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## AN AMIABLE YOUTH

## FALLING SHORT OF HEAVEN.

“ONE THING THOU LACKEST.”—MARK 10 : 21.

THE history of this young man is given by three of the evangelists, Matt. 19, Mark 10, Luke 18, in nearly the same words. It is, therefore, doubtless worthy of our marked attention.

This youth possessed many things, and yet was deficient in one. He was rich; he was possessed of power, for Luke calls him “a ruler;” he was remarkable for his morality. Few young men in our day could compare with him in this respect; for when our Saviour, to try him, mentioned several of the commandments of the second table, in which our duty to our fellow-men is enjoined, this young man was able to say, “All these have I kept from my youth up.” And our Lord did not deny the truth of his assertion; yea, he admitted it; for Mark says, “Then Jesus beholding him, loved him.” He was pleased with the purity and blamelessness of his external conduct. Christ, as a man, possessed the common innocent affections of human nature; and he loved this young man on account of his freedom from the vices to which many are addicted.

In the sequel, however, it will appear that this youth had no proper knowledge of the state of his own heart. His obedience was only like that of Paul when a Pharisee, “touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”

But he was not only moral, but *respectful*. Christ was treated by most of the Jewish rulers with great contempt; so that it was contemptuously asked, on a certain occasion,

“Have any of the rulers believed on him?” This young ruler, however, was not ashamed to accost him in the most respectful manner; for he came, regardless of the sneers of his compeers, and kneeling, said, “Good Master.” Christ reproved him for using the epithet “good,” as being a title which properly belonged to God only; and, evidently, the young man, though he thought Christ was an inspired teacher, did not know that he was a divine person.

And in addition to all, this amiable youth was *a serious inquirer*. The question which he asked was the most important that he could ask, or that any man ever asked: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” He was convinced that something was still needful, but he knew not what. He had heard of the teachings of Christ, and he was impelled by the serious impressions on his mind, to break through every difficulty, and to inquire of the Master; believing that he could tell him what to do to secure this object of infinite value.

And, evidently, he was confident that he was *willing to do whatever should be prescribed*. Oh, deceitful heart; how little did he know of its true state! But Jesus knew, and in a moment brought him to a fair test. He knew that, notwithstanding all his fair professions, amiable character, and courteous demeanor, he was an idolater in his heart, and worshipped mammon with supreme affection. He therefore said, Go sell all that thou hast and distribute to the poor, and come, follow me; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

O what a test for a lover of riches! See, the young man’s countenance changes; he remains silent. His heart is undergoing an evident conflict. Heaven and earth, with all their charms, are before him. For a moment, perhaps, he hesitates; for he sincerely wishes to possess eternal life—but, O hard condition! to give away all his riches, to which his heart was wedded! No, no; he cannot do it.

See, he turns his back on the Saviour; he turns his back on all the treasures of heaven. He goes away sorrow-

ful indeed, very sorrowful to lose the opportunity of securing eternal happiness, but deliberately resolved not to relinquish his hold of this world. He will have his "good things" in this life, whatever may become of him in the next. Here is a picture of the true state of thousands—of thousands of well-instructed, moral, and amiable youth!

But was not this a hard test? Was it not more than is required of others? Not at all. All may not, in fact, be put to this test; but every true disciple has already passed this ordeal, and has renounced the world as a portion—as an object of supreme affection. And every true Christian, however much of this world he may possess, would instantly resign it all at the command of Christ. It is the characteristic of every genuine disciple, that, for the sake of Christ, he has been made willing to forsake father, mother, wife and children, house and lands, yea, life itself.

It is true, this test, if made practical in our churches, would detect the hypocrisy of a multitude of professors; or rather, their want of supreme love to Christ is already but too evident, from the ardor with which they pursue the world, and from their unwillingness to part with even a small portion of their wealth, to promote the cause of Christ.

This young man possessed many excellent qualities and advantages, and lacked but ONE THING; yet that was the main thing—the one thing needful: a heart to love God supremely—a heart to prefer heavenly treasures to earthly riches. Though his character and conduct were so correct and amiable, yet his heart was not right in the sight of God. He went away sorrowful.

But did he ever come back with a better mind? We do not read that he ever did. His sorrow was not that of true repentance—repentance unto life, but "the sorrow of the world which worketh death;" a sorrow which probably he has bitterly felt for eighteen centuries, and which will never cease.

What good can his riches do him now? They only furnish fuel to the flame in which he is tormented. Let

young men look at this. Let the lovers of riches look at this.

Although neither the future course of this rich young man in this world, nor his final destiny, is given in the Scriptures, the probability is, that, having turned his back on the Saviour and on the heavenly inheritance, he relinquished all thought about his salvation from this time, and abandoned himself to the enjoyment of his idolized riches. Men who have for a time been under serious concern about the salvation of their souls, and afterwards turn back to the world, because they find the terms of salvation too difficult, commonly become more careless and more hardened than others. "Their last state is worse than the first."

But though we have no record of the end of this rich young man, we have, from the lips of the Saviour himself, an affecting account of the end of another rich man, who lived in splendor and pleasure on earth, but neglected piety and charity. The transition, in his case, from a sumptuous table, and from being clothed in purple and fine linen, to the torments of hell, is as great as the imagination can conceive. When he began to experience the keen anguish of future misery, O how bitter was his cry! "Send Lazarus to dip his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." But it was too late to pray. He had enjoyed his good things here, and nothing but torment awaited him in the world of woe. Let the rich and respectable fear, then, lest they receive their portion in this world. Better to be poor as Lazarus here, if, when we die, angels shall convoy our departing spirits to the paradise of God.