

# What Lack I Yet

By A.W. Pink

*“Behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou Me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto Him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow Me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” —Matthew 19:16-22.*

Verses 16-22 bring to our notice a very striking and solemn case, which is worthy of our closest study. Mark 10:17-22 and Luke 18:18-23 need to be carefully compared. Here we see a young man of exemplary conduct, seeking Christ and earnestly enquiring the way of light, but after hearing His reply, he goes away “sorrowful.” Let us observe what is said of this character.

**1. He was a “young man”** (v. 20). He had not spent a long life in the service of Satan, and at the close, was now offering the Lord the remnant of his days. He was not one of those who imagined that salvation is a good thing to have when death draws near, but not to be desired while life is before us. No, this one came to Christ in the freshness and vigor of youth. See Eccl. 12:1.

**2. He was “rich”** (v. 22). Having “great possessions” his temporal prospects were bright. He had no anxiety about material things; there was no need for him to work hard for a living. Nevertheless, he was concerned about the way of salvation, and came to Christ enquiring. How few of the wealthy of this world do as he did!

**3. He occupied an honorable position.** He was a “ruler” (Luke 18:18). Thus, he was a man of rank and good social position. The majority of young men suppose the chief object in life would be to “make good” in this world, secure for themselves a place of prestige. The young ruler *had* this to begin with, yet it did not satisfy his heart. No; material things cannot do so.

**4. He had a clean moral record.** Outwardly his life was blameless. This is clear from his words in answer to Christ's quotation of the last six commandments, “All these have I kept from my youth up” (v.20). How very few young men could truthfully say this today! There are some who think his was an empty boast. But we do not believe that he could deliberately lie in the presence of incarnate Holiness. Moreover, Mark 10:21 tells us Jesus “loved him,” and he never loved an hypocrite.

**5. He was fearless and daring.** He sought Christ not “by night” (John 3:2)—as Nicodemus did, but publicly. Let it be remembered that he belonged to a class—the “rulers,” who had openly avowed their hostility against Christ. Yet, here was one who had sufficient courage to disregard the opinion of his class. How many a young man lacks the courage of his convictions, and through the “fear of man” (Prov. 29:25) stifles them!

**6. He was very much in earnest.** Mark 10:17 tells us that he came “running.” No half-hearted and dilitary seeker was he. He would not put off till the morrow what should be done today. How unlike this young man are the procrastinating multitudes! How few heed that word— *“Now is the day of salvation”* (II Cor. 6:2)!

**7. He was humble and reverent.** This comes out in Mark 10:17, where we are told, “He kneeled to Him.” That is very striking. It was something more than an Eastern form of salutation. “Rulers” never acted before peasants in this manner; rather did the peasants pay obeisance to the rulers. How very few young men there are today who bow the knee to Christ, especially when others will see them!

**8. He came to Christ inquiring the way of salvation:** “What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (v.16). His question was not one of idle curiosity (Luke 13:23), nor impertinent (John 21:21),

nor unwise (Titus 3:9). It was not a question concerning the body (Mt. 6:25), but it concerned the *soul*. Few are interested about “eternal life,” and fewer still about learning the secret of its possession.

This “young man” puts thousands of moderns to shame. In the estimation of “religious” people today he would, undoubtedly, be pronounced a most exemplary character. Were such an one to die, few indeed would hesitate to say that *he* had gone to heaven. Ah, but all is not gold that glitters. Mark the sequel: this young man turned away from Christ, and left Him “sorrowful”! What was wrong with him?

**First**, he labored under the twofold error of his class, the “rulers”—probably Pharisees; cf. Luke 14:1. They believed that men might be saved by their own works, and they also believed that such works were within their own power to perform. See Romans 9:31-32. In his case, this is clear from the very wording of his question in v. 16: there was some “good thing” which he imagined that he must “do.” But this is a terrible mistake. See Romans 3:20; 4:5; 6:23; Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5.

**Second**, though he evidently felt there was something lacking in himself (or he had not sought Christ), and though he humbly acknowledged his ignorance (as his question shows), yet there was a fatal defect: there was no *conviction of sin*, no realization that he was a *spiritual leper* in the sight of God, no consciousness of his *helplessness*. This is clear from his own declaration in v. 20. It is also evident from the manner in which the Lord dealt with him. It is vain to enquire the way to heaven while a man is trusting in his own righteousness, for Christ came here to “save that which was *lost*” (Luke 19:10).

**Third**, there was something vital which he had not: “One thing thou lackest” (Mark 10:21), and that was the *love of God in his heart*. He had come to Christ on the ground of works, and therefore the Lord pressed upon him the requirements of the Law. But *love* is needed before the law can be kept from the heart (Rom. 13:10); for the sum of the Law is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Hence, when Christ bade him, “Sell that thou hast and give to the poor” (v. 21), he showed this *lack of love* by going away sorrowful.

**Fourth**, he was hindered by a dominating *lust*, that of *earthly riches*. He loved gold more than God! “Any reigning sin makes us incapable of faith, and by consequence, of salvation” (T. Manton). So taught our Lord, “How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another?” (John 5:44). It is the heart God requires, and whatever has divorced its affection from Him *must* be abandoned (Mt. 5: 29-30). The teaching of Christ on this point is too plain to be misunderstood (Luke 14:26). What is it that crowds God out of your heart and life? *True conversion* is a turning from the creature to God, from self to Christ, from sin to holiness.

**A final word** on Christ's treatment of him. *First*, His words, “There is none good, but one, God” (v. 17), at once closes the door of hope upon any trusting in themselves. *Second*, His stern demand, “Keep the commandments (v. 7), writes the sentence of death upon the flesh (2 Cor. 3:7), for fallen man cannot keep them (Rom. 8:3). Had the young man's question issued from a burdened conscience and a broken heart, Christ had said, “Only believe” (Mk. 5:36); but coming from a self-righteous man, He pressed upon him the claims of the Law, for until that does its work by bringing the sinner to the *end* of himself, there is no hope for him. See Mark 2:17. *Third*, Christ exposed the real state of his heart (v. 21), and showed what stood in his way of “following” Him, and that was *self*.