins in me is going to begin with you and you doing a work in my heart so change my heart so that I want whatever you want." You know what? That process of a heart change will probably not happen instantly to where now you walk away smiling and selling everything, giving it away. Instead where it will begin to lead you to, is God will begin to change your heart and you'll see this in your life, and this in your life, and this in your life, that you can change, and this in your life. And all of a sudden you're beginning to turn in a different direction.

And this is why Jesus, I'm convinced, does not give us a check list because there's a process of heart change that happens here. There's an internal process that needs to happen here that we would be robbed of if we had a checklist. And we are a quick fix people. We want to do it. Just get it done. But the reality is, we need Christ to change our hearts and that's not a quick fix thing. Now we have to be careful not to just grow weary in that because we can see Him start to change our heart. We make a little step this way and then we just start moving. "Okay, well that was a good series, here we go, back over here."

And before long, we're right back into the grain. It's a battle. It's a struggle. It's a fight. Paul talks about that in 1 Timothy 6 and all over the Scripture. That's something He will do. He will do it in us. Let's ask Him to do it in us. We need Him to change our hearts. So I want to encourage you, prayerfully, thoughtfully spend time with your family alone and asking Him to guide your lifestyle according to these radical things that He's showing us in Scripture.

## **A Radical Freedom... Jesus frees us from our bondage to ourselves and our stuff.**

Okay, number nine in these ten truths; a radical freedom. Jesus frees us from our bondage to ourselves and our stuff. We're not going to spend too long here, but I want you to see this. I want you to see Peter's response in Mark 10:28. "*With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.*" Peter said to him, *'We have left everything to follow you!'*" (Mark 10:27-28). I love this. See the picture here. See the contrast. Just a few verses before this, a man walks away from Jesus sad because he's holding onto everything he has. Now you've got an eager disciple, let's be honest, a little too eager at

some points, stands up and says, "We've left everything to follow you!" And there's a radical contrast here.

There's a freedom here. There's a man walking away sad, chained to his possessions and a man who is standing up excited about the fact that he has left everything to follow Jesus and it sounds a little bold, but Jesus doesn't rebuke him or anything. He actually affirms him in this. There's a freedom here and I know this. We've looked at some of these radical commands in Scripture, there's a tendency to also think, "Well when we're saved, doesn't Christ free us? Why are we talking about all these commands? We're free."

We're not free from commands. For the first time when Christ saves us, we're free to obey commands. Now we have what's in our hearts that's necessary to put these truths into practice. And we don't have to try to work, or earn, or do this that we don't want to do—we do begrudgingly. No, we do it because Christ is changing our hearts and it overflows into our obedience. And the beauty is now we are free, absolutely free from ourselves and our possessions and our stuff and our living for comfort and security in this world because now we're free to live for Christ.

### **We are free to go wherever He calls.**

And, we're free to go wherever He calls. What happens when a people, because of spending, are not in chains to debt and large mortgages and large payments on this and that, what happens when we're not in chains to this or that we're holding onto? What happens when we are free to go wherever He calls? What a picture.

### **We are free to give whatever He asks.**

And free to give whatever He asks. Imagine that. A cap on your lifestyle that frees up abundant resources and now your struggle is, where are we going to give these resources? What's the best way to give these resources? Where do I give to the lost and poor? Now, this is a good question to ask.

A good question to wrestle with and a good problem to have. Before, when we were giving scraps, we could manage that pretty easy. Now we're giving surplus, now we're giving instead of having a nice house or a nice car or nice clothes or this or that. Now, now we see, "Okay, how can I best spend that? How can we best spend that for the sake of the lost and for the sake of the poor?" And all of a sudden, and don't miss this, what if there really were billions of people on this planet who are headed to an eternal hell and millions of them haven't even heard the name of Jesus? And what if there were unprecedented numbers of suffering people on this planet? And what if God decided to give His people on this side unprecedented wealth to make a difference among the lost and the poor?

What if that's exactly what He has done? What if that's exactly what He has done? And what happens when the people in this room, you and I, are free to go wherever He calls and to give whatever He asks? Ralph Winter said, listen to this, "Obedience to the great commission has more consistently been poisoned by affluence than by anything else." Let's get rid of the poison.

### **Practical Application...**

So, practically, here's my encouragement. Honestly answer this question. In your life or in your family, are you giving less than your ability? Are you giving according to your ability? Or are you giving beyond your ability? Less than, according to, or beyond your ability. To be honest, I would guess, and I certainly don't have anything empirical to back this up, but I would guess that 90 plus percent of us are giving less than our ability, and I would include myself, as your pastor, in that, far less. The luxuries and excess that surround my life. I

would say maybe a couple of percentage points of us that are giving according to our ability, commensurate with how much we have. And I would say probably less than one percent of us are giving beyond our ability, and those are probably the most unnoticed.

It's the whole picture in Luke 21 when all the wealthy are putting gifts into the temple treasury and a widow comes by with two copper coins and puts them in. And what does Jesus say? He says she gave more than all of them. Why? Because she gave out of her poverty and she has nothing left. She gave beyond her ability. We don't think like that. We don't think like this. You use even the extreme example. Say, a man makes \$10 million next year and he gives away \$9 million to the poor. Would we say that's extravagant giving? Of course we would, but the reality is, it's giving far less than that man's ability, far less. He's only living on a million dollars? Doesn't square with 1 Timothy 6 at all.

What happens when people making \$30, \$50, \$75, \$100,000.00 or more in a faith family, begin to give beyond their ability? Probably not going to happen overnight, but what happens when we begin to move in that direction? We're spending our surplus and excess in our lives for the sake of the lost and the poor. This brings it around to the second question, second point there. Stop asking how much you can spare and start asking how much it's going to take. To be honest here, this is part of where the beginning point, I guess, the conviction in my heart was.

A few months ago we had some friends, we have a variety of friends living around the world, a couple of friends of ours came to visit us. They live in an area in the 1040 window of the world, where 10/40 window is some of the least reached peoples in the world, and they're living amidst the people, that most of them have never heard the name of Jesus. They have given their lives and their two kids, third kid on the way, given their lives there. And they came to visit us. And there are a lot of things about that visit that helped trigger some things in my heart. But when they were coming, what brought me to my knees was looking back over some of the emails he had written me and I want you to hear what one of them said.

He wrote: "How many people have not believed because they've not heard?" He's surrounded by people who've never heard the gospel.

"What will it take for these people to hear? Have they not heard because there is no one to tell them? What can we do in obedience to God to change a world in which there are millions and millions of people who cannot call on the name of the Lord because they haven't believed? And who haven't believed because there's no one to tell them? Most of us would say we know the answer to that question. Many of us would say we're even doing things to change the situation. But the truth is, there will continue to be millions and millions of people who do not hear as long as we continue to use spare time and spare money to reach them."

These are two radically different questions. What can we spare and what will it take? I know that when I throw out some numbers that I've thrown out over the last few weeks that they're almost too alarming. 4.5 billion people, 30,000 kids today, dying, who will die of starvation or preventable diseases. And the fear is that the overwhelming nature of these numbers actually can lead to inaction, because it can actually make us begin to think "Well what can I really do to impact that?" In light of that, I want to encourage you. The line of thinking that says "I can't do everything, so I won't do anything" is straight from the pit of hell. It's straight from the pit of hell.

What happens when individuals and families begin to say "I can do. I can free up this over here to do for one. I can free up this over here to do for five. I can free up this over here to do for 10 and 20 and hundreds more and more and more." What happens when a faith family stops asking "What can we spare while we indulge ourselves?" Instead, "What's it going to take to make the gospel known among the least reached peoples on the earth? What's it going to take to bring water, food to unprecedented millions in the world?" That begins to change a whole mindset and that really leads us to this last truth, and it deals with the church. It brings this altogether for us as a community of faith.

## **A Radical Family**

### **Jesus unites His people together to enjoy and encourage one another as they abandon themselves to Him.**

Here's the deal. This is a picture that ends within Mark 10. Jesus unites his people together to enjoy and encourage one another as they abandon themselves to Him. Did you catch that? Enjoy and encourage one another as they abandon themselves to Him. We don't have a lot of time to hang out here, but look at verse 29 and 30, "*I tell you the truth,*" *Jesus replied,*" in other words, guaranteed, mark it down, don't miss it "*no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 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*" (Mark 10:29-30). I love this. It brings this whole series to such a strong concluding statement here.

Jesus says you abandon your house and your possessions and your family...That's what Christ calls you to do, which He's doing all across this world today. I talked to a brother this last week who lived in a part of the world, just about every person he leads to Christ is then beaten by their brothers or sisters or father or mother. It's the reality. Many of you will lose your mother or father or brother or sister. You'll lose your life, maybe. But here's the beauty. You do that? You get 100 times as much. It's a good deal. If you give me \$1.00 and I give you \$100.00, that's a smart thing for you to do.

#### **The church no longer seems like an abstract idea.**

That's what Jesus is saying here. And the picture is, don't miss it, first, the church no longer is an abstract idea in our minds. He says, "Some of you will lose family, but you're going to get a family you can't even imagine." This is talking about the church. Let me show it to you real quick. Look at this in verse 29. I want you to listen to the family members that are mentioned and see if there is a conspicuous absence the second time He mentions them. Follow with me. "*No one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much,*" and listen to what He says, "*homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields*" (Mark 10:29-30). What did he leave out? Did you catch it? He left our father.

The picture is when you leave behind, it's necessary to abandon your earthly family, because you're following Christ, He says you will have brothers and sisters and mothers, but you will have one Father who protects you as His children and makes sure that you're provided for. This is the beauty. The church is no longer an abstract idea. This is Acts, 2, 3, 4. If we'd do this, if you were to do this. If you were going to take food and covering and then begin to give surplus away, then all of a sudden some unexpected need comes that you never saw coming in your life, the beauty of it is, now you've got a family that is around

you to walk with you through that, to help you in that, a giving family at that. This is the picture. This is the church in reality.

But I also think it's one of the deterrents. When I think about these truths and putting them into practice, I think one of the reasons why we're hesitant to is because of our love of things. I think another reason why we're hesitant to is because of our fear of loneliness. Here's what I mean by that. I think it would be a lot easier to live out these truths in a simple, radical life if we saw everybody else in the church doing that. But when we look at these words and we look around us, and even look at our pastor and we see a life of self-indulgence, then we think, "Well I guess this really doesn't matter. I guess this isn't really true."

We need each other to show what this looks like in practice. I need you to pray for me and I want you to know that I'm praying for you. We need each other. The church is not an abstract idea that we gather together with every Sunday. This church is a motivator in our lives that spurs us on to Christ with the way we're living. God do this in this faith family. The church is not an abstract idea.

### **Sacrifice no longer seems like an adequate term.**

Sacrifice no longer seems like an appropriate term. A hundred times as much. This is all over Scripture. Proverbs 14:21, if you're gracious to the poor you will be happy. Proverbs 22:9, give generously to the poor and you will be blessed. Acts 20:35, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" And I love Isaiah 58:10 and 11, "*And if you spend yourselves,*" listen to this, "*And if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday. The LORD will guide you always; he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.*"

This is what He says. You spend yourself on behalf of the hungry and the poor and you will be a well-watered garden. That's a good picture there. A hundred times as much. This is why Hudson Taylor, after giving his life for 50 years in China, spending his life, his family's lives and his possessions for the sake of the lost and the poor in China, gets to the end of his life after 50 years and he makes this statement. "I never made a sacrifice." He said "I never made a sacrifice because it all made sense." See the treasure here. Church no longer an abstract idea.

### **The world no longer seems like an acceptable home.**

Sacrifice no longer an appropriate term and the world no longer seems like an adequate home. This world no longer seems like an adequate home. Not just in present age, but in an age to come.

Brothers and sisters, this world is not our home. This world is not our home. This world is not our homes. Let's stop living like it is. Picture this, you live in France, you come over to the United States and you're here in the U.S. for one month. And you're living in a hotel room here. And the rule is, during this one month, you can make as much money as you would like, but when you get on that plane at the end of the month to go back to France, you can take absolutely nothing on that plane with you. You can take no money and no possessions with you. Just all you've got on your back is what you will take back with you. Now the only caveat to that is, as you make all the money you want, you can deposit that in your bank in France.

So you got a month here. What are you going to do? Are you going to go out and buy expensive paintings and put them on the wall in your hotel room? Are you going to go out and buy expensive furnishings to fix up that hotel room as nice as it can be? Absolutely not. That would be the most foolish of things you could do. You would squander it all. Instead, you're going to make as much money as you can and you're going to make sure that before you get on that plane, it's in the bank in France.

I remind you, we are here for a vapor, a mist. Our life is here one second and it is gone the next. And there is an eternity to come. What is 80 years here to be followed by 80 billion years? So why live for nice hotel rooms? Houses and cars and clothes and stuff that are full of luxuries, why? Why not leave all the luxuries behind? Because it makes sense because there's another world to come. This is the question: Do we believe this Book? Because this Book tells us about Christ dying on a cross so that we would not have to live for comforts here. Or we don't have to live for luxuries here because we're free from those luxuries because we know the luxuries to come.

We know that we're living for another home. We know there are people here that God has left us here for their sake. The only reason we're here instead of with Him at this moment is for their sake. So, how can we indulge in more and more and more and more for ourselves? Not if we believe this Book, because this Book says we're living for another world, and it brings us to the question that all of us have to ask and we are at a point where we've got to ask as a church. Where are we going to stand? Are we going to stand with the starving or with the overfed? Are you going to stand with the rich man on his way to hell or the poor man, Lazarus, on his way to heaven?

How can we hoard our wealth and possessions when millions are hovering on the edge of starvation? I appeal to Christ in you. Are we going to have the courage to seek justice for the poor and the lost, even if that means disapproval from our affluent and religious neighbors? Which world are we going to live for? We must decide, and my encouragement is to decide today to take our lives and our possessions and to give them to God and to ask Him to spend them radically for the sake of the lost and the poor around the world.

**Permissions:** You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material provided that you do not alter it in any way, use the material in its entirety, and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. For web posting, a link to the media on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Radical.

**Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:** By David Platt. © David Platt & Radical. Website: [Radical.net](http://Radical.net)