

Barriers To Belief

Turn with me again to the Book of Luke chapter 10, and let's consider the question that's being asked by this highly educated intellectual man of Jesus' day, this Jewish lawyer. And let's consider the possible "barriers" that are interfering with this man being able to understand one of the most basic and fundamental of all the beliefs that mankind needs desperately to understand. Follow along as I read, beginning in verse 25 of Luke chapter 10.

²⁵. . . a certain lawyer stood up and tested Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

²⁶Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"

²⁷So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'"

²⁸And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

There are all manner of roadblocks and "barriers" that can be erected within our hearts and minds that are able to keep us from surrendering our souls to our Lord for the eternal life that this man is asking Jesus about. And I'd like for us to spend a few moments today considering some of those "barriers".

There was a similar occurrence to this one that is given to us in the Book of Matthew chapter 19. This one also involves a highly educated man within the ruling party of the Sanhedrin. Listen to those words.

¹⁶And behold, a man came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ²⁰The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" ²¹Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. (Matthew 19:16-22)

Here in these words, the last verse seems to give the reason, the “barrier”, that had been erected within the heart and soul of this young man. He treasured his great possessions. And though he seemed to have a deep desire to have eternal life with God, his love for his possessions was stronger and too great a “barrier” for him to overcome. And so, he sadly turned and walked away.

While we can’t know all the many reasons why people do as this young man did and turn their backs to the eternal life that Jesus offers. Often, it seems to be just a simple matter of preference. A person prefers the life and lifestyle they have adopted and they see no reason to change.

This is an especially meaningful matter of concern for my wife and me at this time because of the recent loss of a dearly beloved relative of ours.

You might recall that a few weeks ago, I mentioned to you about this beloved relative of ours having died suddenly. Though she was near our age, her health had been good and her death was unexpected. We have grieved for the great loss to her husband, her children and her grandchildren, and also for ourselves because we loved her very much.

And we grieve also because in all of the years that we knew this dear one, she did not show any outward desires for the things of God, His salvation and the eternal life He gives.

We, of course, hope that before she breathed her last, she did come to a saving reconciliation with the Lord Jesus, but we don’t know that she did. But we do know one thing for sure, and that is, that she right now, does know all that Christ offered in His salvation, and also where she will now spend her eternity.

And those thoughts bring us back to the words of this passage that we’ve been studying here in Luke chapter 10 where this man, this Jewish lawyer, is asking this very question about himself, about his own soul, and about how and where he will spend his eternity.

And yes, this passage tells us that the man was asking the question to “test” the Lord Jesus, but even so, he was still asking the right question.

And as I read through this passage several times, I was reminded that sadly I had never spoken to my relative about the Lord Jesus and about her eternity. I

so wish that I had, and I have no excuse for not having brought this question to her.

And again, as I have read through this passage over and over again, it has brought to my mind all the many times that I have engaged other people in conversations with this or a very similar question.

And I can recall that just as with this lawyer, in my conversations, many of those that I would speak to didn't seem to be really interested in knowing God, but were often instead interested in doing as this lawyer was doing, that of "justifying" themselves, perhaps validating in their minds that they were okay in their not themselves becoming "religious".

But thankfully, there were others who would ask those questions about eternal life, and would be truly interested in getting to know the Lord. And with them, the conversation would go well.

But I would know that no matter the personal motives of the people asking the questions, whether they be truly interested or not, the real reason that they were involved in the conversation with me was because God had "drawn" them to be there, asking those questions. I base that understanding on several passages of scripture, but especially on a verse that I have quoted to us often given in John 6:44 where the Lord Jesus said,

⁴⁴ No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.
(John 6:44)

And I would also know that regardless of the reason why those folks were asking the questions, it was my duty to give each of them the gospel. They, and God, could do with my words as they chose, but for me, I needed to give them the truths that these scriptures give and then leave the response to them.

And again, yes, there are many personal reasons and motives as to why people ask such questions about God, about salvation and about eternal life. This scripture tells us that this Jewish lawyer ask the question to "test" Jesus. And you'll note, the Lord Jesus was faithful to respond kindly and with truth.

And I have no doubt that the Holy Spirit prompted the next question in the mind of the lawyer, the question about who his neighbor might be. And that

prompting would bring the lawyer one more step towards God's purposes for the man's soul.

We aren't told what this man did with the truths he received that day from the Lord Jesus. I really do hope that he came back at a later time and surrendered his heart to the salvation that Jesus was offering.

But with all of this being said, consider with me for a few moments some of the other reasons why men and women of our day don't go on ahead and freely surrender their hearts to the Lord Jesus. What are the "barriers" that are erected within their hearts that hinder their progress in believing and receiving the truths of God. If any of you have not taken this step of fully surrendering your heart to the Lord Jesus, what might your reason be?

As for myself, you will recall that I've mentioned that I was 29 years old before I gave my heart to Christ. And I can remember well how as a teenager and young adult, I kept avoiding all the invitations that some of my relatives gave for me to come to their church. And my reason for not accepting their invitations was that I simply was not interested. I liked hanging out and having fun with my friends more.

As for some of my friends who also didn't want the things of God, many of them had Christian parents who dragged them to church while they were still living at home, but as soon as they moved out, they stopped going. Some of them rejected their parents, and so also they rejected their parent's religion.

As I grew older and entered the business world, I observed other young businessmen and women doing much as I did. It seemed that careers and secular family life got in the way of a relationship with Christ. Weekends were for activities and sports and just sleeping late on Sunday mornings.

Another common "barrier" that I have also observed is one that comes to us from the culture that surrounds and influences us. It seems, like never before, emerging social issues and political beliefs are taking a position in direct opposition to the "truths" that are given to us in these scriptures.

And that is especially so as it concerns moral issues, such as, abortion, sexual activity, and now, more than ever, same sex relationships and gender confusion. And in an effort to hang onto family relationships during those kinds of struggles,

parents and grandparents and other relatives have found themselves making concessions to their beloved family members who are caught up in those immoral behaviors, hoping to salvage whatever relationships they can.

And folks, when that takes place, choices get made, choices between the demanding truths in these scriptures and the demanding lies being forced upon people by the culture.

And unfortunately, the demonic power within all those cultural arguments is strong, so very strong. And from all appearances within the media, the culture is winning most of those battles. And when that takes place, many families are left in a state of confusion, and the souls of many, many people are forfeited.

And though many of these issues within our families are new to us, they are not new to the Lord Jesus. He warned us that all this would take place. He said, ³⁴ "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 10:34-38)

Folks, these words of the Lord Jesus well describe much of what is taking place within our families today as we try to navigate our way through these culture wars.

And again, these are "barriers" "great barriers" blocking the pathway of many, many people of our day in this search for the eternal life that is being spoken about here in this passage.

And while yes, there have been other cultural revolutions that have taken place in our history, and most of them were in opposition to the moral value systems of the day. But few of them were as blatantly and unapologetically in defiance of the biblical values and requirements that are given within these scriptures, as are taking place today.

And at the forefront of most all of these events of decay within our culture today, there seems to be the foolish belief that as a people, we have now evolved on past all those antiquated standards of conduct that once inhibited our behaviors. And now we are able to freely be and do as our heart desires, without any of those cords of moral restraints that once contained us.

I'm reminded of the Apostle Paul's words to the people of Corinth who considered themselves to be a wise and enlightened culture of people. They too had cast off the bonds of restraint and were living a life of culture-driven self-indulgence. And in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 20, Paul asked,

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him.

25 . . . the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. (1 Corinthians 20-25)

Folks, it seems that we, as a culture, are frantically trying to cast off all the bonds of restraint that once held us back and protected us. And we are choosing the ways of the world to be our guide.

And you will recall that God has given us many forewarnings about the dangers of the ways of this world. That there are "barriers" inlaid within the world's foundation that will surely hinder and prevent our reaching on forward for the eternal life that we so desperately need. Listen to this warning given in 1 John 2,

¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that *is* in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (1 John 2:15-17)

Again, the "barriers" that can keep us from the precious eternal life that this Jewish lawyer is seeking and that you and I need so very much are many. And most of those "barriers" can be found within these few words given here by the Apostle John. They are within these unholy three, our "lust of the eye", our "lust of the flesh", and our "pride of life".

And these three are at the heart of this new “cultural revolution” that is taking place across our land. And not only across our land, but especially within the hearts and minds of our precious family members.

So then, how are we supposed to combat this decaying of our moral values. How are we supposed to dismantle the barriers that are keeping us from the precious eternal life that we so desperately need. There is only one answer folks. It is to seek the real truth about all these demanding questions being thrown at us from the only place that truth exists.

That truth is in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the truth of His word.

Listen to these precious truths given to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 2. These are familiar words, but listen carefully. Beginning in verse 6.

⁶ . . . we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, ⁸ which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

⁹ But as it is written:

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

¹³ These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

¹⁴ But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:6-14)

Salvation and eternal life are not part of the natural experiences of human life and are not a part of the “wisdom of this age”. Salvation and eternal life are “Spiritual”. And there is an impenetrable barrier between the two, the “natural” and the “Spiritual”. And no person is able to breach that barrier, especially by their own free will ability. It is only by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit that all our “barriers” to salvation and eternal life are breached and torn down.

Before we close these thoughts for today, may I make one more plea to each one of us. And may I give you truth that you may not want to hear. And that is

that contrary to the attitude and the beliefs of our culture today, God is not asking you or me for our “opinion” on these matters. He does not need your or my “opinion”.

He has set into place His immovable standard, and now it's about “choices”. And as you and I participate within the culture of this day, you and I will absolutely be required to make choices.

And so, as this culture cries out to you and to me to join with them in their behaviors and beliefs, may I give this clear and plain alternative. It's given to us in the Book of Deuteronomy chapter 30, and it is the only “choice” that will give us the eternal life that we so desperately need. Listen!

¹⁵ “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you today, by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you . . . ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away . . . ¹⁸ I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish . . . ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you, life and death, blessing and curses. Therefore, choose life. (Deuteronomy 30:15-19)

May we pray.