

Are You the Rich Man or the Camel?

How hard would it be to give up something you desire most if someone told you that doing so would save your life? This question may seem like an easy one, but when it comes right down to the nitty gritty of actually giving up your sources of comfort, most would find it extremely difficult, particularly if they have amassed great wealth and riches. Interestingly enough, my daughter asked me a similar question and it caused me to think for a minute. She asked how hard do I think it would be for a rich man to go to heaven. When you think about it, that's a heck of a question and I'm glad the bible addresses it. Even so, I had to ponder that one before I answered because truth be told, most of us have a hard time letting go of anything that's comfortable, no matter if it means that what's coming next would be exponentially better and more fulfilling.

Mark 10:17,21-22 (NIV)

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

21; Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22, At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

The Word tells us here that Jesus Christ was talking to his disciples when a man of great wealth approached him. The man asked what must he do to inherit eternal life? Jesus Christ answered and said he must give up all he had and follow after Him.

Now you can probably picture this man's face when Jesus Christ not only told him to sell everything he had, but then also give it away to the poor. The man went away sad because regardless of the love and sense of well-doing he claimed to have in his heart, he wanted to hold on to his possessions. In other words, Jesus Christ was saying, "Put your love for me to the test. Prove your faith!" When you think of it, whenever you confess your love for anyone—that person wants to see some kind of evidence that you can back up your love with action. And if you can't, then your love is not worth its salt.

Mark 10:25 (NKJV)

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

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Jesus Christ explains very clearly in Mark how difficult it can be for a rich man to seek the kingdom of God first and honor the ways of Christ. Here was a man in Mark 10 who was clearly sincere in his address to Jesus Christ, for verse 17 tells us that he ran up to the Master and fell to his knees, a show of great respect. But here also we must note that sincerity is no guarantee for truth. Doing good does not make a person good.

Take notice that this man asked the question, "*what must I do*", so he did the right thing. He wanted more because he knew that more was available. By asking Jesus Christ this question, the rich man indicated that he had the capacity to gain more, but what he lacked most of all was a willingness to act on the love of Christ.

No doubt the rich man had tried to live in such a way as not to bring offense to others, and he seemed genuinely interested in living better than what he knew up to that point. The rich man thought he knew his own heart. He thought surely that Jesus Christ would tell him something that could be easily done, something that would not infringe upon his comfort zone. But you see, clinging to anything more than our desire to please and honor God is not the way. If an individual has consciously or unconsciously prioritized something over their relationship with God, their commitment to stand on the Word will be challenged. And so we see here that Christ challenged the man to rise to a new level, but he could not find it in himself to do so. He was too comfortable with his way of life and could not let it go.

To whom much is given much is required. You cannot gain more if you are unwilling to release something as well. The love of Christ requires that we release the things that no longer aid our spiritual growth and maturity so that we can gain the things that will take us higher.

The image of a camel going through the eye of a needle is a telling one. It demonstrates the care that we all must give to the decisions we make every day. If you imagine yourself as the camel, how much baggage would you be willing shed to get through? When it comes to our own relationship with Jesus Christ we often say that we'll give up everything, but our lives do not bear that out. We hold on to resentment, anger, shame, fear, and many other things that do not serve the kingdom well. Often our actions speak so much less than what we say we represent.

Jesus Christ has done all the leg work for us. The difficult part has already been done. What's left for us to do is the easy part, which is to put our trust in him. Jesus calls upon us to have faith in the extraordinary path that he has laid before us. We have to get our house in order and take inventory so that we can prepare to travel light. So whether you see yourself as the rich man who has more than enough or the camel who must unload some unnecessary baggage, the point is that when God says let it go, let it go! Surrender it with peace and love and cling to it no more. Remember that anything we lose for Christ' sake will not compare to the glory of what we will gain.

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