

“What Am I Still Lacking?” (Matt. 19:20)
By Mark Hatfield
Lesson 2

On one occasion Jesus was talking with a young ruler who had an overstock of riches. When he asked Jesus what to do to have eternal life, Jesus told him to keep the commandments...listing them off one by one (Matt. 19:16-20). The young ruler responded that he had kept all of these things from his youth. Jesus then revealed something to him that would make or break his decision for eternal life. Jesus said, "If you wish to be complete go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me" (Matt. 19:21). Jesus had located the area of his life where he lacked something. Let me ask you, what did the rich young ruler lack? Was it care for the poor? No, not necessarily. Notice that Jesus goes on in this text to address the difficulty of a rich man entering heaven (Matt. 19:23-24). This young ruler was not exercising self-control in the area of personal wealth. This young man was indulging in the wealth of the world and Jesus called him to the treasures of heaven.

The Bible addresses those who may lack self-control in various areas of life and we need to think about our lives. Paul said to husbands and wives, “Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” Just a few verses later Paul said, “But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I, But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn {with passion}” (I Cor. 7:5, 8-9). Then in II Timothy 3:1-5, Paul warns Timothy about troublesome times and says, “But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, **without self-control**, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.” Since we are living in the last days, I want you to ask yourself, what am I still lacking? Is it self-control? Think about how many of our sins could be avoided if we didn’t lack self-control. Look at the list in Paul’s letter to Timothy (II Tim. 3:1-5). When you are able to put a restraint on your fleshly desires and then control yourself to do what is right, you will be able to overcome any temptation. Unfortunately, we are much like the rich young ruler. In Matt 19:22 the text reveals his response about being made complete in giving up his large amount of wealth, and says, “But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property.” Whatever you find yourself struggling with, how do you respond when you learn what the Lord wants you to do to be made complete? Do you walk away grieving? Do you feel like he is asking too much of you? Satan has a hold of your life if you will not listen to the voice of the Lord and respond in adherence to His directives.