

**Téleios.** God's perfection is absolute; man's is relative. The *téleios* is one who has attained moral maturity, the goal for which he was intended, namely, to be a man obedient in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

35. The Lord gives the man a plan to complete his advance to "perfection."
36. The last thing the Lord cited for the rich man to do in verse 19 was, "you shall love your fellow citizens as yourself." This man certainly loved himself. But, would he be willing to "sell his material possessions," which he also loved, and "give all its proceeds to the poor?"
37. The Lord told the man that if he would make such a sacrifice, then he would have "treasure in heaven."
38. The challenge given to the rich man is designed to force self-analysis, to abandon earthly prosperity for heavenly gain and eternal life.
39. The man's initial question to Jesus was, "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" This query was centered on learning what specific human work would produce life everlasting.
40. The "good thing" left for him to do would be to get his mind off himself and his stuff. To do these things, he would need to believe in Jesus for eternal life.
41. Jesus is challenging him to make a series of decisions to determine if he is willing to place his faith in Christ as his security and not his earthly possessions.
42. The young man is given a formula designed to fulfill his objective of acquiring eternal life: **(1)** sell your stuff **(2)** give its proceeds to the poor, **(3)** and you will have treasure in heaven, **(4)** and come, follow Me.

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<sup>1</sup> Spiros Zodhiates, gen. ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, rev. ed. (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1991), 1372.

43. The Lord give the man a divine solution, but it requires volitional decisions that would lead to salvation.
44. So, let's break this down so there will be no misunderstanding about what the young ruler is thinking and the Lord is teaching:
  - (1) The young man's initial question is, "what good thing shall I do?" The word "good" is the neuter, singular noun **ἀγαθός (agathós)**. The word "thing" betrays the man's ignorance of the Mosaic Law and what it requires. The Law is a union of divine concepts, not a plural containing various "things."
  - (2) Every imperative mood in the Mosaic Law requires perfect fulfillment on the part of the individual. It is not a process of checking off boxes. The man wants Jesus to let him know which one commandment he has not yet checked off so he can "fulfill" it.
  - (3) Jesus changes the singular noun *agathós* from a "singular item" to a "collective union." "Good" is to be understood as the totality of all that God is and the Law is the totality of all that God requires of man.
45. Although impossible to accomplish, in light of the imputation of Adam's original sin, the young man made the mistake of thinking the Law was a list of things to do rather than ideas to adopt.
  - (4) To correct this misunderstanding, the Lord puts forth a test that the man would be sure to understand: "If you wish to enter into eternal life, keep the commandments."
  - (5) The Jesus verbally checked off several commandments the man would know but the principle, "... you shall love your neighbor as yourself," was his downfall.

- (6) In verse 19, the young ruler lied about having kept all the commandments the Lord cited. He lied about loving his fellow man as he did himself.
- (7) He must prove this by divesting all his assets and dispersing the proceeds to the poor. This would address the mandate given in **James 2:10**, "Whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."
- (8) The next thing the Lord says is His coup de grâce, "If you wish to be perfect." Remember, this is a first-class condition which assumes that the statement is true.
- (9) With a supposition based on the man's own testimony, the Lord makes the conclusion that the man "will have treasure in heaven."
- (10) The man lied. The Lord knows he lied. In verse 20 the man said, "All these things I have kept." The words "have kept" are the aorist active indicative of the verb **φυλάσσω (phulássō)**: "to observe without violation from my youth until this hour."
- (11) The aorist tense is culminative which contemplates the action in its entirety and regardless of its extent of duration, gathers it into a single whole.
- (12) The active voice means that the young ruler declares to have kept these commandments from his youth while the indicative mood means he affirms that the statement is absolutely true.
- (13) Based on the man's own authentication, the Lord invites him to join with His other disciples after having given his assets to the poor.
- (14) The invitation implies that the man is saved by having kept all the commandments of the Mosaic Law and is in status quo perfection.

- (15) In reality, what the Lord offers is the gospel. He first says, "Come." This an adverbial interjection that accompanies an associated imperative mood.
- (16) The Lord is inviting the man to place his personal faith in Him as Messiah after having abandoned his earthly possessions.
- (17) The man must make a volitional decision to do this and the Lord continues with the present active imperative of the verb ἀκολουθέω (*akolouthéō*): "Follow Me!"
46. This brings us back to our passage where we pick up with the young man's volitional response to the Lord's invitation:
- Matthew 19:22 -** But when the young man heard this statement [ the requirement to assure the veracity of his perfection since youth and to place his personal faith in Jesus as Messiah ], he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.
47. The word "grieving" is the adverbial participle λυπέω (*lypéō*): to be grieved, saddened, sorrowful. But why? He had two clear choices before him: salvation, but accompanied by an imperceptible future although eternal in duration, as compared with a visible and perceptible present, but with death as its terminus.
48. His grief was the result of two clear but competing choices. Take the present prosperity, but with no temporal guarantee, or believe the promise of spiritual prosperity with an eternal guarantee.
49. What decided the issue that challenged the young ruler's volition was the reality of the present.
50. Salvation is often rejected by many because it is determined that the simplicity of "faith alone in Christ alone" is surely not sufficient to acquire eternal life.

51. Legalism has so indoctrinated the souls of the lost that the necessity of human good works is required to negotiate a yes vote from God for an eternal future.
52. Sometimes, the response to the grace offer of “faith alone in Christ alone” is rejected with the sorrowful response, “I’d like to believe that, but I just can’t.”
53. If the follow-up question, “Why can’t you?” is presented, the typical response is, “I just have to believe you must be a good person to go to heaven.”
54. This erroneous and fatal conclusion has robbed heaven of millions of souls in the United States alone, only God knows how many over the course of history.
55. This false gospel results in entire congregations becoming involved in human good works. The evil of this cosmic lie is revealed when, one by one, these people experience physical death.
56. In the next paragraph, the Lord explains the young ruler’s decision to his disciples:

**Matthew 19:23** - And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”