

How Do I Get To Heaven?

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 05 June 2016

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

- [0 : 0 0] Well if we could, for a short while this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read and with the Lord's help look at Mark chapter 10.
- Mark chapter 10, page 1020 in the Pew Bible. Mark chapter 10, and if we take as our text the question of verse 17.
- Mark chapter 10, and verse 17. And as he, that is Jesus, was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?
- What must I do to inherit eternal life? One question which often puzzles people is the question, how do I get to heaven?
- How do I get to heaven? Because in the day and age in which we live, there are so many views about heaven, and what heaven is like, and how to get there.
- [1 : 2 2] There are so many theological perspectives which come from so many different religions and faith groups and sects, which confuse people as to which one is actually right.
- I mean, which one is telling us the truth? Which one is actually telling us how to get to heaven? And some say that, well, always, they all eventually get you to heaven.
- Every way, which doesn't matter what you do or who you believe in, you'll get to heaven. But on top of that, there are so many philosophies and theories and concepts and ideas all about heaven.
- Because the atheist will say that there's no such thing as heaven. When we die, we just cease to exist. We're put in the ground, we will be eaten by the worms, end of story.
- But the agnostic will admit, well, there must be a heaven if there is a God. But the agnostic isn't quite sure which God is in heaven. Yet for most people, whether they're religious or not, they would like to believe that at the end of their days, when they die and when they leave this world, they're going to go to heaven.
- [2 : 3 4] And some think that they're going to be a bright shining star looking down on everyone else. And they're going to go to heaven because they're a good person. Because in their understanding of who goes to heaven and who doesn't go to heaven, it's only good people who go to heaven.
- But bad people, like all the pedophiles and rapists and child abusers and murderers, they all go to hell. Those like ISIS and Hitler and Stalin and Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, they are the ones who will go to hell.
- But not good people. Not the upstanding members in our community. Not the good neighbours. Not the friendly people. Not those who keep themselves to themselves and don't do anyone any harm.
- They won't go to hell because they will go to heaven. And you know, there are all these opinions and ideas and views and suggestions and thoughts and theories about who will and who won't go to heaven.

And they're being thrown out by the media and by books and magazines and they're in songs, the lyrics of songs. And it's as if they are the authority figures on how to get to heaven.

[3 : 48] But the question no one ever seems to ask, and thinking about it, it would be the most logical question. No one ever seems to ask, what does God say about this subject?

What does God say about how to get to heaven? What does God say about who goes to heaven and who goes to hell? And so if we were to ask God, how do I get to heaven?

What do you think he would say? Well, that's the very question that this young man did. He came to Jesus, the God-man.

And he asked him, what must I do to inherit eternal life? How do I get to heaven? But this question which the young man asked, it sparked a discussion.

Not only between Jesus and this wealthy young man, but also it sparked a discussion between Jesus and all his disciples. Because when the disciples hear Jesus talking to the rich young man and explaining to him how he is to get to heaven, they soon realize that their understanding of how to get to heaven is completely wrong.

[5 : 05] And that's because they have a wrong view of salvation. They have a wrong view of how to be saved and how to get to heaven. And so what I'd like us to consider this morning is that Jesus addresses three wrong views of salvation.

He addresses three wrong views of how to get to heaven. Because the rich young man, he has a superficial view of salvation.

And the disciples, they have a surprising view of salvation. And then Peter, he has a self-righteous view of salvation. And so we're going to look at a superficial view of salvation, a surprising view of salvation, and a self-righteous view of salvation.

So we look firstly at a superficial view of salvation. A superficial view of salvation. Read again at verse 17. And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked, Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

If we were to grade this man on his outward appearance of religion and his honourable questions and what seemed to be a desire for eternal things, if we were to have graded him, he would have scored full marks.

[6 : 31] Because as Jesus was walking through Judea towards Jerusalem, this young man spots him. And he makes a beeline just for Jesus. And Mark tells us that he came running up to Jesus, which was an indication of his humility before Jesus.

But he also came, as Mark says, while Jesus was on the way. Which points out that Jesus, he was just passing by that day. And the young man, he takes his only opportunity to speak to Jesus.

But more than that, this young man, he kneels down before Jesus. As this token of respect and honour because Jesus is a teacher of the law.

And as this rich young man kneels down before Jesus, he addresses Jesus with this weighty and serious question. Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

But what we mustn't miss about all this is that the question of this man's lips are not the question of his heart.

[7 : 38] The question of his lips are not the question of his heart. Because if we were to go on outward appearances alone and actions of respect towards religion and respect towards the teachers of religion, then this rich young man, he looked apart.

He looked like he should get to heaven. But even though these outward actions of this young man seemed to show signs of interest and desire to follow Jesus, they were in fact superficial.

They were completely shallow. Because as outward appearances go, that's all they were. They didn't come from his heart. And I say that because as we have followed Jesus throughout his ministry, Jesus has had many people kneeling before him.

Many people kneeling before him. We met the leper. He came crawling on his knees, begging Jesus, Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean.

We encountered Legion, the demon-possessed man who fell down on his face and worshipped Jesus in the dust. We saw Jairus who was running to Jesus and he was throwing himself at the feet of Jesus, begging Jesus to come and help him heal his dying daughter.

[9 : 01] And we've seen many others coming and they're falling at the feet of Jesus. But the difference between all of them and this rich young man is that they all saw their need of Jesus.

They all saw their need of Jesus, but this young man didn't see his need of anyone. And that's why he called Jesus Good Teacher. He was trying to flatter Jesus by calling him good.

He was trying to get on the good side of Jesus. He was trying to butter up Jesus and make Jesus think that he's just this nice guy. But the teachers or the rabbis, they never considered anyone or anything good except for God alone.

And that's why Jesus responds to the young man's question by saying those very words. There is none good but God alone. Now Jesus never said those words to highlight that he was God.

He said them in order to reaffirm to the young man that you can flatter me, you can have banter with me, all you like, but it's still God's standard that you must meet.

[10 : 14] Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? And as we said, the question of this young man's lips, it's not the question of his heart.

Because instead of outward false humility, he should have come to Jesus with true reverence and godly fear. Instead of proudly bowing on the pavement for everyone to see him, he should have bowed in submission within his heart.

Instead of flattery and sweet talk to Jesus by calling him good teacher, this young man should have come to Jesus confessing him as Lord, just like the leper did.

He should have come acknowledging that this good teacher is Jesus, the son of the most high God, just like Legion did. He should have come to the end of himself, begging Jesus for help, just like Jairus did.

And you know, my friend, we ought to be careful how we view Jesus. Because this young man had a superficial and shallow view of the Saviour. So much so that he had a superficial and shallow view of his own sin.

[11 : 32] Because when Jesus answers the question of this young man's lips, he says in verse 19, you know the commandments. Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not bear false witness, do not defraud, honour your father and your mother.

And as a Jew, this rich young man would have been taught the Ten Commandments on his mother's knee. He would have been taught to recite the Ten Commandments from the moment he could talk.

And there was no doubt that he knew them in his head. He knew them all in his head, but he didn't know them in his heart. And there's a huge difference, a huge difference.

And that's why he answered Jesus the second time, teacher. He doesn't call him good this time, because Jesus is now getting very serious with him.

There's no room for flattery now. There's no room for buttering up Jesus and giving him all the sweet talk. Teacher, he says, all these things I have kept from my youth.

[12 : 34] And when you listen to the question of this man's heart and not the question of his lips, we see that he didn't actually want to do anything in order to inherit eternal life.

Because he thought he had already done it. He thought that his good works and his commandment keeping was enough. And so the only reason he came to Jesus was that he wanted confirmation that he was on the right track to get to heaven.

Which affirms that he wasn't his question wasn't actually genuine. He just wanted the good teacher to pat him on the back and say, you're on your way son.

You're on your way. He had such a high view of himself as a good person that he's claiming to Jesus that he's sinless. I mean, listen to that.

This young man's self-assessment it leads him to claim to a sinless Christ that he is sinless. How arrogant can you become to claim that you've never committed adultery or murdered or stolen or lied or defrauded anyone and you've continued to honour your father and mother all your life.

[13 : 53] But that's his self-assessment. And like many people, this young man has a superficial view of sin because he's only looking at the good that he has done in his life.

He's looking at all the outward appearances which he has kept. But Jesus says to the young man, that's not the good God's assessment of you. That may be your assessment of yourself but that's not God's assessment of you because God doesn't have a superficial view of sin.

And Jesus, as you know, he teaches in the Sermon on the Mount that in Matthew chapter 5 in the Sermon on the Mount he teaches that God's law, it goes far deeper than good works and keeping up appearances.

Because Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount you've heard that it was said you shall not murder and whoever murders shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

And Jesus goes on to say you have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

[15 : 09] And then Jesus goes even further by saying you have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you love your enemies. Bless those who curse you.

Do good to those who hate you. And pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. And so when Jesus lists all these commandments to this rich young man he's affirming to him that his view of sin is nothing but superficial.

And my friend Jesus wants to know today what view of sin do you have? What view of sin do you have? Because God doesn't have a superficial view of sin.

And he doesn't have a superficial view of the saviour. And he doesn't have a superficial view of salvation. Because God knows how much it cost to save people from their sins.

He knows the depth and the breadth and the length and the height of hell which Jesus had to endure for sinners. He knows the extent that Jesus would have to go through in order for sinners like you and me to be saved.

[16 : 21] He knows how much. He knows how much it cost to see that man upon a cross. But he also knows the love that put him there.

He knows that greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. And the love of Jesus for this young man is what Mark draws our attention to next because he tells us that Jesus looked at him and loved him.

He looked at him and loved him. And you know that's what Jesus does with everyone who is lost. Everyone who is lost and trying to find their own way to heaven.

He looks at them and loves them. And he looks at them and loves them and says Ryle J.C. Ryle because the heart of Jesus is a wide heart.

He has an abundance of pity, compassion and tender care for those who are following sin and the world. But Ryle goes on to say we may boldly tell the chief of sinners that Christ loves them and that salvation is ready for the worst of people if they will only come to Christ.

[17 : 49] If people are lost it's not because Jesus does not love them and is not ready to save them. No, no says Ryle.

His own words unravel the mystery. Men love darkness rather than light. And my friend that was the sad case for this rich young man and it's the sad case for many other people who come face to face with the love of Jesus in the gospel.

They love the darkness rather than the light. They love the darkness rather than the light and because they all lack one thing they lack a true love for Jesus.

A love that is willing to submit your life to Jesus and follow him. A love that is willing to make Jesus more than a good teacher. It's a love that is willing to make Jesus my Lord and my Savior.

But for this young man he had such a superficial view of the Savior and of his sin and of salvation. He couldn't even see the ruin that he was in which is why he couldn't see the remedy in Jesus.

[19 : 09] He was blinded by his possessions and he loved the darkness rather than the light. And when Jesus finished speaking to him we're told in verse 22 it says disheartened by the same he went away sorrowful for he had great possessions.

But the response of Jesus to the rich young man's superficial view of salvation it led the disciples to have this surprising view of salvation in which they wondered well who can be saved?

So let's look secondly at the disciples' surprising view of salvation. A surprising view of salvation. If you read with me at verse 23 and Jesus looked around and said to his disciples how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were amazed at his words but Jesus said to them again children how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

And they were exceedingly astonished and said to him then who can be saved? And so having listened to this dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man the disciples had witnessed the change in the demeanour of this young man.

[20 : 33] They saw his confidence when he came to Jesus standing on his own merits and his own self-assurance and asked how do I get to heaven? But the disciples also saw this man's face fall and become sorrowful and they saw him walk away from Jesus all because he had great possessions.

And as this man is walking away from Jesus having run to him in the first place we're told in verse 23 Jesus looked round and said to his disciples how difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.

And as the disciples just stand there they're completely taken by surprise. They're astonished to see this rich young man being denied access into heaven.

And just so the disciples don't think that Jesus has made a mistake with a rich young man Jesus repeats himself children how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God.

And the disciples are surprised at these words from Jesus because their view of salvation is that rich people deserve to go to heaven. The disciples understanding of God and his salvation is that wealth and having riches they are a blessing from God.

[21 : 56] It's viewed as a reward and a good thing. And so when the disciples encounter this rich young man walking to Jesus or running to him their perception of him straight away before Jesus says a word to them what they're thinking in their mind is that if anyone can get to heaven it's him.

He can get there. I mean look at him. He's young. God has blessed him with his health. He's rich. God has blessed him with his wealth. He is all the outward forms of a good person.

God has blessed him with a good upbringing. He kneels down before Jesus which means that he's been taught how to show reverence to the ministers of God's word. And he asks all the right questions and he even calls Jesus the good teacher.

And so for the disciples all that they can see in this rich young man is that he is the perfect candidate for heaven. The perfect candidate. The disciples think that he's this exemplary person and one which many should follow.

But as we know Jesus sees through it all because he can see the heart of this rich young man. man. And he sees all his covetousness and his idolatry.

[23 : 15] Because like many people who live an exemplary life and who even endear themselves to their religion they can still be an idolater.

But what we must be clear on is that this rich young man's problem wasn't his money. His wealth wasn't his problem. His money wasn't a problem in the bank.

His money was only a problem in his heart. Because it was his love of money and his love of possessions and his unwillingness to part with any of it for the sake of gaining eternal life.

That was his problem. His money was his security. His money and his wealth that gave him security and status and prestige and power.

And he wasn't willing to part with any of it in order to get to heaven. Now Jesus wasn't actually demanding that the rich man sell everything. All that he has in order to become a Christian and go to heaven.

[24 : 20] Jesus was testing the rich young man to see what was of more value to him. His possessions or eternal life.

His possessions or eternal life. will be a challenging question from Jesus to all of us. Which do we value more?

Our possessions or going to heaven? Eternal life. And our response to that question shows what our real treasure is. Jesus said where your treasure is there will your heart be also.

and if our true treasure is Jesus and eternal life then we'll be laying up treasures in heaven. But if our true treasure is all our possessions then what Jesus is saying to you is you cannot get into heaven.

And my friend it's a simple question. But as Jesus said it's a hard question. what's more important to you? Your stuff or your soul?

[25 : 34] What's more important? Are your possessions your servant or your master? But Jesus' questions it's all to do with discipleship. Because Jesus wants to know if we are willing to become his disciple.

Are we willing to give up the treasures in our heart in order to gain the treasure of heaven? Are we willing to put away all our idols in order to gain Jesus as our saviour?

Are we willing to deny self and take up our cross and follow Jesus? Are we willing to obey Jesus and follow him in order to have access to heaven? Are we willing to make Jesus our lord and master and cast our lot in with him?

Well my friend only you can answer that question for yourself. I just hope that you don't leave church today the same way that this rich young man left Jesus disheartened by the same and sorrowful because you're still clinging to your possessions.

But you know even Jesus admitted that many people struggle with this. Even Jesus admitted it's not easy. It's not easy to give up things. It's not easy to give up your life and follow Jesus.

[26 : 52] It's not easy to give up your status and your position and all that you've known to and clung to in your life. It's not easy to admit that discipleship comes at a great cost.

It's not easy. It's not easy. In fact Jesus says it's impossible. It's impossible. He says it's far easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

And it's such a vivid illustration isn't it? And if you want a modern equivalent Jesus is saying that it's easier for your car to go through the eye of a sewing needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Which is an understatement. It'll never happen. It'll never work. It's impossible. But the disciples they're listening to Jesus speaking and they're in disbelief.

They're totally surprised that this rich young man can't be saved and he can't go to heaven. And they begin asking one another well who can be saved then? Who can enter the kingdom of God?

[27 : 58] Who can get to heaven? Because if this rich young man can't get to heaven even though he showed all the right signs of coming to Jesus and kneeling before him and calling him good and asking him the right questions if this rich young man, this exemplary person, this good person, this upstanding member of society, if he can't get into heaven who can?

Who can? And we're told that Jesus looked at them again. He's been looking at everyone. But now he looks at the disciples and says, with men it is impossible, but not with God.

For with God all things are possible. And what Jesus is saying is that it's impossible to get to heaven without God. And that's what all the other religions and philosophies and faith beliefs seem to forget because they all think that the only way to get to heaven is by our good works.

And as long as our good works outweigh all the bad works and our mistakes, then we will get to heaven. But my friend, surprise, surprise, that's not what the God of heaven says.

He says that it's impossible to get to heaven on your own good works. It's impossible to get to heaven on your outward forms of religion.

[29 : 29] He says that it's impossible to get to heaven by being a good person. He says that it's impossible, impossible to pay your way into heaven. Because my friend, it's impossible to get to heaven without God.

It's impossible to get to heaven without God. But Jesus doesn't leave us without direction on how to get to heaven. Because he says, children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God.

And he's giving us the answer. The key on how to get to heaven, it's in the word children. Children. And what Jesus is saying is that we are not to follow the exemplary life of this rich young man, but the example of children.

Because in the previous section, verses 13 to 16, which we looked at briefly last time, Jesus tells the disciples in verse 15, truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

And when Jesus said this, he wasn't saying that we need to be naive or gullible or innocent when it comes to our salvation. No, the quality which Jesus commends, which is so readily found in young children, is their dependency.

[31 : 01] Their dependency. Because as you know, a little child is completely dependent upon someone else doing everything for them. They can't do anything for themselves.

They can't pay for their food. They can't prepare their meals. They can't feed themselves. They can't wash themselves. They can't dress themselves. They can't do anything for themselves. They are completely dependent upon their parents.

All they can do is throw their arms wide open and just cry for help. And so what Jesus is saying is don't look at the rich man on how to get to heaven.

Look to children. Look to the example of children. Because salvation is nothing to do with what we can do for ourselves.

We can't earn it. We can't work for it. The only thing we can do is completely depend upon what Jesus has done on the cross.

[32 : 01] and throw our arms wide open and cry to him for mercy. That's what we need to do.

That's what we need to do in order to get to heaven. You need to see your sin and you need to cry to Jesus for mercy. And so we've seen the rich young man he had a superficial view of salvation.

The disciples had a surprising view of salvation. But lastly and very briefly we see that Peter has a self-righteous view of salvation. A self-righteous view of salvation.

He says in verse 28 Peter began to say to him that's Jesus see we have left everything and followed you. And like all the other disciples standing there Peter has been listening intently to Jesus.

But whilst he was listening to Jesus Peter seemed to be getting more and more restless. Because if he had understood Jesus correctly then Peter thought Jesus said that there is nothing we can do for God in order to get to heaven.

[33 : 19] If Peter understood what Jesus was saying then what we do for God has no bearing or ensuring that we get to heaven. And so Peter concludes that if with man through discipleship and getting to heaven if it's impossible by our own good works for God then what's the point in sacrificing everything for God?

And Peter is listening to Jesus and he just bursts out with it as he always does and he says what he's thinking we have left everything and followed you. And the disciples had.

They had left their nets they had left their tax booths they had left their homes they had left their families they had left their income to follow Jesus. And Peter is listening to Jesus and he can't believe what he's hearing and he's asking does anything of what we have done for you count towards going to heaven.

And with this we must see that Peter had the mindset of a Pharisee because he still thinks that he will get to heaven by his good works and his faithfulness to Jesus and the fact that he has given up everything to follow him.

And even as a disciple of Jesus Peter has a self-righteous view of salvation. and you know he's acting like the older brother in the parable of the prodigal son.

[34 : 49] The parable about those two lost brothers where the younger prodigal son took his father's inheritance and he went and squandered everything with reckless living.

But when the prodigal son the younger son when he returned the father forgave him and welcomed him home with open arms. And the father he killed the fattened calf of the younger son and he threw a party at his return.

But the older brother the older more self-righteous brother he was furious and he came to his father and he said all these years I've been serving you and I've never transgressed your commandment and yet you never gave me a young goat.

And the father said to him son you are always with me and all that I have is yours. And that's what Jesus reminds Peter here.

That he has his inheritance and it's an inheritance which is incorruptible undefiled that does not fade away because it's reserved in heaven form.

[36 : 00] And Jesus tells Peter that what he has done for the name of Jesus and for the sake of the gospel it's not worthless. You'll have your reward for your faithfulness he says but that's not what gets you to heaven.

It's not by your self-righteous acts that gets you to heaven. It's not by what we do for Jesus and how much we serve and how much we give to him that gets us to heaven.

And he says all these things they should be the outworking of our love for Jesus and our love for the gospel. They shouldn't be done out of guilt or favors or the approval of others or even the approval of God.

All our service to Jesus Christ should all be done with a heart of service and a heart of submission and a love for Jesus.

Because as Jesus says the sacrifices which we make in this life as a disciple they are nothing. Nothing in comparison to the eternal value of heaven.

[37 : 13] That's why he says Jesus said truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands with persecutions and in the age to come he says eternal life.

But says Jesus many who are first will be last and the last first. And what Jesus means by this one I suppose it seems to be a riddle.

What he means is that in order to be his disciple and to experience true salvation we must humble ourselves and concede that faith in Jesus Christ alone is the only way to heaven.

And so we conclude with a question we began. How do I get to heaven? Jesus is saying to us today I am the way I am the truth I am the life no man comes to the father no one can get to heaven except through me.

therefore the only way to get to heaven is to put your faith in Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone.

[38 : 53] So the only question which is left to ask is your faith in Jesus Christ and are you going to heaven?

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee that we have an access to heaven at all.

We bless thee that the God of heaven would open that door wide for us and call us and bid us to come to it. And enable us Lord we pray to see in Jesus Christ that living and new way to come to him to confess him as Lord and Saviour to say like the hymn writer of old that nothing in my hands I bring but simply to thy cross I cling O Lord help us to see the way the narrow way that leads to life help us Lord to seek it to seek it and to find it O Lord that thou wouldst bless us we pray thee then apply thy word to us by thy spirit and lead us and guide us in this day the day that is the Lord's day help us to rest in thee and to wait patiently take away our iniquity and receive us graciously for Jesus sake Amen We shall conclude by singing in

Psalm 73 Psalm 73 in the Scottish Psalter page 316 Psalm 73 singing from verse 25 down to the end of the psalm Psalm 73 is a psalm in which the psalmist has been looking at everything else around him in the world and he sees the emptiness of it and that's why he confesses at the end of the psalm whom have I in the heavens high but thee O Lord alone and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none so Psalm 73 from verse 25 to the end of the psalm to God's praise who who have I in the heaven's high but thee

O Lord alone and in the earth whom I desire beside thee there is there is none my flesh and heart doth faint and fail but thought doth fail thee never for for of my heart God is a strength and portion forever for lowly and far from thee forever perish thou and not the whole grave from thee know thou hast destroy destroy it all but surely it is good for me that

[43 : 11] I trot near to God in God I trust that all thy words I may deliver abroad the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore Amen Amen good God God Him