

1. Only the Absolutely Needy Receive the Kingdom
 - a. The Kingdom is something that is received, not achieved
 - i. It is offered to receive as the controlling reality and authority or to reject as the controlling reality and authority
 - ii. To enter the Kingdom of God, we must receive the King as the King
 1. Not elected, not equal, not under the Law
 2. But omnipotent, supreme, majestic
 - a. Supremely virtuous, powerful, good, loving, just, i.e. HOLY
 - iii. We do not come to Him merely for what He can give us (enter the Kingdom and enjoy its blessings), but rather for WHO He is: King of glory
 - b. The King must be received as King to receive His kingdom
 - i. **This idea of “receive” has more to do with one’s relationship than one’s profession**
 - ii. The hospitality idea of how one would treat and relate to the King
 - iii. The omnipotent God in flesh! How shall we receive him?
 - c. Receiving the kingdom and its king precedes entrance into the kingdom
 - i. One does not receive the blessings of such a kingdom without first receiving the kingdom as the authority structure over him, the definer of moral good and social good and soul needs, the provision for these needs, the means by which one is bound to a community, etc.
 - ii. Thus, to enter the Kingdom of God it is necessary for one to receive Jesus as the King over her, the definer of moral good and social good for her, to reveal to her the real needs of her soul, to provide the resources for those needs, to bind her to the community of other King-submitters, **then she finds entrance into the King’s protection, provision, and permanence.**
 - iii. Jesus offers all of this as the King of this Kingdom, the purchaser of its entrance because He loves His enemies and invites them within the walls!

2. Absolutely Needy Exchange Nothing in Return for the King
 - a. **This is the “how” we receive Him as King.**
 - b. The reception of the King and His authority (Kingdom) must be a reception of absolute dependence.
 - i. Luke (and other gospel writers) talk of these children being very young, infants, absolutely dependent and powerless on their own.
 - ii. The analogy is that we must receive the King and His Kingdom in the same way, with no power, no production, no propriety of our own, but only need
 - iii. This is the grace of God!! Because everyone has **absolute need**, so **there’s hope for anyone.**
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 - c. **This has nothing to do with “becoming” a child, but it is a comparison “as” or “like” in the sphere of absolute dependence**
 - i. **The parents were “bringing” or “offering” their children for Jesus to touch them with a blessing from the Lord**
 - ii. **This word “bring” is a compound word = to carry + towards, and is used most often in regards to offering a sacrifice**

- iii. In other words, these children didn't even have enough strength to present themselves, but had to be brought, i.e. carried like the paralytic who had to be carried by his friends (Matt 9:2)

3. The Absolutely Needy Distrust Their Own Strengths

- a. He was a good man with good life *in comparison to others*
 - i. Jesus' comment about "goodness" shows that the only real comparison of goodness is the comparison with God – this man was speaking in comparative terms and Jesus refocuses **him on God's terms**
 - ii. He was lacking something that Jesus perceived: need
- b. But he was not a powerless man when confronted with the King
 - i. He had the strength of which he was unwilling to let go
 - 1. He had the strength of wealth and the strength of "rulership" in his society, which was probably attached to his wealth
 - 2. He wanted something to do, not something to let go
 - 3. He wanted to gain strength, not give it up, to seize control, not lose control
 - ii. Thus, He did not receive the wealth of the King, but clung to the wealth of his own kingdom
- c. He was not "child-like" in this sense of dependence
 - i. His need was not absolute, so Jesus was not enough for him, thus he was grieved
 - ii. Why was he grieved?
 - 1. He was sad that he could not inherit eternal life AND have his wealth!
 - 2. Grief comes with loss, and the loss of his wealth and power was too much for him to bear, so "he went away grieved" instead of heeding Jesus' call to "follow me"
- d. It is this resistance to the loss of power which makes it "impossible" for the strong to enter the kingdom
 - i. They don't enter because they do not receive the Kingdom *as a child*
- e. We do the same thing
 - i. We all have "strengths" or "righteousnesses" which we use to define how good we are
 - 1. Nice Righteousness – "I am acceptable because I am nice to people"
 - 2. Moral Righteousness – "I am acceptable because I'm not struggling with heinous sin right now"
 - 3. We know what they are when we lose them and are grieved or angry
 - ii. All of these "righteousnesses" that we base our goodness (importance, acceptability, significance) upon lead us to:
 - 1. Compare ourselves with others (it's not just that we think we're good, but that we think we're better)
 - 2. Trust *somewhat* in our own righteousness before God and devalue Christ as our absolute source, securer, and sustainer of our acceptance before Him
- iii. Jesus calls us to let our strengths go, to leave them behind as having any honor before God or Man as our strength.
 - 1. Our works are only valuable to God when they are done in reliance upon Christ
 - 2. We get the joy of honoring God and Christ gets the glory for making our pitiful efforts beautiful and acceptable to God, effective by His power and purity

3. His righteousness alone is what has value, freely given to us by His grace, so that we boast in Him!
 4. What is impossible with Man is possible with God!
- iv. See yourself and weep. See your God and rejoice!!

4. Jesus Bridges the Impossible Gap of Righteousness for the Absolutely Needy

a. **“With God all things are possible.”**

- i. Context! – the people assumed that the wealthy were righteous and approved by God, so if it were impossible for them to enter the kingdom, then nobody could!
 1. **Jesus said that this was correct, it was impossible with man’s power, but also that God’s power is sufficient to save powerless man**
 2. **“All things” = salvation**
- ii. Remember that Jesus is heading toward Jerusalem to die the atoning death that will make the impossible possible – God just and the justifier of ungodly people (Romans 4:5)

b. A proper response from Paul: Philippians 3:4-8

- i. **“I count all my good that I might trust in to make me approvable as rubbish *that I might gain Christ*”**
 1. For the sake of Christ
 - a. **He is the ultimate purpose and result of God’s eternal plan**, not me
 - b. All my own righteousness is worthless compared to his genuine worth, beauty, and value
 2. For the sake of the incomparable value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord
 - a. **The rich young ruler didn’t like the “follow me” part, too, not only the “sell all that you have” part – He didn’t want Jesus more than power**
 - b. Knowing Jesus as the Christ (Savior from sin in all its forms and devastations) and as the Lord (King who rules and heals) overshadows all his **“gains”**
 - c. Nothing can compare with knowing His treasured Savior more
 3. That I might gain Christ
 - a. Like the treasure hidden a field (Matt 13:44) and the pearl of great price (Matt 13:45-6), the immeasurable worth of Jesus leads us to sell all else in order to gain Him

ii. **This is the final exclamation of such a radical change in the way of the Christian’s thinking**

1. **It’s about desire:** I desire Jesus more than my own reputation and righteousness
2. I consider my own strength as worthless so that I might gain Christ in my weakness

c. Childlike dependence recognizes that even our good works are failures and that receiving the King is our only hope of life and that it comes from God’s gracious provision

- i. **Paul didn’t convert because he was failing at Judaism, because he felt obeying the Law was too hard**
 1. He was succeeding at it: it was his righteousness
 2. He converted because he saw the worthlessness of his righteousness in the light of the face of Christ on that Damascus Road: only God is good!
 3. **Jesus’ beauty opened his eyes to the futility of his achievements and revealed the beauty of Christ’s achievements for him**

- ii. He treasures Jesus the Christ ('for the sake of Christ')
 - 1. There is always a deep, deep, sense of appreciating, valuing, treasuring Jesus that exemplifies the truly righteous
 - 2. They boast in Jesus because He is their treasure, rather than boasting in their successes **or even attempted successes, or even in the general person of "God"**
 - a. **"God" is largely a vague title today, highly undefined or personally defined**
 - i. Many believe in "God"
 - b. What about Jesus? What is believed about Jesus?
 - i. Particularly, are they talking about Jesus and praising Him?
 - ii. Do they boast in His salvific work, i.e. cross? (Galatians 6:14) or just His good life and teaching?
 - iii. **Is it: "He has done it all, thus I will live for Him" or is it: "He has shown me what to do, now I must do it so that I'll be good enough."**
 - 3. What people boast about, talk about, emphasize, comes forth from what they truly believe
 - a. Talk is cheap and definitions are usually hidden
 - b. **It is easy to deceive by giving the "pat answers" that one thinks people want to hear**
 - c. But what do people actually talk about and boast in the greatness of?
- d. SEE THE CROSS CHART

- 5. **The Only Valuable Righteousness in the Economy of God's Kingdom is the Righteousness that Comes from God Through Faith in Christ**
 - a. The only righteousness that has value to God is the righteousness that comes from God, through Christ, and is received solely by absolute powerless dependence, i.e. faith
 - b. **When we come to Christ we trade in our worthless attainments and varying "amounts" of righteousness and must receive the righteousness of Christ by faith alone.**
 - i. There is nothing to compare with each other here: all of our righteousness is worthless for His sake and all of our need is absolute
 - c. The desire of the Christian is to know Christ, to gain Christ, to lay down our righteousness for His sake, to suffer with Him, receiving His righteousness that makes you and I acceptable to God only by faith
 - i. **You can't trust yourself any more**
 - ii. You will lose control over your own righteousness and your own life
 - iii. You will gain Christ and His glorious rule over you for your JOY!
 - d. God works these impossible things
 - i. He opens the eyes of our hearts to the beauties and excellencies of Jesus
 - ii. He raises our dead affections to life and puts new hearts within us
 - iii. He exchanges our sins for the righteousness of Jesus at the cross – impossible made possible by the atoning blood of Christ and His risen life to reign over us.
 - iv. This means that there is hope for anyone, even me and even you, because though none of us are righteous, all of us are desperately needy and absolutely powerless and God does impossible things in Christ Jesus