

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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AND REQUIREMENTS
FOR ENTERING
INTO THE
KINGDOM OF GOD

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In Luke 18:9-30 we have the Lord's teaching about the entrance into the kingdom of God. What is covered in these verses may be considered the condition and requirements for entering into the kingdom of God. Here the Lord mentions three steps: first, to humble oneself before God as a sinner, realizing the need of God's propitiation ([vv. 9-14](#)); second, to be like a little child, without any preoccupying concept ([vv. 15-17](#)); and third, to follow the Savior by overcoming being occupied by riches and all other material matters ([vv. 18-30](#)). Let us consider each of these aspects of the Lord's teaching.

HUMBLING ONESELF

In [18:9-14](#) we see that in order to enter into the kingdom of God, we need to humble ourselves. In [verse 14](#) the Lord says, “Everyone who

exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.” We should not think that we are somebody. Instead, we should humble ourselves and regard ourselves as nobody and nothing.

THE PRAYER OF THE PHARISEE

In [verses 10 through 14](#) the Lord tells a parable of two men who “went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector” ([v. 10](#)). The Lord often used tax collectors and Pharisees as examples. [Verses 11 and 12](#) record the Pharisee’s prayer: “The Pharisee stood and prayed these things to himself: God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all, whatever I get.” The Pharisee’s word in [verse 11](#), where he thanks God that he is not like the rest of men, does not sound like a prayer at all; instead, it sounds like an accusation of others. Likewise, his word in [verse 12](#) about fasting and paying tithes does not sound like a prayer, but rather like an arrogant boast to God. Therefore, in his prayer the Pharisee was accusing others and boasting to God.

THE PRAYER OF THE TAX COLLECTOR

In [verse 13](#) we see that the despised, accused, and condemned tax collector prayed in the way of humbling himself to the uttermost: “But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be propitiated to me, the sinner!” This word implies the need of a Redeemer and also the need of propitiation. The tax collector realized how his sinfulness offended God. Hence, he asked God to be propitiated, to be appeased toward him by a propitiation, so that God may be merciful and gracious to him.

[Romans 3:25](#) says that God set forth Christ Jesus a propitiation-cover through faith in His blood. The Greek word for propitiation is *hilasterion*, different from *hilasmus* in [1 John 2:2](#) and [4:10](#) and *hilaskomai* in [Hebrews 2:17](#). *Hilasmus* is that which propitiates, that is, a propitiatory sacrifice. In [1 John 2:2](#) and [4:10](#) the Lord Jesus is the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. The Lord offered Himself to God as a sacrifice for our sins ([Heb. 9:28](#)), not only for our redemption but also for God’s satisfaction. In Him as our Substitute, through His vicarious death, God is satisfied and

appeased. Hence, He is the propitiation between God and us.

Hilaskomai means to appease, to reconcile one by satisfying the other's demand, that is, to propitiate. In [Hebrews 2:17](#) the Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to reconcile us to God by satisfying God's righteous demands on us. The Lord Jesus made propitiation for our sins to appease God's righteousness, to reconcile us by satisfying the demand of God's righteousness.

In [Romans 3:25](#) *hilasterion* is the place of propitiation. So in [Hebrews 9:5](#) this word is used for the lid of the ark within the Holy of Holies, and in [Exodus 25:16-22](#) and [Leviticus 16:12-16](#) the Septuagint also uses this word for the cover of the ark. The law of the Ten Commandments was in the ark, exposing and condemning by its righteous requirement the sin of the people who came to contact God. By the lid of the ark with the atoning blood sprinkled upon it on the day of atonement, the whole situation on the sinner's side was fully covered. Therefore, it was upon this lid that God could meet with people who broke His righteous law without, governmentally, any contradiction to His righteousness, even under the observing of the cherubim that bore His glory overshadowing the lid of the ark. The

propitiatory or expiatory sacrifice, which foreshadowed Christ, satisfied all the requirements of God's righteousness and glory. This is what Romans 3:25 refers to. Thus, the word *hilasterion* is used to reveal that the Lord Jesus is the propitiation place, the propitiation-cover. As the propitiatory sacrifice, He has made full propitiation on the cross for our sins and has fully satisfied the requirements of God's righteousness and glory.

It is significant, therefore, that the tax collector in Luke 18:13 said, "God, be propitiated to me, the sinner!" He realized that he had offended God and that he needed someone to be his offering of propitiation so that God would be appeased. This humble person realized that he was nothing but a sinner. Because he offered up a prayer that was based upon God's propitiation, he "went down to his house justified" (v. 14).

HUMBLED AND SUBDUED

The Lord's word in verse 14 about being justified refers to the initial stage of our salvation. Every saved person should be one who humbles himself to the same extent the tax collector did. Actually, to repent and confess our sins is to

humble ourselves. All saved ones are those who have been humbled and subdued.

When I was young, I was proud and arrogant, never willing to admit that I was wrong. But one day the Spirit caught me, and I was convinced, humbled, and subdued. It seemed to me that no one was as sinful as I was. My attitude was the exact opposite of what it had been before. I can testify from experience that a saved person is a humble, subdued person. We need to humble ourselves to such an extent that we consider ourselves nobody and nothing.

BEING LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

After humbling ourselves, we need to become like a little child ([vv. 15-17](#)). In [verses 16 and 17](#) the Lord Jesus says, “Allow the little children to come to Me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of God. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall by no means enter into it.” A little child, not filled with and occupied by old concepts, can easily receive a new thought. Hence, people need to receive the kingdom of God as a new thing, with an unoccupied heart, like a little child.

We were all born into the kingdom of man,

and we are all in the kingdom of man. In order to go from the kingdom of man into the kingdom of God, to be transferred out of the kingdom of man into the kingdom of God, we need to accept some new thoughts. Who is able to receive these new thoughts? Only those who are babes, those without preoccupations, can receive them. However, many saved ones do not want to be like babes. Instead, they like to regard themselves as intelligent and knowledgeable, thinking that they know everything. Those who have this attitude are through as far as entering into the kingdom of God is concerned. Although they are saved, it will be difficult for them to enter into the enjoyment of the jubilee. A requirement for entering into the kingdom of God is that we become like little children.

RENOUNCING ALL AND FOLLOWING THE MAN-SAVIOR

In [18:18-30](#) we see that if we would enter into the kingdom of God, we need to renounce all and follow the Man-Savior. In particular, we need to renounce material possessions.

[Luke 18:18](#) says, “And a certain ruler questioned Him, saying, Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” To inherit

eternal life is different from having eternal life. According to the Gospel of John, to have eternal life is to be saved with God's uncreated life so that we may live by this life today and for eternity. But to inherit eternal life is to share in the manifestation of the kingdom in the coming age. The certain ruler in 18:18 apparently was seeking eternal life in the coming age.

In 18:19 the Lord Jesus said to this ruler, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except One—God." Only God is good. This indicates not only that the one who asked the question is not good, but also that the Lord Jesus is God, who is good. If He were not God, He also would not be good.

In verse 20 the Lord went on to say to the ruler, "You know the commandments: you shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not testify falsely, honor your father and mother." The ruler answered, "All these things I have kept from my youth" (v. 21). When the Lord Jesus heard this, He said to him, "Yet one thing you are lacking: all things, whatever you have, sell and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow Me" (v. 22). Here the Lord comes to a matter He has emphasized previously—the

renouncing of material things. For example, in 14:33 the Lord said, “So therefore, everyone of you who does not renounce all his own possessions cannot be My disciple.” Here we see that to follow the Lord requires that we love Him above all things. This is the supreme requirement for entering into the kingdom of God.

In 18:22 the Lord Jesus said to the ruler, “One thing you are lacking.” This ruler may have observed the commandments of the old law, but he was still lacking one thing. He was not willing to sell what he had and have treasure in the heavens and follow the Lord.

Luke 18:23 says, “But when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful, for he was exceedingly rich.” Loving material possessions above the Lord causes one to sorrow. But those who love Christ above all things are joyful in losing their possessions (Heb. 10:34).

Verses 24 and 25 of Luke 18 say, “And Jesus observing him said, How difficult it is for those who hold on to riches to go into the kingdom of God. For it is easier for a camel to enter through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” The Greek word for “needle” here is a different word from that in Matthew and Mark. The word here indicates a

surgeon's needle. The Lord's word here indicates the impossibility of entering into the kingdom of God by our natural life.

SALVATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

In [verse 26 of Luke 18](#) we see that those who heard the Lord's word said, "Then who can be saved?" The hearers, like most Christians today, confused salvation with the kingdom of God. The Lord's word to the ruler concerned entering into the kingdom of God. But the disciples thought that it referred to salvation. They had the natural, common concept of being saved. They did not grasp the Lord's revelation concerning entering into the kingdom of God.

In [verse 27](#), the Lord went on to say, "The things that are impossible with men are possible with God." By our human life it is impossible to enter into the kingdom of God. But this is possible by God's life, the divine life, which is Christ Himself imparted into us so that we may live the kingdom life. We can fulfill the requirements of the kingdom by Christ, who empowers us to do all things ([Phil. 4:13](#)).

In [Luke 18:28](#) Peter said to the Lord, "Behold, we have left our own things and have followed

You.” Here Peter in a boasting way was saying, “Lord, we left everything to follow You. We left our boats, our nets, and the Sea of Galilee. We have left everything behind, and now we are with You on the way to Jerusalem. Lord, what shall we get for this? What will You pay us for leaving everything, even our own country, to follow You? Thus far, we haven’t received anything. What will You give us, Lord?”

In [verses 29 and 30](#) we have the Lord’s answer: “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not by all means receive many times as much in this time, and in the coming age, eternal life.” In [verse 29](#) the Lord says, “for the sake of the kingdom of God,” but [Matthew 19:29](#) says, “for My name’s sake.” This indicates that the Savior equals the kingdom of God. As we have seen, this also is indicated by the Lord’s word in [Luke 17:21](#), where He tells the Pharisees, “Behold, the kingdom of God is among you,” referring to Himself. The kingdom of God is the Savior Himself. Wherever the Savior is, there is the kingdom of God.

In [Luke 18:30](#) the Lord speaks of receiving eternal life in the coming age. This is the life

which the overcoming believers will enjoy in the coming kingdom. To enter into this enjoyment in the coming age is to enter into the coming kingdom and participate in its enjoyment of eternal life.

When Peter made the statement recorded in [verse 28](#), he was not yet in the kingdom, but he was at least standing on the threshold. He was very close to entering into the kingdom. However, he was still a little proud and needed a further word from the Lord.

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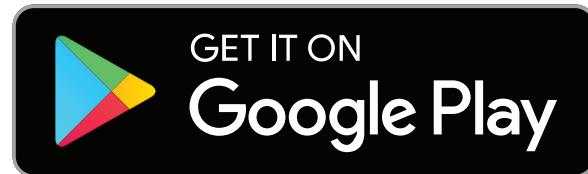
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