INTRODUCTION

A. A few years ago, a California electric company ran a slogan in many of its television commercials that promoted their unequaled service, saying at the end of the commercials, "Because 'good enough' isn't." Their intent, I believe, was to convince the audience that they went beyond 'average' and were striving to do the best and give their best service to the customer. Their concept was noteworthy in that they seemed to recognize that what the world often says is 'good enough' really means average, or mediocre and is seldom acceptable.

B. Unfortunately, 'good enough' seems to be good enough to the vast majority when it comes to their religious service to God — even among some professing believers. It seems that, to many, coming 'to church' once or twice a year is 'good enough'; for others, once a month or so is 'good enough'; to others still, Sunday morning worship [not Bible class] is 'good enough.' My question is this: When did we gain the right to decide what is or is not 'good enough'? When did that stop being God's determination alone? I believe that we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, should be less concerned with 'good enough' and more concerned with our 'best' and what is pleasing to the Lord.

C. With that in mind, let's take a look at a familiar story that shows in the heart and life of this man a desire for only what was minimal in his service to God, for he came to Jesus asking, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” ([Matt. 19:16]). What may seem to be a good question is not! He was looking for one good deed to do to ensure his salvation and eternal life in heaven — as if one good deed was 'good enough'! As we may already know, even the answer to his question was not what he wanted to hear because he had bigger problems. I submit to you that when we ask questions such as his — which indicate we are looking to find out how little we can do for God — we are only demonstrating that our spiritual life is troubled, too. Let us learn an important lesson from this man about what is Not Good Enough!

I. OUTWARD HONOR [v. 17]

A. AT LEAST VERBALLY. When we are introduced to the rich, young ruler, we find that he at least recognized something in Jesus by coming to Him, and even called Him “Good Teacher,” acknowledging Him as an informed instructor, but it was apparently only in word that he honored the Lord.

1. His Possessions Were What Ruled Him. (v. 22) When it came down to it and the answer was given, he did not recognize and he did not accept the words of Jesus as authoritative and he certainly did not see Jesus as Lord; his possessions are what ruled his life! When Jesus told him to sell all his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor and take up his cross and follow Him, he was unwilling, thereby eliminating any possibility that he could be a disciple of Jesus, for Jesus also said, “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” ([Luke 14:27]), and, “any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be My disciple” (v. 33). He loved his possessions far more than the Lord and whatever honor he spoke fell meaningless to the ground because his heart did not mean it!

2. Not Uncommon! But this man does not stand alone in his willingness to give verbal honor while withholding true honor; many men before him and many since have done as he did. The Pharisees, in fact, were noted for their hypocrisy, coming to Jesus with false honor and ulterior motives, while also calling Him “Teacher” ([Matt. 22:16, 17; John 8:3, 4]). The fact was, as Jesus said, they honored Him with their lips while their hearts were far from Him ([Matt. 15:8, 9]). They did not truly honor Him because they were more concerned with their own honor! Many trusted in their riches, in their social status, or in their power to give it over to Christ.
B. **Will We Make Him Lord Over Self?** Let us take the time to examine ourselves here to make sure that we are not following in their steps! When we come here to sing songs that honor our Lord and God, is it in word only, or do we truly honor and exalt Him? Have we already made Him Lord over self, or is it in word only?

1. **We Must!** If we want to be genuine disciples of Jesus Christ, then we must deny self (cf. Matt. 16:24) and our worldly desires (Titus 2:11, 12) and exalt Christ as Lord of us. I must consider, as Paul did, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20), and that all who claim to be Christ's now “no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised” (2nd Cor. 5:14, 15). Merely outward honor is **Not Good Enough!**

2. **Or Will We Establish Our Own Righteousness?** Paul once wrote of his fellow Jews who, “being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness” (Rom. 10:3). If our honor is in word only, if the songs we sing to glorify Him do not come from the heart, if we are daydreaming about other things while in the worship assembly, and if we go our own ways when we do not like the answers He gives to us, are we really any different than these men? If so, then it is **Not Good Enough!**

II. **Asking the 'Right Question'** [v. 17]

A. **Superficial Interest Only.** Though this man had gone to the trouble of finding Jesus and asking Him what seemed to be a good question, it was merely a superficial interest.

1. **He Didn't Like the Answer!** (v. 22) Though he had asked what some might say was a good question [I would disagree], he didn't really want to hear the answer! What good is asking even the **right** questions if we are not willing to hear God's answer? If this man truly wanted to know what Jesus wanted him to do, he would have rejoiced at the answer, but he did not; he went away sorrowful! Though some might have believed this man was genuine in his search for truth, his response showed that his heart was not in the right place. His question was not meant to be answered!

2. **Not Uncommon!** But, again, let us recognize that this man is not alone in his response. When the Pharisees brought the adulterous woman before Jesus (John 8:4, 5), they asked Jesus what should be done with her. But Jesus answered in a way they did not anticipate — and they did not like what they heard (vv. 7-9) and they just went away! When God's people finally came to Jeremiah and asked him to go ask God what He wanted them to do (Jer. 42:2, 3) — **certainly** the 'right' question. They even said, “May the LORD be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not act according to all the word with which the LORD your God sends you to us” (Jer. 42:5). But when Jeremiah gave God's answer, the people accused him of lying and conspiring against them (43:2, 3) and they went to Egypt anyway — against God's will!

B. **Will We Accept God's Answers to Our Questions?**

1. **We Must!** If we genuinely seek to know God's will, then we must also be genuinely willing to accept His answers when found. John reminds us, “Whoever keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in them” (1st John 3:24), but not unless and until we keep those commandments. We cannot rightly be called His disciples if we ask the right questions, go to God's word to find the answers, but then turn away when we hear what He has said. Jesus Himself said, “Blessed...are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28). We will be either blessed or condemned, so the choice is ours, but obedience is the difference. Will we come here to study God's word diligently, only to go home and fail to apply it to ourselves? Will we ask the right questions but then refuse to take the necessary action? Asking the right question, but rejecting the answer God gives is **Not Good Enough!**

2. **Answer, Followed By Proper Action.** Simply hearing the answer, too, is not good enough; we must follow our discovery with the proper action demanded of us. When those on Pentecost asked, “Brothers, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37), Peter gave them the answer (v. 38), but they then followed that up with obedience to those same words (v. 41). If they had asked that question but left before hearing it, or left after hearing it without doing what Peter said they must, it would have done them no good. When Saul asked, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6), he had to wait around for
three days before the answer was given (22:16), but he responded by taking the proper action and, for that, he was saved. Asking the right question, though, was Not Good Enough!

III. SELECTIVE OBEDIENCE [Matt. 19:17, 18]

A. NOT A MATTER OF 'WHICH ONES?' When Jesus initially answered the man, He told him to keep the commandments [the Old Law]; but then he revealed his selective thinking, which meant:

1. **He Sought To Justify Himself.** (v. 20) With the answer of Jesus, an honest heart might ask, "Lord, have I kept those?" Or he might have asked, "Lord, what is it you want me to do to be pleasing in your sight?" But the specificity of the question ["Which ones?"] demonstrates a heart that was trying to justify self and to actually see how little he could do and still be acceptable! But, as one living under the Old Law, failure to keep one law while faithful in the rest was simply Not Good Enough! As James said, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it” (Jas. 2:10). This man had failed in this “one point” — by choice!

2. **Not Uncommon!** Once again, though, let us not think that this man stands alone in this thinking. Jesus severely condemned the Pharisees for their habit of tithing “mint and dill and cumin” while they had “neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness” (Matt. 23:23). Others put so much weight on circumcision that they saw it as the sign one was right with God. And let us not forget the accusers of Jesus who, sending Him to His unjust death, felt no compunction about falsely accusing Him (cf. Matt. 26:59, 60) but stayed out of the Roman guardhouse lest they be defiled for the Passover (John 18:28) and would not allow the money Judas returned to be placed in the treasury because it was blood money — their own (Matt. 27:3-6)!

B. **WILL WE STRIVE TO DO ALL THINGS?**

1. **We Must!** Selective obedience has never been an option for the true disciple of Jesus Christ or any follower of God. Picking and choosing which commands we may follow is not within our realm, for we must be giving our best and doing our utmost for Him instead. Jesus, when asked about whether there would be few saved, answered, “Strive to enter through the narrow door: For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:23, 24). Does this sound like one who keeps one law and neglects another will be able? We must strive to enter into the narrow door — not see how little we can do or look for loopholes! Selective obedience is Not Good Enough!

2. **We Have No Authority To Do Anything Less.** The fact is, we do not have the right, the authority, or even the option of choosing which laws of God we will obey or not! Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:1). When we are selective with which commands we will obey, we have elevated self to the authority — a place that was given to, and is reserved exclusively for, Christ (cf. Col. 1:18). Selective obedience is simply Not Good Enough!

IV. HEARING AND NOT DOING [vv. 21, 22]

A. A FOOLISH CHOICE.

1. **He Did Not Obey!** (v. 22) When it all came down to it, when Jesus gave him the answer to his one “good deed” and told him what needed to be done, the rich, young ruler went away sorrowful without obeying Jesus “for he had great possessions.” Though he had taken the time to find Jesus [the right source] and taken the time to ask the question about inheriting eternal life [the 'right' question], and though Jesus had given him the answer [the right answer], in the end, he did not obey. The only expectation this young man had was not eternal life but the wrath of God (2nd Thess. 1:8). Though he had eternal life within his grasp, he chose to not obey and, thus, surrendered it for mere material gain!

2. **Not Uncommon!** And, once again, we should not be surprised to find that this man does not stand alone in his decision to not heed the words of God or Christ. Even God's people had this habit from time to time! During the time when God's people were going into captivity [some were already there], God told Ezekiel about how they said to one another, “Come, and hear what the word is that comes from the Lord” (Ezek. 33:30) and would then come to him “as people come, and they sit before you as My people, and they hear what you say but they will not do it; for with lustful talk in their mouths they
act; their heart is set on their gain. And behold, you are to them like one who sings lustful songs with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument, for they hear what you say, but they will not do it” (vv. 31, 32).

B. WILL WE DO GOD'S WILL?

1. We Must! As we have seen from the text, honoring Jesus with exalted titles is not enough, for Jesus Himself said, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 7:21); what matters, He said, is if we have done the will of the Father. Many will stand in Judgment proclaiming Him 'Lord' but never having done His will, and He will say to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (vv. 22, 23). Luke's account has Jesus asking, “Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46). That very question could have been asked of the rich, young ruler, but let us not think we are exempt from examination, either! Are we doing the will of the Father? How many today turn away sorrowful at the command to be baptized because it is not what they have followed, or what their parents have done? How many turn away sorrowful upon hearing they must put to death their fleshly lusts? How many turn away sorrowful when they hear that they cannot live in adulterous marriages? Hearing is simply Not Good Enough because we are deceiving only self unless we do God's will (Jas. 1:22).

2. But For The Right Reasons. And even in our obedience, we must make sure we are not doing it just to be able to say we 'kept the law' as did the Pharisees, but that we have done it with the right intention. Even if we do the right thing, but for personal glory (cf. Matt. 6:1-8), we stand condemned; even if we do much good, but it is done without love, it is for nothing (1st Cor. 13:1-3). Let us not forget that all we do will be brought into Judgment, but also that even our intents [motives] will be laid bare before Christ our Judge (1st Cor. 4:5). Let us think about this seriously: Even obedience is Not Good Enough; we must do it for the right reason!

CONCLUSION

When we come to this, we may be thinking that we are hopeless and don't have a chance! But it is not as severe as it seems. What Jesus asked of this man was possible — but he had to want to do it. All that God and Jesus Christ ask and command us is possible — if we want to obey! It all comes down to a matter of the heart. Outward honor is not good enough; asking the 'right question' is not good enough; selective obedience is certainly not good enough; and hearing without doing is not good enough!

The fact is, without Christ, no man is 'good enough' in the sight of God for we all had sinned. It is only in Christ that any man be called truly good in God's sight and, once in Christ, we cannot cease seeking to do good. What is 'good enough' is this: “Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God” (Deut. 12:28). 'Good enough' is what God deems good enough and, as we have seen today, we cannot fall short by failing to obey. To obey is better!