

# Being Right with God

Misc

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**Bible Text:** Luke 18:9-14  
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With that said, if you can go ahead and turn your Bibles to Luke 18. And before we get into this, I did want to thank the Family of Families. I really appreciate it much with everything went on in my family over the last couple weeks. I appreciate the thoughts and prayers and continued thoughts and prayers, and sometimes we forget about that, we get emails sent to us and forget to even pray, and so those of you who did take the time to pray, thank you so much and continue to pray for my brother-in-law and his girlfriend and their little one and many needs there. So thanks so much.

I was thinking about this text not only this week but the weeks coming up to this and just really praying that the Lord would use it to encourage us this morning and to challenge us and to maybe convict in areas of conviction, but I think the text is really encouraging if we fully understand it, and it's a text that I think we've all heard many many times, we've read it, we've probably studied it, we've heard someone teach it before and so it's not gonna be something new or earth-shattering in the sense of it's not a text that no one studies, it's there, it's in the Gospels, we read it and study it many times, but I pray, again, that it will be encouraging to you this morning as the Family of Families.

So with that said, let's go ahead and pray and we'll go ahead and get into the text.

*O heavenly Father, Lord, we do praise you for this morning. We thank you for bringing us back together this week. As we exit every week, each and every week brings about excitement and joy and happiness and difficulties and tears and sorrow and, Lord, I thank you that you bring us back week after week after week and as a Family of Families, we can come together, we can encourage each other, we can fellowship, we can challenge each other and we can love each other figuratively, literally, wrap our arms around one another and we thank you for that. We pray that this time this morning would be encouraging to each of us. Lord, we pray that you would teach us and we pray all this in Christ's name. Amen.*

Let's go ahead and read Luke 18:9-14. This is the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, being right with God, right? Verse 9,

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

I want you to go ahead and think through a question with me and think how to answer it. So the question is is pre-fall, so pre-Genesis 3: would there be any need or desire to seek or to gain acceptance in the garden? Would there be any need or desire to gain to seek acceptance, to be made right with God, pre-sin? No. Man pre-fall, pre-sin, entering the world had no need or desire to seek approval from God or from other men due to men at that time having full acceptance, full approval in God alone. I mean, man had no need to convince himself of his worth, of his value. There was no point in man priding himself on his moral excellence. I mean, we talk about morals and people being immoral, there was no such thing as bad morals pre-sin. Along with these, unlike what we'll see today in the text, man had no need or desire to compare himself, to persuade himself that he was better than the man next to him, to look better than them in what he does or didn't do because, again think about it, that would not even have been possible for there was no sin. I mean, it would be, in a sense, like Jesus comparing himself to God, right? That's not possible.

So again pre-fall, pre-sin, there was no need or desire for man to seek approval in God or in others because their full approval, their full acceptance was in God, again pre-fall. Then Genesis 3:15 takes place, right, and we have a problem, a separation. This separation takes place and now due to this separation between God and man, there's this, in a sense, this neverending chasing after this rat race of wanting to be right with God and all of mankind, all of us in here, all of mankind, we all know that at some day we're gonna take our last breath, we get that, and we're gonna sit before God no matter what you may call that God, all of mankind believes that they're gonna sit before a judge, and so the question is and so pre-sin, pre-fall, perfect communion with God, the fall takes place and the question is how can a man separate from God be made right with God? And so all of us in this room have had or have, maybe, this desire since sin entered the world to chase after seeking God's approval and, again, I think even as believers we can do this, and to show our worth, we want to show our value, we want to compare ourselves, we want to convince ourselves of compared to the, maybe someone next to us.

And once the fall took place, think about this, before the fall there was no such thing as religion. There was God. That was it. And so in a sense, since the fall man has created what I like to call this ledger, and for those accountants or math guys or just simply maybe even older people out there, you know what a ledger is, just a simple ledger of

credits on one side and debits on the other, and so I'm gonna compare this to our life ledger, if you want to say, or our life account of all the good deeds on one side and all the bad deeds on another and so man, what we like to do is we like to take and add to our credit account and compare it to our debit account and in the end we hope that in the end when we see face-to-face God, that our credits outweigh our debits. We hope that our good will outweigh our bad. At the end of the day when man comes to meet God, we hope that we're right with him based on our ledger.

So every religion and every philosophy, any of us who have watched talk shows or have seen some people's philosophies on tv, whether that be on tv or in literal religion, they believe when it's all said and done that their good, their ledger, their good on their ledger will outweigh their bad and they will then be made right with God. And so just quickly, I won't get into this much but just some quick examples of this. You have the Muslims and their five pillars that they believe in and the one is that they believe in for giving alms or giving to the poor, that will outweigh their bad deeds. You have Buddhism, they believe that their bad deeds bring about this bad karma, is what they say, and then which must be outweighed by the good deeds that bring about good karma, and what they believes is kind of when the ledger comes, when the accounting comes, the good has to outweigh the bad and if it doesn't, fate will not be kind to them. You have the Catholic religion that calls on its people to be made right with God primarily through grace bestowed through the use of sacraments such as baptism. You have liberalism that just simply says, "You know what, if I do enough good it's gonna outweigh my bad."

And so all of us maybe now or at some point due to our separation from God, since Genesis 3, have this problem of approval, of acceptance, of being made right with God, with our Creator, and there's essentially two ways to make us right with our Creator and in the text today, we'll see that there's two ways that's presented but there's only one that works, and so the question is, it's the same question that Job asked in Job 9, if you look at Job 9, or if you look at the very next parable coming after this in the rich young ruler, the question that they ask is how can a man be made right with God? How can a man be made approved, accepted, be made right with God?

So with that, so let's go ahead and get into it. Let's go ahead and look at verse 9 in the parable. It says, "He also," that's Jesus, "told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt." Now here Jesus clearly tells his audience, he tells us his main target audience, and he tells us his comprehensive audience, I believe. I mean, specifically as you look who he brings up in the parable even in the Pharisee, he clearly tells us his target audience even if you go back to Luke 16. He says there in verse 15, "He said to them," talking to them, "'You are those who justify yourselves before men," in other words, you try to make yourself right with God. You try and do your good versus your bad. You're trying to outweigh the two, you know, outweigh the bad and make yourself right with God, but then it says, "but God knows your hearts." Again we'll see in the next verse that the main character in the parable, there's two, is the Pharisee and the tax collector and collectively, again, it's those and they have two characteristics about them. One is they trusted in themselves that they are righteous, and the other is that they treated others with contempt.

Now let's look at this and let's think about, again, we have to reflect on ourselves, and let's think about what this means and how we respond. I mean, Jesus specifically is talking to those types of people that pride themselves in their morals. They pride themselves in their conduct and what they do is they try to convince themselves that they're worth something, that they're valuable, and what they do is by convincing themselves and others that they're worth something and that they're valuable, they believe that that enables them to then be right with God by their own approval rating. Again, there are people just like today that trusted in themselves and their morals and then their ritual codes.

It says he was talking to those who treated others with contempt. It was those that, again, we never do this, right? It was those that kind of placed themselves next to someone else and they did a bit of a comparison here, and based on the comparison they persuaded themselves, they convinced themselves, they deemed themselves that they're more worthier than the guy next to them, more valuable, more important than the guy next to them, in turn feeling that their ledger, their ledger, their credits and debits, outweigh this guy's ledger, his credits and debits, their goods and bads. Their ledger beat that guy's ledger, in turn that makes me right with God. And to put this into, I guess for fun, to put it into a sort of a mathematical equation, if you take Product A and you take Product B and based on my, if I'm the evaluator, based on my standards and how I like to evaluate them, Product A outweighs, is more valuable than Product B, in turn Product A has more worth or more value, so then Product A is right with me based on my evaluations.

Here's what Jesus, Jesus is thinking about the pious guy who walks into the room and he kind of pompously looks out and maybe he doesn't say it out loud, I don't think any of us would say it out loud, right, but he just kind of feels like he's a cut above the rest. He kind of feels like he and his group is maybe a little bit better than them in their group, their ledger, and what he essentially is kind of saying is, "Look at my resume and look at my resume of goodness compared to that resume of goodness. I mean, how could I not be in compared to that guy? I mean, you, on the other hand, you gotta get to work. I mean, my ledger, look at mine, you gotta get to work. Your credit marks on your ledger are low." Now again, I'm not saying this happens outwardly all the time, now in the text it clearly happens outwardly, but I don't think that someone does this outwardly and just kind of pompously throws it out there. But what was happening here is these types of people looked at anyone below them, outside of their group, with contempt, and what they did was they took their ledger and they compared it to this guy's ledger.

Look at verse 10 with me. It says this type of person Jesus is speaking to, I'm sorry, it says, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector." So you have a Pharisee and a tax collector. It's a pretty normal scene back then, right? Going up to the temple to pray. Now clearly for one of the guys, it would be normal, more normal for the other guy obviously, one's a Pharisee, the other is a tax collector.

Now I just go quick overview and we're not gonna get all into this that much, but just a quick overview of the Pharisees. Outside of what verse 9 says, they were self-righteous, they treated others with contempt, outside of what that says, what were they? They were the original legalists, right? They were, at least they thought they were. They were obsessed with the Old Testament and the law, and as we also knew, what they did was they just, they took the Old Testament, they took the law, they took the Scriptures, and what they did, they just kind of twisted them and tweaked them and prodded them a little bit and kind of made them what they wanted them to be and they took the truth and the principle of the truth and they reduced it to simply just a list of laws, and then what those laws turned into their laws, turned into their kind of own evaluation or what it turned into was their code of holiness, what made me right with God. It was their standards of spirituality.

It probably would be best if you guys would just turn back to Matthew 23 with me. Go ahead and turn to Matthew 23 with me. Jesus clearly defines what he's talking about when he's talking about Pharisees so, again, we won't spend much time on exactly who they were but I think we'll go ahead and let Jesus define them. He says in Matthew 23, let's look at verse 1, Jesus talking to the crowds and to specifically his disciples, verse 2 it says, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others." You can turn back if you want to, but if you think about Jesus is defining them, how is he defining them? They like to be noticed at work. They like to be noticed out in society. They like to be noticed in their community. They want to sit in the best seat. They want to be heard. They say what to do but they don't do what they say.

Now I think it's really key to note that the Pharisee in the parable in Luke 18 is no doubt a respected man. He's honored. He is a religious guy, like he goes to church. He's revered. I was even thinking he probably is a man that the tax collector may be looking at as someone he may want to be like outwardly. He may have even looked up to the Pharisee's outward goodness.

Now the flipside, the tax collector, real quickly as know, they were, they were the scum of the earth, right? I mean, these were the greedy guys, the cheats, the thieves, the liars, the traitors. I mean, they stole money from their own people. I mean, I know we're all sinners, right, we all believe we're sinners, but these guys were like in a class of their own. They were the sinners. There are sinners and then there are sinners. And I brought it up in the first hour and I have to bring it up now too because I have some loved brothers out here, but it'd be like in America if you want to take, there's people in general and then there's those who like, like the city of Pittsburgh and actually live in the city of Pittsburgh. You know?

So, but no, seriously though, actually though if you look at Matthew 9, there is a sense that there's a class of their own. Matthew 9:10 says, "And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with,' not only the sinners but like the chief sinners, those 'tax collectors?'" Matthew 21:32 says, "For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors," and who are we gonna group them with? We have the tax collectors, "and the prostitutes," it says, "believed him." So again, in a sense, there were sinners and then there were sinners. He lumps them with the prostitutes. I mean, if you're raising children at that time, you're not the guy who says, "I want my kid to grow up and be a tax collector," right? No. I mean, it'd be like today, like I'm raising two little girls, like I'm not the dad who says, "I want my little girls to grow up and be drug dealers." Like that's my goal for them. That would be nonsense, right? I mean, you didn't want to be lumped in with one of these guys, right?

And so what Jesus is doing is he's making this drastic distinction here and essentially what he's doing here is he's comparing the respected, honored, revered, Sunday school teacher, you know, the church guy compared to the drug dealer. I mean, these guys clearly aren't like each other. They're not friends. One seems to be doing well in life. He kind of has his ducks in a row. It seems like he's doing pretty well. He's got his religious degree. He's respected. He's looked up to, maybe. And what Jesus does here clearly is he takes the Pharisee's perspective and our perspective of understanding of who's right with God and totally flips this on its head.

So here in verse 11, look at verse 11 with me and we'll begin the actual parable that Jesus tells. It says verse 11, it says, "The Pharisee, standing by himself," which is a key phrase, "prayed thus," he says, "'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.'" And so here is the Pharisee standing off by himself, which isn't surprising. I mean, he doesn't want to be like close to that guy. He doesn't want to be contaminated by the tax collector, by the drug dealers of that day. Now look for a second. If you look at the text, the Pharisee doesn't praise God at all. He thanks him at the beginning, if you look at it, he said, "God, I thank you." He doesn't ask for forgiveness. He doesn't ask for mercy. He doesn't ask for help. He sees no need of anyone outside himself. He doesn't ask for peace. Instead what he does essentially is he says, "God, like I thank you. I appreciate that but I want, I want you to take a moment now and I want you to listen to me. I want you to kind of listen up and I want to tell you how awesome I am." What does he do? He says, "God, I really appreciate it that I'm not like those other people." How? "Well, God, thank you that I'm not an extortioner. I appreciate that. God, thanks that I'm not a thief or a robber or a cheat." That's what he's saying, "God, thanks that I'm not a thief or a robber or a cheat. God, thanks so much that I'm not unjust or an adulterer." In other words, "God, I thank you so much that I'm faithful in my marriage. I appreciate that."

Now, by the way, all these things that he's stated that he's not, the tax collectors many times were. In and of itself, "God, I thank you that I'm not a cheat, I'm not a tax collector, or I'm not unjust. I don't cheat on my wife." In a sense, like not horrible, but this is what

he does, he switches and he says, "By the way, I really thank you that I'm not like that guy. I'm not like that tax collector over there. I mean, I really appreciate that, God, that I'm not like that guy." I mean, how arrogant, how pompous, and so what the Pharisee is doing here is he's communicating all his moral righteousness. "I'm not this. I'm not this. I'm not this." He's thanking God not for what or who God is, he's thanking God for who he's not. He may even say he's blessed. He's thanking God for what type of person he is in comparison to that guy. Remember back in verse 9 it says that he trusted himself for his righteousness and treated others with contempt, and so what he does here is he brings another man into his kind of how to be right with God equation, and at the expense of another person, of someone else, thinks he moves himself up of God's approval rating based on his code of holiness, based on his ledger compared to that guy's ledger.

And so what's the Pharisee's view of sin? What he does here is he looks at behavior and all externals, and his picture or definition of sin is keeping versus breaking rules, and what he says here is, "I do do do do this and I don't don't don't do this. Look at me. Due to my life ledger, due to that, I'm right with God. Due to me not doing this," and we'll see in a second, "due to me doing this, that makes me better, therefore that makes me right with God. I'm acceptable."

Look back again and I think this is important, I don't want to say this is the main point of the text, but he's standing by himself. Again, I don't want to say this is the main point of the text but the picture painted here by Jesus is the Pharisee standing way off by himself which was normal for the Pharisees, and it's a picture of this separatist type of attitude. In other words, "Due to what I do or don't do compared to the guy over there, that makes me different, that makes me better, that makes me accepted, that makes me approved." And I think this is really scary because if we view sin in the way the Pharisees view sin, as merely being external, we'll fall into this trap of believing that as long as I don't do that and as long as I do do this, and as long as I stay as far away from that and stay as close to this and those types of people, then I am and will be right with God. I'm okay. And I think this is for parents, for students, for people in general. This is a really dangerous trap for our family to fall into, a simply external view of sin, that sin is oriented towards the externals will lead to this then separatist way of living, believing that as long as I stay as far away at one's distance, then we can kind of sneak ourselves into God's graces. And I think it's really easy to do that as a parent now having children, that as long as I keep them as far away and as close to, that I can sneak them into God's grace, and I think it's a scary trap.

Now a reminder. This man Jesus is painting is actually a "good guy." He's, in a sense, really not being a hypocrite. He actually is a religious person, like he goes to church. Whatever he says about himself is actually true. He's not an extortioner. He's not dishonest. He's not cheating on his wife. He really wasn't like the tax collector. He really was moral and religious but he's saying, "I do this, I don't do that, therefore based on the comparison, that makes me better, that makes me right with God."

So what he does here, again, in this verse he gives his moral code. "I do this. I do this. I do this. I do this." And then he transitions here, look at verse 12, he's gonna present to us

his religious righteousness, if you want to call it, another more codes of holiness. "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." I mean, just a real quick side note. I mean, listening to someone like this, you're like, "Really? I mean, I, I, I. I'm tired of hearing about you." But what he says here is, "I don't only fast once a year. I mean, I don't fast just once a month, not even just once a week. I actually fast twice a week. And by the way, I also give tithe. Like I give to the church. I give to this temple. That guy over there, I mean, I'd be surprised if he gave a dime to this place yet."

The items that the Pharisee brought up in verse 11 were sins, right? We would agree with that. They were sins. Stealing, adultery, cheating, sins. Stealing, adultery, cheating, fasting. Anything commanded about fasting twice a week? No. It's a neutral act, something one chooses to do. And so what the Pharisee does is he takes something neutral and he raises it up and he sneaks it into kind of his list or code of holiness and he raises it up to being the will of God. He elevates it. By the way, he actually also forgets that what he's saying he does do, like I give tithes, I actually fast and I don't just do it to code, I do it beyond code, he forgets that God looking at his ledger is completely different to him looking at his life ledger. God looking at his life ledger says, "There's nothing on the credit side because everything that you do, including your tithing and your fasting outside of Christ, is like filthy rags," as Isaiah communicates in Isaiah 64. In the ESV it says "polluted garment."

And so real quickly just a summary of the Pharisee. He, again, we have to understand that he was an outwardly moral, honored, religious man. Again, I would think we would call him a good guy who lived a good life, but he was essentially doing the exact same thing as what we would call the "bad guys." Since the fall, both the "good guy" and the "bad guy" humanly speaking are trying to get God back. They're trying to become once again right with God because something in their life is missing, God. And so this is what happened: "good people" live the moral life, and in turn based on the way they live, even using the Bible and their codes, maybe twisting them, become essentially their own savior based on their comparison, their life ledger of the guy next to them, and they believe that because theirs is better than this guy's, they're right with God. On the flipside, the "bad guys" know that they're avoiding God. They're clearly running to be their own savior. The difference between the two is the religious guy actually doesn't know what he's doing. The bad guy, the irreligious guy, does. Who is in worse shape? Obviously at the end of the day both of them.

And so I think as we've already seen, it's, and I think we could all think about our own life, it's pretty easy to feel pretty good about ourselves. Like it's not hard if you want to really bad to feel good about yourself, to just kind of search out there and think about someone who maybe actually does steal, who does commit adultery, who is a drug dealer, who does drugs. Like it's not hard to find someone like that, right? That doesn't go to church. That maybe is in jail. That isn't giving to his church. Like it's easy to find someone like that and start doing this little comparison, but for the tax collector, if you look at verse 13, there's no comparing. There's no comparison here. You can always find someone but here's what the tax collector does, verse 13, "But the tax collector, standing



far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

So the tax collector can't even look up in his shame. He knows he's a sinner and I was thinking as I was preparing, like when's the last time that I seriously cried out, "God, be merciful to me!" Like when's the last time we did that? "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Or do we run this rat race of comparing and trying to do and do and don't do and don't do, and forget to just simply stop and he stops, he doesn't even look up, there's no looking over at the Pharisee, and he says, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" And it seems and I believe that what happens here is all his outward what some may call evil or bad things, sin is what we would call them, drove him to reveal what he was internally, what we are.

Now we're obviously not at the end of the Gospel of Luke, we're in chapter 18, but since today we have the full revelation of God, it's as if we should read Luke backwards, and the reason I say that is because the cross has to be at the forefront of the mind when you're reading. Christ here in this parable is pointing, the Pharisee is pointing us to Christ at the cross, and what he says here is let's look at the outcome. Let's look at verse 14, "I tell you, this man went down to his house," that man, like that man, that drug dealer, that cheat, that liar, that guy who stole from his own people, "he went to his house justified, rather than the other," rather than that religious good guy. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Think about your own ledger. The ledger that we discussed at the beginning and kind of throughout, we will never come out on the right end. Like our credits are never going to outweigh our debits. Our good's not going to outweigh our bad. It's not possible. All those religions which I don't bring them out to just simply call them out, but all those religions and philosophies, it's really sad because they keep trying to do the things to get them right with God. And by the way, I think we as believers even do that sometimes and we'll get into that. Like they'll never do enough, will never give enough, will never pray enough, will never serve enough, will never come to church enough, will never fellowship enough, will never love people enough. All of us who are sitting here or any of us who have friends or family that think they're never gonna be good enough, like they're right. They're not and that's where 2 Corinthians 5 comes in, right? 2 Corinthians 5:21, God who made him, Jesus, who knew no sin, he, Jesus, was, is perfectly right with God. He is God. Jesus is Lord so that in him, in Jesus, not in the work even that he does in us, in Jesus we might become through his work in our place on the cross the righteousness of God. We may be made right with God.

And I totally believe, this is vitally important because I think we can just barely tweak this a bit and it changes everything, because if you look at verse 14 again and the term he brings up there is "justified," he's not talking about, "Don't look at what God has worked in you," but he's talking about, "You need to look to the righteousness God is for you, in your place." And this changes everything, and although I don't think this is the primary like clearly he's talking to nonbelievers here, but not the primary point of the parable but believers, I believe, I, we, have a tendency to think and to live like a Pharisee. We have

this tendency to want to do something to then be right with God and we, believers, need to remember that in spite of everything that we've done wrong and everything that we did wrong today and everything that we're gonna do wrong to the future, we're fully approved, made right in Christ.

And so how does this change my life? How does this change your life? How does it change Faith Bible Church's life? Well, quickly, individually, for me when I sin and fall into sin, I mean, I totally understand and believe the doctrine of grace. I totally believe in once saved, always saved. But when I sin, I have this internal battle and this tendency that I feel as if God has like knocked me down a couple rungs off of his grace ladder, and I have this tendency to want to get back up on God's grace ladder to the top rung that I was supposedly previously at. But that's feeling, that's totally not true. God sat in my place and fully approved me, made me righteous for all time. He sat in it then. He sits in it now. And he'll sit in it at judgment. All of it. I mean, isn't that what he meant when he said, "It's finished"? And for some reason I feel like, again in my own life, maybe the life of some of you, that we have this tendency that we believe in grace here, like grace saved us, and we believe that grace takes us home, but for some reason in the middle, it's as if we turn back to our work thinking that we have to keep that grace and that that grace isn't through.

Again, I'm not communicating "let go and let God," so don't walk away from here with that. I'm communicating that it's in the transforming power of the Gospel that makes us right with God, keeps us right with God, and continually keeps us right with God. It's not what he has done for us but what he has done, or it's not what he has done in us and what he continues to do in us, it's what he did for us. And so that's why I love the kind of phrase, we need to preach Christ to ourselves daily. I mean, John, John Piper, that's kind of his phrase but along with this, many times I think we like to back, we like to look back on life and John Piper even wrote a whole book, "Don't waste your life." You know, look back on your whole life. Make sure you don't waste it. And I'm not saying it's not good to look back but when you look back, like what are you gonna see? You're not gonna see that it was good enough. It's never gonna be good enough. We're saved by works but it's not our work, it's his work. Now that doesn't mean I don't repent and we don't confess sin. I get that. But that's a product of.

A subpoint under this is I believe this changes how I, how we serve. Do we really believe, do we really understand that Jesus is the one who has done all the work in our place? In turn serving within this body, within your community, should not be a duty but a delight. We, I have this tendency to in my pride, in my selfishness, we like to create our busyness ledger, right? How busy we are. We like to even compare our busyness ledger to someone else's busyness ledger. Why, I don't only have to work, I have 19 kids and counting. Right? And I have this tendency too, even in ministry stuff I like to think about all the ministry things and the busyness and we create this busyness ledger, but it's not, "Oh, I'm busy. I have to do this." It's, "Oh, I get the joy to do this because of what God did for me at the cross." And so do our kids, our friends, those in our flocks, our nonbelieving friends, see us serving more out of duty, more out of begrudgingly, more

out of, "I have to do this"? Or is it a delight? Is church a duty or a delight? Is loving people, like helping people, a duty or a delight?

It also changes our parenting, so for those of you who have been, well, you still are but who already raised your children, or who are in the midst of parenting, are you raising a Pharisee? This is so easy to fall into. We don't want to produce kids that are simply good at morals. We want to produce, by God's grace, raise children whose hearts have been transformed by the power of the Gospel to then love Jesus. Not simply children who are good at keeping rules.

It's amazing, Pastor Greg Roberts and I were talking about this a while ago and just thinking through young curriculum and things like that, but when kids are young, it seems as if we like to tell them all the things that they have to do, and then it's like they hit a certain point and we like to tell them all the things that they can't do or they shouldn't do. Not that in and of itself those things are wrong, I'm not saying that, or sinful, but we when we parent solely on all the things you should do and all the things you shouldn't do, we produce really good rule-keepers, good Pharisees, instead of kids who have been transformed by the power of the cross.

For those in this room that are unsure of like where they're at or who think that they may be a Pharisee or who think that they'll never be good enough, you won't. You're not going to be good enough. Your ledger is never gonna have from your own perspective enough credits. You're right. But Jesus' ledger from the cross, he's the one who sat perfectly, he was perfectly righteous and sat in your place, so when we take our final breath and we come face-to-face with God, it won't be us looking back, you won't look back and say, "Was it good enough?" It will be good enough because of Christ, because of Christ who did, who does and who continues to do the work for us.

Now I want to be careful here because I don't want us walking away from here saying this. Would it not be ridiculous if we walked away from here saying, "God, I thank you that I'm not like that Pharisee." Like that makes you the Pharisee. 2 Corinthians 5:21, God made him, Jesus, who knew no sin, perfectly, was, is perfectly right with God, he is God, so that in him, Jesus, in Jesus we might become through his work on the cross, it's all grace, through his work on the cross, the righteousness of God. It's Jesus who makes us right with God.

Let's pray.

*Heavenly Father, it's never going to be good enough. The tax collector, the drug dealer, the guy who steals money from his own people, it's not going to be good enough in ourselves. Lord, I pray that we would have full full full dependence on Christ and what you did for us, not what you do in us. Lord, I pray that that changes our serving within this church, that we do it out of delight not duty; that it changes how we parent, that we don't raise good Pharisees, good rule-keepers, that we raise children who are transformed by the power of the Gospel. Lord, we thank you that it's in Christ alone that we can pray this and pray this in Christ's name. Amen.*