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## Not By Might

Readers of *The Adopted Life* are used to reading about Jesus and his impact on humanity in cosmic terms. Because of who he is, his effect upon everything and everyone is HUGE! Jonathan Stepp's booklet *Jesus is... A Study Guide To The Good News of Jesus* (available on *The Adopted Life* website, [www.theadoptedlife.org/books](http://www.theadoptedlife.org/books)) is no exception to this way of thinking about Jesus.

When I got to the section entitled "Jesus Is...The One Who Believes," I really connected with the section where he wrote "The Holy Spirit is trying to awaken us to the fact that we cannot get ourselves adopted, or save ourselves, by the exercise of our own, sin damaged belief." This made me think about my own recent musings on the scripture passage in Matthew 19:13-26. In this passage, the story of Jesus' interaction with children and the so-called "Rich Young Man" (RYM for short) is described.

Basically, Jesus tells us to come to him as little children. Children have no great abilities, skills or resources with which to enter his Kingdom; instead, they just trust Him! In fact, the children were BROUGHT to Jesus, and Jesus reminds us that "the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Then the scene shifts to the RYM. He asks Jesus the WRONG QUESTION: "What GOOD THING must I DO to GET eternal life?" Jesus—who had just revealed to us that it is NOT about our ability to DO anything (we are like helpless little children, and that's OK!)—seems to go along with the Rich Young Man's flawed logic by actually describing what it looks like to PARTICIPATE in ("enter") the adopted life Christ has already given us. The RYM is totally wrapped up in what he must DO to GET IN (Hey! He's already in and doesn't realize it!), and it all sounds too hard.

Who could blame him? He has grown up in a culture that has given itself WHOLESALE to the idea that it is ALL ABOUT WHAT I MUST DO - "RULES R US!" The RYM goes away sad. He thinks Jesus is telling him that he must work up his own perfection to GET eternal life. Then Jesus tells his disciples that famous statement: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" - again, talking about how hard it is for us humans, in our fallen minds and in our OWN power to participate in the adopted life we've already been given by grace. Jesus is NOT describing how we are adopted in the first place, but the disciples don't get it.

Here is the really amazing and telling part. Notice the reaction of his disciples: They are flabbergasted by Jesus' statement! The various translations have them "astonished," "staggered," "exceedingly amazed," or "astounded!" Ever wonder about their reaction? It is because they too had bought into their culture's belief (ours too!) that it is up to them and their ability, their belief, to obtain salvation.

When your theology is all about what YOU must do, what YOU must believe in order to make salvation HAPPEN, then you think that the best and brightest, most advantaged, and the richest, MUST be the MOST able to make it happen! When Jesus says that even these folks can't make it happen, they say "Then who in the world can be saved?" He brings us back to the little children

episode theologically when he replies "Humanly speaking, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE. But with God everything is possible."

Whew! What a relief! It is not our ability or even our faith, but HIS ability and faith alone that brought us into the eternal relationship with the Father, by the Spirit. Our righteousness doesn't get us in and our failures don't keep us out. It is all by the GREAT grace and mercy of our loving Triune God. Thank you Jesus!

*~ Jerome Ellard*

*Zechariah 4:6: Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD Almighty.*