

**\* The Heights Baptist Church \* Series: Change \***  
**\* Topic: Paul: A Change in Attitude \* Mark 10:13-31 \* 2/2/25 \***

MAIN POINT

The life of anyone who has accepted Jesus as their Savior and Lord should be radically changed forever. And one of the big changes we should experience is a complete overhaul in our attitude about life. My attitude should shift from promoting self to humbly placing Jesus as not just Savior, but Lord of my life.

INTRODUCTION

**Think of a famous athlete or entertainer that is known for their good or bad attitude. What is it about them that led to this reputation?**

“Attitude” can be defined as a feeling or mental position one has toward something, and the effect this has on one’s behavior.

*Note to study leader: The current sermon series at The Heights is titled “Change.” We started by looking at how God supernaturally intervened in Paul’s life to lead him to Christ. In today’s lesson, we will look at how Christ changed Paul’s attitude about life. We will be considering this by looking at Paul’s attitude as expressed in 2 Corinthians 12, and the principles behind his new attitude in Mark 10.*

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:12-15

**What issue is Paul warning the Corinthian believers about in these verses?**

Paul is warning the believers there about false apostles who had arrived at the church. It appears that one of their tactics was to promote themselves as being more worthy of following than Paul was.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 CORINTHIANS 11:30—12:10

**These false apostles who had infiltrated the church at Corinth were boasting about themselves in order to get the church to follow them rather than Paul. In verses 1-6, how does Paul refute this?**

Paul makes it clear that through visions and revelations, he had been personally taught by the Lord Himself.

**Why do you think Paul calls the things he is describing here as “boasting” (1 Cor. 12:1)?**

Pointing out these things is not part of his new attitude in Christ. Yet discussing these things was important to help the Corinthians to see that these false apostles are exactly that. His use of the word “boasting” will help the church see what the false apostles were doing while promoting themselves.

**Why did Paul say he was given the thorn in the flesh (verses 6-8)?**

Our natural bent as sinful humans is to promote self. And Paul had a lot to boast about. God was using this ailment to keep Paul humble.

**What was God’s response to Paul when he pleaded with God to take away this thorn in his flesh?**

God told him that His power is made perfect in weakness.

### **What do you think God meant by saying His power is made perfect in weakness?**

God doesn't need us, we need Him. If we are relying on our own self, we are relying on the wrong thing. It is his power that works through us as Christians.

### **How does Paul describe his new attitude about life in verses 9-10 as an apostle of Christ?**

Rather than boasting about himself and his strengths, he is glad to have his weaknesses, since they help him focus on Christ and allow Christ's power to work through him.

*"I need my weaknesses. These are the very things that help me rely on God."*  
Pastor Randy Hahn, The Heights Baptist Church, 1/15/23

A CLOSER LOOK AT WHY THE ATTITUDE WE ARE TO HAVE AS CHRISTIANS MAY NOT COME NATURALLY TO US

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 10:13-16

### **How did the disciples feel about the people bringing their children to Jesus? Why did the disciples try to stop them?**

The disciples appear to have made themselves some sort of filter to limit which people could access Jesus. With so many adults needing His attention, the disciples rebuked the parents for bringing their children to Jesus, giving Jesus time to do more important things. In their minds, the children didn't measure up.

### **How was Jesus' view of Children different from the view of the disciples?**

Jesus told them to let the children come, and he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them, and blessed them. He said unless we receive the kingdom of God like a little child, we won't enter it.

### **What childlike qualities are necessary to enter the kingdom of heaven?**

God builds His kingdom on childlike characteristics: faith, trust, love, innocence, lack of power, lack of pretension, lack of credentials. Faith includes an awareness of our spiritual helplessness that leads to humility before God, trust in Him and obedience to Him. Jesus called this quality "poor in spirit."

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 10:17-31

### **The rich man's question to Jesus is probably the most important question a person can ask. "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Based on his dialogue with Jesus that followed, what do you think the motive of this rich man was for asking this important question to Jesus?**

The rich man seemed to be more interested in justifying himself than learning the actual answer to his question. Another man asked Jesus the same question, and in that case, we are specifically told that "he wanted to justify himself" (Luke 10:25-29).

**Note to study leader:** *From the whole of the New Testament, we know salvation is by faith alone, and not by works. But we see that when Jesus met people who thought they were righteous based on their own merits, Jesus taught them Law rather than grace. And if someone came up to him who realized they were sinners, He taught them grace. Until we realize we are sinners, we will never see our need for grace.*

**It is probably not a coincidence that Jesus' discussion with the rich man occurred right after Jesus received the children. What is your impression of the man who came to Jesus, and how does he provide a contrast to the children?**

While he was all about himself, his self-righteousness, and how he appeared before others. This is the complete opposite of the kids, who humbly came to Jesus with childlike faith.

**What do you think Jesus focused in on riches making it hard to enter the kingdom of God?**

People saw wealth as a sign of blessing and obedience to God. The rich ruler's riches were his justification that he was in right standing with God. Whatever we are looking to justify ourselves before God (other than Jesus) is the thing that will make it hard for us to enter heaven, because as long as we are relying on that thing we will not see our need for a savior. We will think we can do it on our own.

**What are some other things that people look to in order to justify themselves before God today? How might these things make it 'hard' to enter God's kingdom?**

**Considering the contrast we see between the children and the rich man, how might Jesus calling his disciples "children" in verse 24 actually be a compliment?**

Jesus has just told them that we need to receive the kingdom of God like a little child, and he has just shown them the results of trying to come to him as a proud adult.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MARK 10:35-45

**James and John asked Jesus for a favor. What do you think their motive was in their request?**

**How did the other disciples react to James and John's request? What do you think their motive was in their response?**

James and John asked for the positions of highest recognition for themselves. The request reveals the true hearts of James and John. They expressed a selfish concern for personal greatness. And it is doubtful that the response of the other disciples was based on concern for James and John's spiritual wellbeing. They are likely also selfishly concerned about James and John cutting in line as they seek positions of honor.

**Looking at Jesus' teaching moment in verses 42-43, what issue besides just our sinful nature stands in the way of our choosing to serve each other?**

The values of the world ("the rulers of the Gentiles") stand diametrically opposed to a Christlike attitude about life. This has a lot to do with why the world opposes Christian teachings such as submission to God, submission to church leadership, wives submitting to husbands, and children submitting to parents. Christ demonstrated that God views submission as a virtue, while the world views it as a weakness.

**What can we learn from the children, the rich man, the disciples who asked for positions of prestige, and the disciples who got angry at their request?**

We need to recognize that our sinful nature and the world's values are opposed to us drawing closer to Christ. We need to put off the old nature and put on the new nature, and focus on serving Christ

APPLICATION

**Is there any area in my life where I am allowing a selfish attitude or the world's values to negatively affect my walk with Christ? What action can I take to accept my weaknesses and focus on Christ's strength while choosing to serve others in love?**

## PRAYER

God, we pray that we would truly understand what it is to come to you like a little child. Help us set aside boasting and comparing, and to be thankful about our weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on us.

## COMMENTARY

### MARK 10:13-45

10:13-14. Rabbis were known to lay hands on children and bless them. The children in this incident could have been anywhere from infants to 12-year-olds. The disciples, who were tired and tense with the prospect of going to Jerusalem, were probably trying to protect Jesus' time. Note Jesus' anger in this verse. The Greek verb "aganakteo" implies deep, strong feeling. Jesus' service, and therefore the service of the disciples, was for such as these children (9:36). This is one more instance where the disciples failed to realize that there are no outcasts or unimportant people in the Kingdom.

10:15-16. Not only were the outcasts as important as others; Jesus also stated that everyone who desires the kingdom must be like these little children. Much has been written about how children act and what Jesus could have been referring to here. We could talk about a child's total dependence and trust—two qualities needed for the Kingdom. But Jesus' point was, how do children receive gifts? They receive with anticipation. They receive joyfully and thankfully. They receive without believing they did anything to deserve the gift. This is a picture of how we come to the Father. We know we do not deserve the great gifts He has in store for us, but He loves us and desires to give us good things. We need to receive the gift of Christ's redemption with joy and thanksgiving. The kingdom belongs to such as these. Therefore, not only are disciples to receive little children (9:36-37); they are to possess childlike qualities themselves.

10:17. In Matthew's Gospel, this man is called young (Matt. 19:20), and Luke's Gospel identifies him as a ruler (Luke 18:18). Note that this young ruler ran to Jesus and fell at his feet. In the Middle East, it was undignified for men to run. This man with his youthful passion was throwing his respectability at Jesus' feet. The term good in this context is also unusual. It was not a common practice to call anyone good, leaving the appellation for God alone. This section follows the previous section naturally, since the man asked what he could do to earn eternal life. Jesus' teaching on the children emphasized that there is nothing one can do to earn it. It is given freely and must be received freely.

Mark began the section by reminding his readers/hearers that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem and the cross. Commentators are divided as to whether the man's running up to Jesus, falling on his knees, and calling Jesus "good"—all of which were quite unusual—indicate flattery or respect. In view of Jesus' reaction the latter seems more probable. The question is also unusual because most Jews would have no doubts about what to do: observe the law. Probably the man had heard about Jesus' teaching that mere obedience to the law was not enough. It was natural for a man who may have inherited some of his wealth to ask about inheriting eternal life. Although common in John's Gospel, the term "eternal life" is found only here and in v. 30 in Mark (and elsewhere in the Synoptics only in Matt 19:29; 25:46; Luke 10:25; 18:18, 30).

10:18 In Jewish thought God was preeminently good (1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; Ezra 3:11; Ps 118:1; 145:9, etc.), so much so that it was unusual to apply the term to anyone else. That was the main reason for Jesus' question and statement. The statement does not reflect a consciousness of sinfulness on the part of Jesus. It is not a disclaimer of goodness or deity. Such ideas are totally irrelevant. It simply points to God as the supreme example of goodness and the source of all good things, including the commandments in v. 19 and the commands in v. 21. Throughout his life Jesus was concerned to exalt and glorify God. Luke 18:19 lets Mark's statement stand, but Matt 19:17 restates it so as to minimize the possibility of misunderstanding or offense. Certainly the church would never have invented the Markan statement. It is unquestionably a genuine saying of Jesus.

Jesus used questions to help others clarify and express their thoughts. For example, in Luke 8:45, when a woman was healed of a hemorrhage by touching the hem of Jesus' garment. He asked, "Who touched me?" He wanted her to come forward and acknowledge her faith. It also helped restore her to community. Other examples of Jesus using questions to solicit a statement of one's thoughts are in Luke 9:20 and Mark 8:29 ("Who do you say I am?"), in Luke 10:36 ("Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"), and John 8:10 ("Has no one condemned you?").

10:19. Note that Jesus in this verse did not list the commandments dealing with a person's relationship to God. These were internal commandments, not as easily discernible from observing behavior. Perhaps Jesus also knew that this man could not keep the first commandment—to have no other Gods before Yahweh, the supreme God.

It is also noteworthy that Jesus mentioned do not defraud instead of the tenth commandment, “do not covet.” Defrauding someone, however, was listed in the law (cf. Lev. 19:13) and at its heart was covetousness. In this verse and its companion verse (v. 21) is a principle that we see often in Jesus' teachings. It is the same principle as “go the extra mile.” The young man had never defrauded anyone, but neither had he gone the extra mile and been generous with his money. This involved the positive application of the law.

Jesus further directed the man's thoughts to God by calling his attention to the second table of the Ten Commandments of Exod 20:12–16 and Deut 5:16–20. According to the best attested text, the Commandments are listed in an unusual order: six, seven, eight, nine, and five. The command “do not defraud” between the references to the Ninth and Fifth Commandments is substituted for the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not covet.” Fraud is a concrete example of covetousness and a special temptation of the rich. Jesus probably limited his reference to the second table of the law, the one dealing with relationships of human beings to each other, because obedience to it provides evidence of obedience to the first table, the one dealing with the relationships of human beings to God.

10:20 How to evaluate the claim made in this verse is difficult. On the one hand, Jesus did not explicitly deny in v. 21 that the man had kept the letter of the Commandments; on the other, he asked him to do something to demonstrate that he was willing to observe the spirit of the last six Commandments. Alternately, Jesus called the man to a greater obedience than that embodied in the Ten Commandments (cf. Matt 19:21, “If you want to be perfect”; also Matt 5:20–48). According to v. 22 he was not willing to do what Jesus asked of him. The rich man apparently did not understand what was involved in keeping the Commandments. Alternately, the “one thing” this man lacked was not understanding of the requirements of the law but radical trust in God, who alone is good, that would allow him to abandon all his property and follow Jesus.

The phrase “since I was a boy” referred to the age of thirteen, the time when he would have become accountable—a son of the commandments. If this list were all the law contained, then it would not be impossible to conform to its demands—difficult, yes, but not impossible. On the commandments that Jesus listed, this man had it made—externally. But had he considered the spirit of the law as Jesus laid it down in Matthew 5–7? Apparently, even he knew there had to be more to it because he did not leave immediately, rejoicing at Jesus' answer. He knew in his heart that he lacked something. Matthew 19:20 records that he asked, “What do I still lack?”

10:21. Mark is the only Gospel writer who records that Jesus looked at him and loved him. It gives us a sharp image of a God who loves unconditionally, compassionately. This is the God who asks us to follow him. Some interpreters have taken this verse to mean that poverty is more blessed than riches. But Jesus did not intend this meaning here. He was declaring that nothing must come between a person and devotion to God. Some people may have to give up money. Others may have to abandon a cherished dream. Still others may have to surrender family. But one thing is certain: Jesus' love comes before the command. Whatever he commands us to do is because of his love for us.

The word “loved” in the present context refers to something more than embrace, attraction, or affection. It refers to genuine love based on need and not merit or response. The one thing the man lacked was devotion to God, as demonstrated by compassion for the needy. Had this man truly trusted in the goodness of God (v. 18), he would have welcomed Jesus' command as God's best for him. The command “sell everything ... and give to the poor” should not be universalized and applied literally to every professing Christian. It pertains to the need of a particular person. It should not be ignored either. Other persons may have to give up other things in order to follow Jesus: a vocation, a style of life, a sinful passion, or a relationship. The call is not to poverty but to discipleship, which takes many forms. Discipleship, however, is costly. It

involves sacrifice. It involves obedience. It involves following the example of Jesus. It also involves reward, something that is elaborated in vv. 29–31.

10:22 The words “great wealth” probably refer to estates. This is the only example in Mark of someone being called to discipleship but refusing. Not only did the man go away sad, but many of those who have read the account over the years have also been saddened. In fact, this verse has been described as the saddest in the Bible.

This is an instance of someone coming to Jesus with a need and leaving without the need being filled (at least not yet). We are loved by God, but he will not override our free will.

10:23. The phrase “for the rich” is translated at times as “those who have riches.” It means more than having money. It encompasses possessions as well. In our day, it might mean everything that goes with money—cars, furs, jewels, real estate. But even if we do not consider ourselves rich, we still have riches and possessions that often come between us and the Lord.

The event became the occasion for a brief discourse. Jesus’ statement must be contrasted with the Jewish attitude toward riches. The dominant Jewish view was that riches were an indication of divine favor and a reward for piety (Job 1:10; 42:10; Ps 128:1–2; Isa 3:10). Although provision was made for the protection and assistance of the poor (Deut 15:7–11; Prov 22:22–23), rarely was poverty associated with piety.

The teaching of Jesus was nonetheless revolutionary in its time and remains scandalous even today. However, Jesus did not condemn riches as evil in themselves. They are a temptation, a hindrance, a diversion. They provide false security that makes radical trust in God difficult.

10:24 In view of the prevailing Jewish attitude toward riches, the disciples’ amazement is not surprising. Whereas v. 23 describes the difficulty of the rich in entering the kingdom, this verse, according to the best attested Greek text, affirms the difficulty of all in so doing.

10:25 A few witnesses of medium quality reverse the order of vv. 24 and 25 and make minor changes in v. 25. Verse 25, however, appropriately follows v. 24 as a concrete example of the uncompromising statement in that verse. All attempts to ease the harsh meaning of v. 25 must be resisted, e.g., the substitution of the Greek word meaning rope for the one meaning camel (there is only one letter difference in Greek) or the idea that the reference is to a small gate in Jerusalem called “Eye of the Needle” through which a camel could go only with great difficulty.

The mere existence of the word meaning rope is unattested until at least the fifth Christian century and perhaps until medieval times. Furthermore, to put a rope through the eye of a needle would be almost as difficult as to put a camel through it. No early evidence exists that there was a small gate called “Eye of the Needle.” The claim first appears in the ninth Christian century, long after the destruction of the Jerusalem of Jesus’ day. The contrast between the largest Palestinian animal and one of the smallest openings is clearly intended to indicate the impossibility of a rich person—or anyone else (v. 24)—entering the kingdom by doing something for himself or herself.

10:26 For once the NIV, NRSV, NEB, and GNB do not follow the earliest and usually best manuscripts, which have “to him” (RSV, NASB). The latter probably is a grammatical improvement upon the former reading “to each other” by the Alexandrian text-type, which is sometimes guilty of such a thing. It should be noted that being saved, the kingdom of God (vv. 23–25), and eternal life (v. 17) all refer to the same thing, a right relationship with God.

10:27 This verse probably is the key to understanding the entire passage. Inheriting eternal life, entering the kingdom, and being saved are impossible for any human being, but not for God, who is good and desires the salvation of all. Therefore all must depend entirely upon God. Such absolute trust in God makes possible a life of faithful discipleship (v. 28).

10:28 Again Peter appears in the narrative as the spokesman for all the disciples. One may question, however, the accuracy of his use of the word “everything.” It is probably an exaggeration. In leaving occupation and family, however, observe that Peter, James, and John did leave far more than many modern-day disciples (1:18, 20).

10:29 From warning, Jesus turned to promise. The medieval text adds the word “wife” after “mother” (KJV, NKJV), doubtless in an attempt to apply Peter’s example to celibate priests and monks.

10:30 Though v. 29 mentions leaving father to follow Christ, fathers are noticeably absent in the enumeration of relationships in v. 30. This absence suggests that God is the one “Father” of disciples. Some commentators have questioned whether Jesus included the word “persecutions” as part of the “reward” of discipleship, and they have suggested that it is the addition of the early church in light of its experiences. Jesus, however, could have foreseen the persecution of his followers. He himself was persecuted, and it was reasonable to expect that his disciples would be also. Significantly, both Matthew and Luke omit this reference to persecution. If this had been added by the early church, it most likely would have found its way into all three accounts. Persecution is a specially Markan emphasis.

10:31 The different contexts of this saying in Matt 20:16 and Luke 13:30 suggest it was probably a “floating” saying. It is, however, the kind of statement Jesus could have made more than once. Mark likely placed it here to provide an appropriate warning about being preoccupied with rewards and also to summarize and nicely conclude vv. 17–30.

10:32-34. The events in Mark 10 occurred right before the triumphal entry (“Palm Sunday”), which marked the start of the final week of Jesus’ ministry leading up to his resurrection. In Mark 10:32-34, we see Jesus predicting his upcoming death and resurrection for the third time with his disciples.

10:35. The insensitivity of James and John in this verse prefigures the insensitivity of the three disciples in the garden of Gethsemane when they could not stay awake while Jesus was in great agony. It is clear from their words that they did not recognize that Jesus would die; they were expecting him to inherit his kingdom. Some interpreters believe they spoke from faith, because they believed Jesus would die but would overcome through his resurrection. In this case, they wanted to be a part of his kingdom when he came back victoriously. This interpretation does not fit with the rest of Mark’s Gospel or with the general disbelief of the disciples.

10:36-37. Jesus, however, did not rebuke them, but invited them to tell him the desires of their hearts. They were asking for seats of high honor, ruling positions. Although they believed that Jesus would eventually conquer, they misunderstood what kind of kingdom Jesus had come to establish through his suffering and death. To balance this, however, we must remember that James and John loved Jesus and were loyal to him. Although they misunderstood his words, at least they promised they would be with him.

10:38. Again, Jesus did not rebuke them, perhaps because he knew of their love for him. But Jesus asked them if they were prepared to suffer as he would suffer. Jesus asked them, as he asks all disciples, to count the cost (cf. Luke 14:27-33). In the Old Testament, “the cup” signified divine judgment on sin. By “his cup,” Jesus was probably referring to the divine judgment poured out on him on behalf of all humanity. This phrase further points out the disciples’ lack of understanding.

10:39-40. Whether or not they knew what they agreed to, Jesus told James and John they would share his sufferings. James was martyred when he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:2), thus becoming the first apostle to be martyred. Although tradition says that John was the only apostle not to be martyred, he was persecuted for Christ and eventually died in exile on the island of Patmos. Jesus’ reply that their request was not his to grant shows his reverent submission to his Father. In all matters, he submitted to his Father’s will.

10:41. Mark’s statement about the other disciples that they became indignant is an obvious understatement. Their anger and resentment was probably not because of their concern for the Lord. They were probably thinking of their own positions. How did the other disciples hear about this incident? Did James and John

tell the others? Were they overheard? Did Salome brag to others in the group that her sons would receive special privilege? While all these may be possible, the Bible does not specify how they knew.

10:42-44. Jesus called the disciples together. They had been with many other people, but Jesus pulled them away to teach them, as he had done so often in the past. This act reminded them that they were to live in unity. His words underscored the need for this. A good example of Gentile lordship can be found in Daniel 4. King Nebuchadnezzar believed that his kingship gave him the right to claim the status of God: “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” (v. 30). God took away his authority and he lived as an animal, “until you acknowledge that the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes” (v. 25).

This is why God did not want King David to take a census (2 Sam. 24:1–17). God wanted his ruler, the shepherd placed over the sheep, to put his trust in God, not in the number of warriors. Such things are characteristic of unbelievers. At the time of Jesus, Gentile lords (such as the Caesars) loved to equate themselves with gods. They placed their likenesses on coins to remind people of their self-proclaimed divinity. They did not rule their subjects with benevolence, but they required them to bow down and worship them. Do not be like these Gentiles, Jesus told his disciples. He repeated essentially what he had been saying for the last two chapters of Mark: To be great, you must serve.

10:45. In this verse, Jesus delivered the stunning summary of all his teaching on servanthood in the Gospel of Mark. He gave the disciples the supreme example of servanthood: himself. And they had seen him serve. They had seen him touch the unclean. They had seen him heal the multitudes. They had seen him feed thousands. Before it was over, they would see him wash the grime from their feet. They had seen the only one who truly deserved to be called “Lord” place himself in humble service to others. If we remember where Jesus came from, we can see how absurd this must have sounded to them. Jesus had ten thousand angels at his disposal. He was the Creator of everything that exists. He was in eternal fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He shared their glory and splendor. And yet he gave it all up and was born in a stable to a poor teenager in order to draw all people to God.