

The Limited Commitment Plan
by Hendrik Joubert

From Matthew, Mark and Luke we learn of *one*, a *rich young ruler* who came *running* to, and *kneeling* before Jesus to ask: “**Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?**” (Mark 10:17 NKJV) The young man’s actions leading up to the question, as well as his reaction to the reply, indicates that it was asked with serious intent – he wanted to be sure to *inherit eternal life*.

Before answering his question Jesus teaches what may be considered a subtle lesson on His deity – *Why do you call me Good? No one is good but One, that is, God.* (Mark 10:18) The question asked by Jesus, as well as the subsequent statement, makes it difficult to understand *humble* men who claim the title *Reverend*, a term more specific in its reference to God, to *elevate* themselves above their fellow man as having already attained eternal life.

This young man could not put the question to anyone more capable of answering; the One who could *reveal the councils of the heart*, or as the 1912 Weymouth New Testament puts it: ... *openly disclose the motives that have been in people's hearts.* (1Corinthians 4:5) Jesus reminds him of the Ten Commandments by naming some, and it is interesting that the *great commandment in the law* (Matthew 22:36ff) is not specifically mentioned at this occasion, only commandments related to the second; *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* (Mark 10:19; Matthew 22:39) His unconditional love for God is of course addressed in the Lord’s final reply.

The young ruler’s reply “*Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.*” does not seem to be in doubt as the Lord *looking at him, loved him, and said to him*, “*One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.*” (Mark 10:20-21) His ways were *clean in his own eyes*, *But the LORD weighs the spirit*, or as the Contemporary English Version puts it: ... *but the LORD is the judge of our motives.* (Psalm 16:2)

The love of the Lord for each lost soul is obvious from His death on the cross; however to be specifically mentioned as being loved by the Lord seems special. Looking into his heart the Lord sees that his treasure built up in this life is worth more than eternal life to him, and addresses his weakness specifically. Unfortunately his heart was where his treasure was. (Matthew 6:2) He could have joined those who *have left all* to follow Him. (Mark 10:28)

More than one passage in the Bible reveals that the Lord does not expect *every* rich man to sell *all* he has to follow Him; however every rich man should be willing to do so if and when called upon. The rich should always *be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share.* (1Timothy 6:18) The case of Ananias and his wife Sapphira, recorded in Acts 5, shows us that Christians could hold onto their land, and after selling it determine how much to give to the Lord. The intent of the heart, seeking (more) honor for their limited generosity, caused them to lie to the Holy Spirit.

The *plan* the Lord offered the rich young ruler was too *expensive*. He would have signed on if he could have eternal life then and his earthly treasures now. The literal aspect of his following should not be ignored; he would have had to give up his comfort to travel with the Lord. Question: Would the Lord have accepted him giving up everything except for buying some equipment such as a chariot to make the travels easier for Himself? Naturally for the Lord...

I know of no one reading this *story* who does not feel disappointed at this young man’s poor choice and poor sense of value; however if we were the ones asking the question of the Lord, would we have been able to confidently answer that we have kept His commandments as this young man had, *from our youth*? What would be the weakness in our heart to be addressed by the Lord?

It is easy to sell his possessions on his behalf, especially for those who perhaps may be motivated by envy; however how small a treasure will we hang onto as we refuse to sell all and follow the Lord? Could it be as simple as failing to spontaneously show up every time the saints meet to glorify Him who bought the church (us) with His own blood? (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 10:25) This is a *grassroots* illustration of how much I value praising God as He directs. I will sell the rich young ruler’s treasure for him; however I will not give of my time.

When I lay by in store, do I excuse myself as not being rich so I do not have to *give all*, and do so cheerfully, as I have planned, so I may share in a personal compliment (*God loves a cheerful giver*) with pure motives? (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,* ³⁹ *nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 8:37-39 NKJV) From the Lord’s side of the covenant His trustworthiness is amazingly uplifting; however how *valuable* is the treasure I will allow to separate me from the love of Christ? And will I use His love and His grace to justify my holding on to my *treasure*?