

Endless Possibilities For People Being Saved

by James Jennings

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Scripture: Joshua 10:13, Exodus 14:21, Luke 19:10, Luke 15:7, Hebrews 7:25, Matthew 19:26, Hebrews 6:4, Luke 13:28, Hebrews 10:22

Topics: "Humility in Salvation", "God's Power to Save"

Description

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Transcript

Now before I read my passage, I'm going to need someone to help out up here in the front. What I have here is a needle. Now this is not a small needle.

This is a needle on the larger size for the sake of your ability to see the needle. It's got a point. And then if you look closely right here, there is a hole there.

What is that called? The eye of the needle. So who up here could put a piece of string through this for me? Who would volunteer to do that? One of you guys want to? Glenn, alright, I'm glad to see you back. Go ahead and stick that through there.

Let's see how difficult or easy it is. He's almost got it. Okay, he got it.

Look at that. There you've got the string through the eye of the needle. Okay, let's take the string out.

We hold the needle. Go ahead and put this piece of Romax 212 through there for me. Go ahead and get that through.

It should be pretty easy. How's it going? Well, he put the needle in the casing of the Romax. But putting this through the eye of the needle, it's not just that Glenn didn't have the ability to do that right now.

What would be true if we went around every single person in this room to see if anyone had the ability to put this through the eye of the needle? What would we find? There's not a single person here unless you shred this up into all sorts of small pieces and slide it through. You don't have the ability to get this through the eye of the needle. Now how much more if I took Glenn and all of us down to the zoo, and we found a rather large animal called the camel, and we tried to fit that camel through the eye of this needle? Is that possible? No, it's not.

It's absolutely an impossibility to do that. And the problem is that it's impossible for everyone. There's no situation by which it is possible.

Now, if you know your Bibles, you know where I'm headed with this, so go ahead and turn to Matthew 19. I want to speak to you this morning in the midst of this week of prayer and fasting on endless possibilities for people being saved. My hope is you'll be stirred all the more to be praying specifically for people you're praying for to be saved that they indeed would come to know the rest that is found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So Matthew 19, in context leading up to these words in chapter 19 that we're going to look at, you well know it, but the young ruler had refused to follow Christ. He chose his love of his great possessions and his trust in his own law-keeping over the Lord Jesus. Christ is saying, come and follow Me.

He didn't follow Christ. And so then Jesus starts in Matthew 19.23. Let me pray and then we'll read. Father, Lord, I am thankful even just to be here.

Lord, sickness is sad to not have a list of people coming over to the house, to not have hospitality. It's sad to be sick. Lord, lack of energy.

You feel like time can be wasted, and yet, Lord, You have Your purposes. And we do not despise those. And Lord, here we are.

We're gathering today to be stirred up to love and good works. Lord, I pray You'd use this to stir up my brothers and sisters all the more as they're praying this week. Please, Lord, use this.

Give us faith right now. I pray this in Christ's name, Amen. Matthew 19.23 This is right after the rich young ruler went away sorrowful because of his many possessions.

And Jesus said to His disciples, truly I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Difficulty. You hear that word? Difficult for the rich to enter Heaven.

Now, how difficult? Verse 24. Jesus gives this illustration. Again, I tell you, it's easier for a camel, this large animal that's in that area at that time, it's easier for that camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.

That needle I had. It's easier for a camel. He's saying it's easier for that to happen.

The problem is that is an impossibility. Right? And I know in our modern culture, people want to talk about some gate in Jerusalem that is called the eye of the needle and you've got to hop off the camel to get through the gate and all of that. Brethren, that doesn't make any sense in the context here because Christ is talking about an impossibility.

He's using a hyperbole to drive home a point to you and me. Some camel and hopping off of it is very much possible. It makes no sense in the context.

That's reading something in here that I don't believe is there at all and misses the thrust that Christ is wanting to make. So 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. You hear that? I mean, you hear that.

What an illustration. Now, how did the disciples respond to what Jesus said? We just heard what Christ said. It makes you wonder, well, how are the disciples going to respond to what He has said? And v. 25 records this.

V. 25, "...When the disciples heard this..." And the this meaning this statement about how difficult it is for the rich to be saved. What was their response? "...They were greatly astonished." And what did they say? What did they conclude? Who then can be saved? Who then can be saved? Now, pause here. You have to think about what they said.

Because what they said helps us understand what the statement Jesus made meant. We won't understand the statement Jesus said and what He meant if we don't recognize what they actually stated here. They didn't say, oh, so it's easier to be saved if you're a poor fisherman like us.

Boy, I'm sure glad I was born in poverty relative to my time. It's easier for me to be saved. No, they didn't respond like that.

Rather, they took Jesus' words in a broader way and they applied it to everyone. Who then can be saved? Not, oh, the poor or rich, it's so difficult for them to be saved. No, no, they look at it and say, who then can be saved? They include themselves.

Although they're not rich, they're saying who can be saved? Who can be saved? So, it seems they expected this law-keeping, rich, young ruler of all people would be most likely to be going to heaven. And finding that it is more difficult for him to enter than a camel going through the eye of the needle, that just makes them say, wait a minute, then who on earth could ever possibly be saved? Now why would they expect that? Why would they hear that and come away thinking that about what Christ has just said? What's from the Bible tells us why they thought that. What happens when you go to the Old Testament? What do you find? What do you find is likened to riches? When you have riches in the Old Testament? When you have treasure? Yeah, blessing.

Blessing from who? Blessing from God, right? Matthew here is very much geared towards dealing with the Jews throughout his Gospel. The Jews, they've got a mindset. And again, our own disciples here are continually having a renewed mind and not understanding Christ at certain points.

And then eventually, they understand Christ at certain points. But Jews view the rich, and if you go to the Old Testament, you're going to come away thinking if a guy's rich and if he's keeping the law, that means he is blessed of God. I mean, very Deuteronomy 28 that talks about the covenant blessings.

It speaks in this exact way. The Lord will make you abound in prosperity. The Lord will open to you His good treasury, the heavens to give you rain to your land and its season and to bless all the work of your hands.

And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. That's talking about physical prosperity for the Jew. That's how they took that.

If I keep the law, that's what the rich and ruler was doing or professing to do it and Jesus didn't deny it, and I have riches, that's a sign I am blessed of God. And so these disciples seeing that this man, it's so difficult for him even to get into heaven, something it seems to me in their Jewish mindset, that's why they respond, who then can be saved? If the guy most likely to have the blessing of God, it's difficult for him, what about us? You could read many Old Testament passages and see this is how they thought. Psalm 112, one is another.

It says, blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments. What's going to happen to this man's house? Wealth and riches are in his house. There is a promise.

Wealth and riches are in this man's house who is obeying the law. So law-keeping rich people must have God's favor. Very understandable how one would conclude that.

That somehow, they've got a greater chance like this ruler. So I think the disciples' response here in Matthew 19 if you just got here, the disciples heard this. They were greatly astonished saying who then can be saved? They broadened out this idea.

They're not just thinking about rich people and it being difficult for rich people to go to heaven. They're thinking about who. If the person most likely in the Jewish mind isn't, it's very difficult for them, what is it going to be for us? I think this is even another example in our New Testaments where you see some of the disciples' slow thinking and their slowness to really understand Christ and what He's done.

Again, often they're thinking He's bringing a physical kingdom. They're confused at different points. So, to summarize, the disciples are hearing that those who they would most expect would get into heaven will have an impossible time at getting in.

And they're greatly shocked, greatly astonished, the text says. And they say, who then can be saved? You see? I mean, I can't read it another way than that. They broaden out the statement and they're not just thinking about the rich.

They're thinking about everyone now in their minds. So, Christ came, if you remember, to call the sinners and not the righteous. And yet, so often, what mankind thinks is Christ has come to call the righteous.

And this is just another example of Christ tearing down that mindset that humanity wants to have. And often, the Jews are considered the righteous. What did they do when they were put forward with Christ before them? They tripped right over Him.

They stumbled over Him time and time again. And so Jesus' response to them is what's next. They say, who then can be saved? I mean, it's in a question form.

They're wondering, who then can be saved? And look what Jesus says. Here our statement is. But Jesus looked at them and said, with man, this is impossible.

What's the this in context specifically referring to? Salvation. They just asked, who then can be saved? Right? Specifically in context here, this is about salvation. The conversion.

That's why I'm calling this message the endless possibilities of people being saved. Because that's what this is primarily about. With man, this is impossible.

But with God, you've got to love the contrast there, but with God, all things are possible. What a statement in response to their question. And it's not like they asked for this, but He affirms their great astonishment.

They're greatly astonished. Who then can be saved? And Christ says, yeah, absolutely, who then can be saved? It's impossible with man. But with God, all things are possible.

So this morning, we're in a week of prayer and fasting. And as I mentioned, I want us to be reminded, not just reminded of how impossible it is for anyone to be saved. We could focus on that, the negative.

But the text is really about how possible it is for anyone to be saved because of how great and powerful our God is. But you have those two statements there. With man and with God.

How are we going about bringing about this salvation in someone's life? Or how are they, the lost, trying to bring it about? Is it with man or is it with God? Whose side are you on and standing and trusting in? Now, I should ask this question. Does Christ broaden how this can be applied when He says with God all things are possible? He says this, focusing on being saved, and then He goes and He says all things. To me, it does sound like He's broadening it, which is a true statement.

I mean, with God, anything consistent with His character, He's absolutely able to do a miracle in a financial realm. He's able to change the hearts of rulers. He's able to split Red Seas.

That didn't deal with spiritual salvation, but physical deliverance. So yes, there's definitely that truth here. But specifically, if you look at the passage, look at 9.16, the rich and ruler, he's talking about eternal life.

You go into v. 17, if you would enter life. You go to v. 23, kingdom of heaven. And even at the end there, v. 29, it will inherit eternal life.

So the focus here is clearly salvation. But brethren, you know it. There are hard cases.

And what's wrong with this statement? There are hard cases for people to be saved. What's wrong with that? Yeah, all cases of salvation are hard cases. Christ is saying to everyone, is it a possibility? Okay, I know.

Look, I'm interpreting this through the lens of the disciples. They hear it's more difficult for the rich to enter heaven. And their response is, who then can be saved? So the disciples hear Christ's words.

And they don't just narrow it in on these rich people. I'm telling you, I think the text is teaching they view the rich, like the Jews would, as those who had the greatest opportunity, those who were keeping the law, those who were blessed by God. And if the person who looks most physically to be blessed by God, it's difficult for them to get to heaven, who then can be saved? They're seeing this whole thing of salvation, it's impossible with man.

We can't look to the things that are earthly like riches in outward, external obedience. Solitarsis. That was an impossible case.

But what happened? God saved them. So Jesus makes it clear. It's possible.

I mean, it's impossible, but it's possible. Right? It's both. It's impossible for that person you're praying for to be saved with man.

But it is possible with God for them to be converted. And I think first, we really do need to see it as impossible. We need to think of that.

It is impossible for anyone to be saved with man. It's impossible. I mean, that's what's before us.

Every conversion is an impossibility. I think the more we realize that, the less we will rely on anything else but the Gospel message and the power of God. Any temptation to do anything with a false motive or to try to trick someone in like so many churches are doing to try to get people to make conversions supposedly, we will abhor that all the more as we see it's absolutely impossible.

Salvation is, as Jonah said of old, of the Lord. It is of the Lord, as it says in Jonah. When you think of the Bible, Ezekiel's saying, who then can make these dead bones rise? You, O Lord.

It's only the Lord who can do that. Salvation is called a gift. Right? It's given.

Sinners are dead in their trespasses and sins. And the fact a condemned criminal before a holy God can be saved from God's righteous wrath, it's just astounding. The fact we're saved here, it's more astounding than me getting that Romex through the eye of the needle.

It's more astounding than if we got a camel through the eye of the needle. That's how amazing it is that we're saved. It's a miracle.

It's incredible. It's impossible, and yet it's actually happened because with God, it's possible. It's possible.

Is it possible for blood of bulls and goats to take away sin? Hebrews says it's impossible. But you know what? It's possible for the blood of Christ to cleanse of all sin. Is it possible to please God without faith? Hebrews says no, it's impossible to please God without faith.

For whoever would draw near to God, you must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. So second thought, first, we need to see it's impossible, brethren. My five children being converted, it is impossible with man.

But with God, it is possible. Absolutely possible for the Lord to knock them all over like dominoes and save all five of them and bring them into His kingdom. But a second thing, although it's impossible, we need to realize this, man is responsible to follow Christ.

I know we didn't read the whole section with the rich young ruler for the sake of time, but did Jesus share to the rich young ruler this impossibility or did He wait for him to be gone and He shared it with His disciples? He waited. He shared it with His disciples. This stunning statement, He shared it with them.

The main thing put forward to the lost, to the rich young ruler, was His responsibility to come and surrender and follow the Lamb. Same thing, we need to do that before people. I mean, if you look at this passage, it's amazing how much is talked about follow me, follow me.

And all the way down to verse 29, He describes the true Christian as the one who, you haven't just left houses or brothers or sisters, but the motive is the key. And He says right there near the end of verse 29, for My namesake. That's what a Christian is.

There's someone living for the namesake of their Master who is the Lord Jesus. That's Christianity. It's for your namesake, Lord.

So here we are. We've got all these people we want to see converted, and it's impossible with man. But it's fully possible with God.

We have a God who wants us to pray to Him. We've got a God who saved us. The fact I'm here and saved, it was an impossibility.

There's no way it could have happened. Unless God intervened, I wouldn't be here. You wouldn't be here.

It's impossible for that to happen. So thirdly, how would you respond after hearing from Christ of how impossible it is for anyone to be saved? How do you think you would respond? What would be the next thing you would say after Christ says to you, with man it is impossible? You're just greatly astonished. All the disciples were.

You say, who do you think could be saved? And the Lord says, with man it is impossible. But with God, all things are possible. What would be the next thing you would say or ask? I mean, maybe you would say, oh, Lord, thank You for choosing us.

Wow, praise the Lord that You've chosen us. Wouldn't you expect that it maybe hit you about what the Lord just stated? Now why do I ask that? I want to look at Peter's response. Look, there's multiple interpretations on how Peter responded.

You might not agree with mine, but honestly, until this week, it never stood out to me what Peter said. It never hit me. I'm so familiar with this passage from Mark 10, a parallel where it doesn't state everything Peter said, that I felt like I just never saw it.

So let's look. How would you respond after hearing Christ say this absolutely shocking, astounding statement and encouragement about the possibility of being saved? So Peter, verse 27. And notice, the disciples, verse 25, they all said it seems to indicate.

Now, was Peter a spokesman on behalf of them in verse 27? Or was this just Peter? It's hard to know. Is it surprising that Peter's the one who spoke up? No, that's consistent. Peter says, see, we've left everything and followed You.

Now stop. That's what Mark and Luke record. And it's obvious why Peter says that.

The rich and ruler didn't leave everything and followed Christ. Peter's saying, see, we have. Look at the next thing Peter asks.

It's interesting. See, we've left everything and followed You. What then will we have? What then will be our reward? Christ has just made this statement about the impossibility of being saved and how with God all things are possible.

He's just made this astounding statement after they asked, who then can be saved? In Peter's response, see, Lord, we've left everything and followed You. What then will we have? Why did He ask what then will we have? There's a reason He did. Something was on His mind.

What was on His mind that made Him ask this from the passage? Yeah, what He said to the rich and ruler. What did Christ say to the rich and ruler? If you look up at v. 21, you will have treasure in heaven. Come and follow Me, right? Christ just said you're going to have treasure in heaven to the rich and ruler.

So Peter there is saying Christ say that to the rich and ruler. And I would assume that's still on his mind. This dialogue is happening here.

All the disciples are greatly astonished. And Christ makes this statement. But you know what's still on Peter's mind? Not only does he acknowledge, look, Lord, we have followed You, but he just heard that man got offered treasure in heaven.

And he then says, well, what are we going to get? You just said this guy was going to get this if he would have followed You. What about us? Lord, what about us? Now, I don't want to misrepresent Peter here. I don't want to take his words in a way they shouldn't be taken.

But it's debatable how should they be taken here. One thing I didn't realize is that in chapter 20, v. 1-16, is Christ giving a response to what Peter said. That entire parable, it's only in Matthew's Gospel.

It's not in Mark. It's not in Luke. It's right here.

Because Christ is giving a response to Peter. He responds to Peter by saying, Jesus said to them, v. 28, "...Truly I say to you, in the new world when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands for My name's sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life, but..." He contrasts all of that.

And then He goes and He talks for the next 17 verses about what He states right here, which clearly was what Peter needed to hear at this moment in his life. "...But many who are first will be last, and the last first." And then this horrible chapter break. Chapter 20.

It's not helpful that it's there. What's the first word in 20 v. 1? It's a conjunction. He is going on in His train of thought for the Kingdom of Heaven is like a Master.

And He goes and He talks about this very thing here and He ends in v. 16, so the last will be first and the first last. He's responding to Peter. And you could say all of the disciples if Peter was their spokesman with this statement that he has made.

Why am I even wanting to consider this? Brethren, I'm wanting to consider this because you and I can hear a glorious statement like v. 26, that with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible, which is a glorious statement about the power of God in conversion. My question to myself is do I then go in my mind and get distracted by something else that keeps me from seeing the weighty reality of what was just spoken? Or maybe this is an example, kind of like when you talk to your children, you're telling them about some glorious, precious goodness in your love for them, but at some point in the conversation, you mention to your kids about some present that you got them when you're at the store. And they just have a hard time hearing everything you said.

And right when you're done with the conversation, so what was the present? What was the present going to be? It's like that was on their mind. Is that exactly what's happening to Peter here? I lean towards thinking that is what's happening to him. And we're going to find out, this isn't an isolated incident.

Peter does this exact same thing in John 21 as well. My point is how do you and me hear truth from God and how easily our minds can miss it, not be gripped with it, and fade over to something else? And that very thing can happen in this week of prayer and fasting, right? You're trying to wrestle with God. You hear some glorious promise about the power of God for salvation, and you want to wrestle and pray for someone's soul, and then you get distracted wondering what's the Master going to give me when it's all been said and done? So, let me try to prove some of these things to you.

Let's just go ahead and read the parables. It won't take but a minute. Again, it's all connected.

"...But many who are first will be last, and the last first. For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for denarii's a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace. And to them he said, you go into the vineyard too. And whatever is right, I will give you.

So they went." Whatever's right. He doesn't even tell them what he's going to give them. But whatever is right, I will give you.

He doesn't even say what it is. He's appealing to his character. I will give you what is right.

So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing and he said to them, why do you stand here idle all day? They said to him, because no one has hired us.

He said to them, you go into the vineyard too. And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the laborers and pay their wages. Beginning with the last, up until the first.

So you've got the last are getting rewarded first. And those who are hired first are the last ones to get reward. The order of reward.

Beginning with the last, up until the first. When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received denarii. Now when those hired first came, they thought, notice Jesus saying, they had a mindset.

They were thinking something in this mind. Something else should have been going on here in the noggin. They're thinking something in the mind.

They had assumptions about God's character and rewards here from the Master. They thought they would receive more. But each of them also received a denarius.

And on receiving it, they grumbled at the master of the house saying these last worked only one hour. You made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he replied to one of them, friend, I am doing you no wrong.

Did you not agree with me for denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I chose to give it to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity? So the last will be first, and the first last.

Then the next verse as Jesus is going up to Jerusalem. So it moves on here. You've got all of this happening here.

These responses between Christ and His disciples and Christ getting into a very parable to deal with things that the disciples have there communicated right there. And Christ is constantly doing that. He's wanting to illustrate to you and me some point in order to get a lesson that we need to get.

And ultimately, there's a lot of lessons here that we don't even have time for this morning to get at. But like I mentioned, Luke and Mark, they don't record all of Peter's response and this whole parable of the labors. It's not in Luke and Mark.

It's just here, because just Matthew records specifically what Peter asked of Christ. What is going to be our reward? What's going to be our reward? And as I mentioned, he asked that because he heard my assumptions. He asked it because he just heard Christ tell the rich and ruler, if you follow Me, you'll have treasure in heaven.

And Peter, he didn't forget that. And he's inquiring about what are we going to get. Now, what's better here? Being greatly astonished at salvation and the possibility of being saved and the fact you're saved? Or being over here wondering, well, what's the Master going to give? What's our reward going to be? Look at the parable we just read.

Is the person who's inquiring about the reward or they're worried about what they're going to get, is that person in the parable painted in a good light? No. If you're Peter and you're hearing this, what character fits you? Who are you thinking, which one is Jesus imputing to me? Here. Look, Peter, there's an attitude.

You don't get to heaven and people are grumbling on judgment day. There's no grumbling in heaven. This is dealing with a heart attitude that can happen right here and right now in the mind and in the heart of the Christian.

And if you want, turn to John 21 briefly. We can look at what happened here with Peter. It just shows this temptation that he seeks to gratify.

John 21. Keep your hand obviously in Matthew. So in Peter, verse 21, when Peter saw Him, the One Jesus loved, say John, Peter said to Him, Lord, what about this man? Jesus said to him, if it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.

That's a rebuke from the Lord Jesus Christ. If it is My will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Turn back to Matthew.

Is that really a parable? Look, you've got a parable here of a Master saying to the servants, what does He say right there? Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to Me? Right? And you've got Christ telling Peter in John 21, what is that to you? Peter, who cares what's going to happen to John? You follow Me. And notice, Matthew and John, what language did they use to talk about true Christianity? Follow Me. That's Christianity.

I am following a person. It's not go to church. It's not I had faith.

It's I'm following presently the Lamb. As it says in Revelation, wherever He tells me to go. It's a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, Peter, follow Me. Being a Christian, it's about Me. It's not about what happens to John.

It's not about what happens to the reward. It's about Me. And the very fact you're even a Christian, Peter, is because something impossible happened to you.

And you should be greatly astonished at that. It's a miracle that you're even mine, Peter. It's astounding that this even happened to you at all.

Now what does this statement mean? Many who are first will be last. And I wish I had more time to study this out. Again, there's a lot of views on this statement.

You could go right in the parable and say, well, he says beginning with the last up to the first. So is he talking about the order of rewards? But that's not consistent with where you look at this phrase in other passages. This is a phrase Christ used multiple times.

And obviously, this matters here because Christ just stated this to Peter. His concern is, verse 30, but many who are first will be last and the last first. And then he gives an entire parable and he ends with the statement, so the last will be first and the first will be last.

So how are we to understand what's happening here? And who are the first and who are the last? I mean, the first who got hired, do they represent a certain people group? Who does it represent? Who are the people begrudging others coming in and getting paid the same? What does that sound like? It might be saying Jews being the who? And those being last being who? Yeah, and it's interesting. It sounds like that. And if you look in Luke's account, Luke pretty much states that not in his account of the rich and ruler, but using this verbiage, and even before we look at Luke, if you go on and look at verse 27 of chapter 20, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Christ uses this language again and again. It seems to imply Peter was concerned about first in rewards maybe. And you know, you say that's really carnal.

What else is in chapter 20 here? Verse 20, a mother's request. You don't talk about carnality? They just heard in verse 28, you will also sit on twelve thrones. Right? And so a mother gets word of that and what's her question? Well, okay, there's twelve of them.

Verse 21, my two sons of mine, is one going to sit on your right hand and one on your left? Really? Really? Let's just get so sidetracked by that. What does it say in James? Wherever selfish ambition and jealousy exist, there is disorder in every vile practice. Is our eye on Christ or the prize? Is Christ the prize or is the prize the prize? Not that there aren't glorious things here stated about rewards and leaving houses and mothers and God returning a hundredfold.

That's glorious reality. But that's not exactly apparently what Peter really needed to be encouraged by right there. He needed to be warned of something.

I mean, would those who are last, are they even going to inherit eternal life at all? The first will be last or the last will be first? If he's talking about Jews and he's talking about Gentiles, is he right here even making a stark statement of the condemnation as Paul does elsewhere in his writings about the condemnation of the Jew? What was the attitude in v. 15? Do you begrudge My generosity? Is that a fruit of the Spirit? Jealousy, envy, strife, begrudging God's generosity to pay others the same? What do you think happens if you continue in such a carnal mindset? I wouldn't want that to be me. It seems like Christ in part here is calling us to come and have humility and full submission to God and not claim anything is some right that we have deserved for whatever reason. I mean, the first may very well be the Jews who

entered the kingdom before the Gentiles and the Jews were hired early in the morning and here later on, the Gentiles join.

They come on in and the Jews are upset that they find that these are going to be co-heirs with Christ and they've got the same promises applied to them. But here we've been laboring for all these centuries. When you go to Luke, turn to Luke 13.

In Luke 13, where you find the first will be last and the last first, v. 28, teaching towards Jerusalem, they even ask in v. 23, Lord, will those who are saved be few? And He tells them to strive to enter. But look at v. 28. In that place, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out.

And people will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and they will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. They're coming to the meal later. That's the Gentiles.

And behold, some are last who will be first. Sounds like the Gentiles. And some are first who will be last.

Sounds like the Jews, many of them. They're going to be cast out. Because they begrudge God's generosity.

So look, you know what Jesus is doing here? He's not just telling you it's impossible for anyone to be saved. He's actually coming in here through what He shares in v. 20, and I think He's even emphasizing to you the absolute possibility of Gentiles being converted. It's not like at this point, you've got a whole lot of Gentiles just flooding into the kingdom of God.

And Jesus is saying that's going to happen. And how are you going to respond, Peter? How are you Jews going to take what I'm going to do? Those in the parable had an envious spirit and disliked seeing others as fortunate as themselves. That is an absolutely sinful thing.

And was that desire rising up in Peter when he asked the question, what then are we going to have? And is Christ just putting the clamps on that desire by giving this parable? I mean, if you're Peter, something there is hitting home to you. And you realize I don't want to be that person. I don't want to have this happen.

So my point is, are you and I hearing Jesus? If Peter, my interpretation is he wasn't hearing Him. Right? He wasn't stopping and thinking about the glorious thing he should have been thinking. He was still thinking about Jesus' statement to the rich and ruler that if you come and follow Me, you'll have treasure in Heaven.

And does Jesus respond to Peter? Yes. And does He give him a glorious response about reward? Yes. But He has a but statement.

And He warns Peter and the disciples, I believe, and everything that follows right there in chapter 20. So are you and I, are we hearing Christ? Where's your focus? Christ has told you something glorious. Is it out one ear and in the other? Or in one ear and out the other? It would be good if it goes out the ear and comes back in, right? Salvation's impossible.

They're greatly astonished. Who can be saved? And Jesus says it's possible with God. What reward's going to beat that? Like, just being saved.

Lord, this is amazing. The impossible has happened to me. And this should encourage us to pray for those who are lost.

It is possible because of God's power, if you take the needle again, not just for the romex to fit through there, not just for the camel to fit through the eye of the needle. Brethren, it's possible even this week for people you're praying for, for them to come right through the eye of the needle. That salvation is more difficult than a camel going through the eye of this needle.

And yet, it's no problem for God to do that. He's able to do that very thing. What time do we have? Is it 49? A couple more thoughts.

Look, you know one thing this teaches us? We're at the mercy of God at getting called. What does He liken us to when we're lost? Standing idle in the marketplace. Who approached who? The Lord came.

The Lord came to those people in that marketplace. It makes you think of John 6. No one can come to Me unless it's granted to Him by the Father. Yet, as I mentioned at the same time, these people, they're called to come.

Right? Man is responsible. He even shows us we're at God's mercy when it happens. What time of day? I mean, He likens our whole eternity to one day.

And here we are in 2021. We've been called into the harvest, into the vineyard at this time. And that's just the mercy of God.

And what should that make you realize? If God's calling you, you obey Him and follow Him. Do not be sorrowful about what you're losing. Be sorrowful of losing your soul and not gaining Christ.

And you know what we see here? The Lord doesn't just save you and just put you on the shelf. He uses you. He puts you in the vineyard.

He puts you to work. And He even mentions there is reward. Even that text in Hebrews 11.

Believe that He who seeks God is a reward. And yes, the ultimate reward is Christ. It's eternal life.

That's the main thing emphasized, but there's other realities that we were promised as Christians and that should thrill our soul. You know what we see here? When we leave the vineyard, it's at death, right? For us, it's going to be at death. That's when our labor ends.

We better not stop laboring until the Master comes back. Brethren, there are endless possibilities of God saving the lost that you're praying for. You've got a lot of things that are impossible that happen in the Bible.

I mean, just to name a few of them to hopefully stir you up. The earth stopped spinning so the sun would stand still and give Israel daylight enough to defeat their enemies. It's impossible.

It's the earth or the sun or whatever. It's impossible. And it happened.

And God did it to give His people victory. Our God did that. Our God fed thousands of people from heaven in the wilderness for decades.

That is absolutely a miracle. Our God multiplied loaves and fishes to feed people. Our God is the One Who allowed Peter to walk on water.

That's impossible. Peter did it. This isn't some illusion.

This isn't some type of thing where you've got a hoverboard under the water and you put it on YouTube or whatever. Shadrach and company stood alive in a fiery furnace. Is that an illusion? No.

That was impossible. And God did it. And He got a great name for Himself.

A sea split in half for a nation to escape. An evil ruler. A 90-year-old woman who laughed at the Lord saying she'd be pregnant.

Gave birth to a promised child. That's crazy. It's a miracle.

I remember Charles sharing on that at the Denton Conference years ago about laughing the laugh of unbelief. And here this child comes and it's like God just telling her, see, I am the God who does the impossible. A terrorist named Saul being converted and going on to preach the Gospel He once tried to destroy.

That's impossible. And it happened. A demon-possessed man living in a graveyard out of his mind was set in his right mind and went home to preach the Gospel to his family.

It's impossible. You can have 5,000 demons. They're all gone.

You're in your right mind and you go home and evangelize. That actually happened. That's the God that we have.

A virgin birth. It actually happened. A miraculous resurrection.

It actually happened. And a glorious ascension. It actually happened.

It was all impossible with man. But with God, all things are possible. You and I's conversion, it was impossible.

Look, our conversion was impossible as the thief on the cross's conversion and the last moments of his life. You might say, well, my conversion was a lot different than his. No, the fact you're saved is a miracle of God that you've followed Him and you're in His vineyard.

The condemned murderer on death row in South Africa who got a Gospel tract of Charles Spurgeon. He was converted prior to being hung. That was impossible.

Yet it happened. God did that and called that man into His vineyard. Now, if you're me and you're saying all these statements, what text comes to your mind? A negative text, you could say.

I could sidestep it. I could talk about it for a moment. I don't have enough time probably.

Some people are going to go home and you know what text they're going to think about? They're not going to think about what I just said. And they're not going to be like Peter and think about rewards. Maybe they will.

You know what they're going to think about? They're going to think about Hebrews 6. Alright, I don't want to avoid that. What does Hebrews 6 say? For it is impossible. In case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Spirit, have tasted the goodness of the Word and the power for the age to come, then have fallen away to restore them again to repentance, since they're crucifying once again the Son.

Don't mention that, James. I was just feeling faith to pray for Matt Haney that he would be converted and believe God, and now you've read this text that sounds like it's saying the exact opposite of what you've just been declaring to us. Well, what do you want me to do? Avoid Scripture? Let's just avoid these things? You see, James, endless conversions are possible, except in this case.

First, look, the passage and the ruler's rejection, I think Hebrews 6 and Matthew 19, there's a similarity in that they're both are clear warnings to you and me that if you've heard the truth, if you've had the call to come into the vineyard, do not reject it, do not fake it, do not presume that the Master's going to come another time and call you into that vineyard. I mean, there's clearly that warning. And that warning can actually be a means God uses for the impossible to happen in someone's life.

For them, they have such a fear of God, grip them where they come. They realize no more games, no more messing around. I'm going to follow Christ today.

Second, the Hebrew writer, no doubt, wants to set before those in the church, they should not expect those who have been lightened among them to come back because of their deliberate unbelief and rejection of Christ. But I don't think, and I hope I'm not trying to take the edge off the text or something, but I don't think this is the same thing as saying it's impossible for God to yet save them. Right, the text doesn't say with God it is impossible for them.

There's this sense of impossibility in that this is not the rare thing to see people who've been exposed to the glorious truths of Christ and reject them and go back into the world. That's very rare to see those people come back. Now, many will remember years ago when Shirley Musselman was saved.

Shirley had multiple false professions. She had all sorts of horrendous sins. She had horrible rejection of Christ.

Right, I mean, if we thought anyone, Hebrews 6 applied to anyone, it probably would have been your wife. And yet, what happened? The impossible. She got converted.

So again, don't let the mind wander and minimize the power of God, even for those who've gone out from us. Even if they've gone out three or four times. And even if they've gone into horrible sin.

Rather, remember the note of the Bible that there are endless possibilities for people to be saved because all things are possible with our God in conversion. And He is able to save. And it's not because of some blessing because of your works and your riches represent that God's blessed you.

No, it's not that. He came to call the sinner. If you have sinned, that's all you need on the resume.

No righteousness. Take that off the list. Bring your sin to the Savior and He will fully pardon you.

Let's pray. Lord, we don't want to be like the disciples in Luke 24 when they heard about Your resurrection and they said, oh, these things seem like an idle tale. Lord, we could think that.

We could think it's an idle tale that You are the God who does the impossible, that You are able to save to the uttermost, that Isaiah 59, it says, Your arm, it is not short that it cannot save. Your ear, it is not deaf that it cannot hear. But Lord, people's sin has made a separation between You and them.

And so they don't come. Lord, we want them to come. Father, we're wanting to see people converted.

Lord, that's the greatest desire of us parents. Lord, it's Your glory. But Lord, would You not be glorified through the conversion of our children? Lord, it's impossible.

We can't do it. Lord, we're helpless. Please, God, would You act? Lord, would You call people, even today, into the vineyard, even back there now as many of the children are in the children's Sunday school.

Lord, would some of those children pass through the eye of the needle? Lord, would the impossible thing happen? Lord, it could scarcely be believed. Lord, it is amazing that we're here and we know You. We've done nothing to deserve this.

We thank You for Your love for us in dealing with us to keep our mind on You. Lord, we're thankful to be Your servants. Lord, whatever comes in the end, whatever reward, Lord, we're just grateful that we have You.

In Christ's name, Amen.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/k8jLlpjo5g.mp4>

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