

The Good Man and the Bad Man

By Henry Mahan

Bible Text: Luke 18:9-14

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All right. I want you to open your Bibles today to the book of Luke. I am going to bring you a message from the 18th chapter of Luke. I am going to read verses nine through 14. Now if you have a Bible I'd like for you to get the Bible and open it to Luke chapter 18 and follow as I read this story. My title of my message today is "The Good Man and the Bad Man. The Good Man and the Bad Man."

And here in Luke 18 verse nine it says the Lord Jesus spake this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Do you hear that? The Lord spake this parable unto certain, unto a certain group of people and he defines who they are. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous and they despised others.

He says two men went up the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, that's a real religious man, a moral man and the other a publican, a great sinner. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. "God," he said, "I thank thee that I am not as other men are. I am not an extortioner. I am not unjust. I am not an adulterer. I am not even as this publican." He pointed over at the publican who was in the temple. "I fast twice a week and I give tithes of all that I possess."

And the publican—this is the Lord speaking now. He goes on. He said, "And the publican standing afar off would not so much...would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven."

He didn't wave his hands. He wouldn't do that. He wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven. But he smote on his breasts and he said, "God, be merciful to me because I am a sinner."

And Christ our Lord continued and he said, "I tell you. I tell you," the master declared, "This man, this sinner, this bad man, this publican, he went down to his house forgiven, justified, rather than the other man." For he says, "Every one who exalts himself shall be abased and everyone that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Now, there is no reason to understand this parable at all. It is very clear to whom it is addressed. It is addressed to certain people. Christ spake this parable unto certain people. And he tells about these certain peoples. He said they...these certain people, they trust in themselves that they are good. They trust in themselves that they are righteous, that they

are without sin. And they despise others who are not as pious as they are. The Lord described these people over in Isaiah chapter 65. I tell folks, "Everything in the New Testament is in the Old. It is prophesied in the Old Testament, fulfilled in the New."

But in Isaiah 65 verse five our Lord describes the self righteous. He says this. He says, "They say, they say, stand by yourself. Don't come near me because I am holier than you are."

And God says, "Thus saith the Lord, 'These people are smoke in my nose.'"

It is like when you are barbequing and the wind is blowing. You keep trying to get out of the smoke. It keeps blowing in your nose. And it irritates your nose and you keep trying to get away from it. It follows you wherever you go. And he says, "These people that claim to be holier than others, they are smoke in my nose. They are nauseous smell that burns all the day. That is not very complementary. But that is what the master says in Isaiah 65.

Now, my friends, there are five marks of self righteous people. Now you listen to me. I know what I am talking about. And the Lord Jesus tells us this right here in this parable. There are five marks of self righteous people who think they are good, who think they are holy, who think they are holier than other people. Now here is the five marks. You listen to them.

The first one is this. They justify themselves in their own minds. They actually think they are holier than others. They do. What did this man say? "I am not like other men." That is what he said. He said, "I than you, God, I am not like other people. I am different. I am holier than they are. I am better than they are. I am good. They are bad and I am good."

Well, the Scripture says there is no difference. The Scripture says there is none good. The Scripture says all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. That is what God says. But these people say they are good. God says there is none good, but they say they are good. They justify themselves in their own minds.

Here is a second mark of a self righteous person. They even justify themselves before God. They call on God to be a witness of the fact that they are good. He said, "God, I thank you I am not like other men. You know I am not like other men." He justifies himself in the eyes of God. He calls on God to be his witness that he is different.

You know, I would understand. It would be praiseworthy if he would thank God for his restraining grace, if people who haven't indulged in the more wicked vices. But they ought to thank God that he restrained them, that he kept them from those wicked devices and vices. But this man is saying, "I am not like other people in my heart."

But we are. In my nature, in my guilt. This is arrogant pride. He justifies himself in his own mind. Then he justifies himself before God.

And then, thirdly, here is the mark of self righteous people. They compare themselves with the worst kind of people. That's right. They don't compare themselves to God, now. They wouldn't dare try that, or to the holy law of God. But this man here says, "I am not like that publican." He picked out the worst fellow in the temple and he said, "I am not like him. I am not like him."

You know, Paul deals with that in 2 Corinthians 10. He said, "It is dangerous to compare yourselves with another." He said...listen to him. He says in 2 Corinthians 10:12, "We dare not be of that number who commend themselves, who justify themselves, who measure themselves by themselves and who compare themselves among themselves. That is not wise."

So a self righteous man, five marks. First one, he justifies himself in his own mind. "I am different. I am holier than thou." And then he justifies himself in the sight of God. He said, "God, I thank you I am not like other men." And then he compares himself with the worst people. And that makes him look good because he is not like them. But God looks on the heart.

Now watch the fourth thing. Self righteous people base their claim to holiness and outward morality on what they do not do. He said, "I am not an extortioner outwardly." He is in his heart. "I am not unjust outwardly. I am not an adulterer outwardly." He bases his morality and holiness on what he doesn't do. And then he bases his hope for salvation on what he does do. See that? His morality on what he doesn't do. "I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't curse. I don't commit adultery. I don't steal. I don't do these things. That makes me good. Outwardly I don't do those things."

And then he bases his hope for eternal life on what he does. He says, "I tithe. I give alms. I fast twice a week, you see." This is their claim, their claim to morality is based on what they don't do. And their claim to life eternal is based on what they do in religion, in the service of God.

And here is the fifth mark of a self righteous person. It is all right here. Listen. Self righteous people talk a lot about love. They talk a lot about love. I hear them. But they really despise others. They don't love people. I know they say, "Well, God loves you and I do, too." My God might love you, but they don't.

The self righteous man loves himself. And...and he despises. That is what Christ said. He spoke this parable to them who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others who were as holy as they are. These people despised people who are not as polished as they are.

You never met a self righteous person who wasn't critical, overly, strongly critical of other people. They are so critical. They enjoy pointing out other people's weaknesses. Oh, yes, they do. They love to point out other people's weaknesses. I wouldn't do that. I wouldn't do that. They love to point out other people's failures. Look where their chil-

dren...look how their children have ended up. Look what they are doing. My children wouldn't do that.

One preacher told me one time. He said, "My little girl never listened to this rock and roll music."

I said, "Do you want to bet?"

See that's how they do. They criticize, criticize other people's shortcomings and they brag about their faithfulness and they brag about their service to God and one thing a self righteous person will never do, he will never do it, he will never do it. He will never say, "I am only a sinner saved by grace." He will never say it. He can't say it. He would choke to death before he would admit being a sinner. That's right.

Old J.M. Gray, one of the great preachers of the past, he wrote this song, *Only a Sinner Saved by Grace*. "Suffer a sinner whose heart overflows, loving his Savior to tell what he knows. Once more to tell it would I embrace. I am only a sinner, saved by grace." That's right. God has kept us. God has restrained us. God has blessed us, shed abroad his love. It is all of grace. It is not of you. It is not of me. It is of his grace through Christ our Lord. And our righteousness is not ours, it is his.

Richard Baxter wrote *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*. Richard Baxter always said, "I preach as a dying man to dying men. I preach as one who may never preach again. But I'll tell you this. I preach as a dying man to dying men."

And one time Richard Baxter was walking down the street and he saw a drunk and this drunk was staggering from side to side in the sidewalk and almost stumbling and falling. And Richard Baxter said this. He said...he said this. "There except for the grace of God goes Richard Baxter. There except for the grace of God goes Richard Baxter."

So let's look at the parable now. Let's look at the parable. You remember. One thing a self righteous man will never say, "I am only a sinner saved by grace." Can't do it.

Look at this parable. Our Lord said, "Two men went up to the temple to pray."

Now both of these men believed in God or they wouldn't have gone up there to pray. Both of these men went to the same temple. Both of these men engaged in a form of prayer. But outwardly they were different. Outwardly they were different.

Let's look at the Pharisee. One was a Pharisee, very religious. He was an officer in the Jewish religion. He was different in his dress. These fellows wore these broad phylacteries to show their holiness and they prayed on the street corner and they wore a certain kind of robes. He was dressed differently from the publican. He had tokens of religion all around. People who are super religious usually wear some kind of decoration to show that they are religious. And they were different in manner. He was at ease in the temple. He walked right down to the front. The publican stayed in the back. He was dif-

ferent in his language. He talked religious language. He talked about fasting. He talked about praying. He talked about tithing. He talked about all these things and he was different in general acceptance. Everybody there knew him.

And the other was a publican.

“Now, who was the publicans, preacher?”

Well, the publicans were avoided by the religious Pharisees. They were regarded as sinners. The publicans were regarded as great sinners. Listen to his Scripture. One time the Pharisees said to the Lord’s disciples, they said, “Why does your master eat with publicans and sinners...publicans and sinners? Why does he eat with them?”

In Luke 7:34 one of the Pharisees said, of the Lord Jesus Christ, “This man is not a prophet. He is a friend of publicans and sinners.”

You see, publicans were...were...were disliked. They were...they were regarded as great sinners. In Matthew 21 Christ said to the Pharisees, listen to this. Christ said to the Pharisees, “John came preaching righteousness and you Pharisees didn’t believe him. But the publicans and harlots did, the publicans and harlots. And you will find that publicans and harlots enter heaven and you are on the outside.” Our Lord said that to them.

Zacchaeus was a publican. He was a sinner. The Pharisee said, “I am not as other men are.” But he publican...how would you describe him? He would say, “I am as other men are.” That’s the difference, two men. They are different. All right.

These two men approached God. Let’s listen as they approach God. The religious man and the sinner approached God, the bad man and the good man both approached God.

The Pharisee, the Lord Jesus said he stood to be seen and to be heard, Matthew 6:5. “When you pray don’t be like the hypocrites,” Christ said. “They love to pray standing in the temple, on the streets, in the synagogue, that they might be seen of men.” The Pharisee stood. That is what Christ said. And he prayed with himself. He prayed with himself.

What does that mean? He prayed about himself. He said, “I am not like other men. I am not an extortioner. I fast twice a week. I tithe. I...” He prayed about himself. His dependence was upon himself. There is no mention of mercy. There is no mention of a mediator. There is no mention of his needing help. He is satisfied with what he is and who he is. And his prayer concerned only himself.

Listen. There is no confession of sin. There is no celebration of the divine attributes, “Hallowed be thy name.” There is no request for mercy, grace or forgiveness. There is no mention of an atonement or a sacrifice or a sin offering.

Actually this is no prayer at all. This is no prayer at all. It is a sinful, self righteous display of religious pride. God...listen to it again. “God, I thank you I am not like other

men. I am not an extortioner. I am not unjust. I am not an adulterer. I am not even like that fellow. I fast twice a week. Just required to fast once, but I do it twice. I tithe all that I possess, everything, not just some things, everything. And I give alms to the poor.”

Is this prayer? This is not prayer.

One old writer said, “Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire uttered or unexpressed. Prayer is the falling of a tear when none but God is near. Prayer is a contrite sinner’s voice returning from his ways, attended by angels who rejoice and say, ‘Behold he prays.’”

Well, that is the Pharisee’s so called prayer.

Two men went up to the temple. The Pharisee prayed with himself. Now, our Lord describes the sinner’s prayer. Here is the bad man. That’s the good man’s prayer. Now here is the bad man’s prayer. Well, we saw the Pharisee’s posture. He prayed standing so to be seen of men. The posture of this publican was afar off, filled with reverence, filled with awe. He is in the temple. And he realizes that this is where the glory of God and the mercy seat and the ark of the covenant is behind that veil in the temple. And he is filled with reverence and awe and fear in the presence of God. He is in the house of the Lord.

Notice this. That is his posture. Notice his eyes. The Scripture says he...the Lord Jesus said he did not lift so much as his eyes to heaven. He didn’t wave his hands. He didn’t put on a show. All his arrogance and pride were smitten. He didn’t even lift his eyes, but his eyes were bowed down with a sense of guilt, a sense of sin, a sense of unworthiness calling on the living God.

Notice his actions. He smote on his breast. What is he doing? He is pointing to the source of his troubles. He is pounding on his breast. That is where his heart is. It is the heart that is deceitful above all things. It is the heart that is desperately wicked. It is out of the heart that man’s evil thoughts, blasphemies and adulteries, lust come out of the heart, the heart. Keep your heart. Out of it are the issues of life. The fountain of sin. God looks on the heart. God does not look on the outward countenance. God is not amazed by and impressed by what we do outwardly. God almighty looks on the heart.

No question of this man’s sincerity. His posture, his eyes downcast, his actions smote on his breast. And listen to his words.

Preachers, if any preacher is listening to me, they know what this man’s words...they know what he is saying here. They know what this man is saying. You see, the publicans were Jews who were traitors to their own country and collected taxes for the Romans. That is what Zacchaeus was. He was a Jew.

But they hated him because he was a...and Matthew also was sitting at the receipt of customs. They taxed their own people. They were instruments of Rome and of Caesar. This

man is a...he is a compromiser. He is a traitor. He is a wicked sinner. But he knows...he knows the Scriptures.

Now listen to him as he prays. "God..." Who is he addressing? God against whom I have sinned and God only, God with whom there is forgiveness and mercy. That is what David said. "If though, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who would stand? But there is forgiveness with thee."

This man knows there is forgiveness with God.

"God who only can forgive sin, God who delights to show mercy, that God, be merciful to me."

Do you know what he is saying here? Be propitious. Be reconciled. Show mercy to me through the blood of the covenant on the mercy seat. That is the mercy seat. Show mercy. The Jews knew mercy was in the mercy seat covering the broken law.

Moses wrote this in Exodus 25. God told Moses, he said, "Put the mercy seat on the ark. Put the broken law in the ark. Put the mercy seat to cover the broken law. And sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, that atonement for your sins, propitiation, propitiation, the mercy seat. And I will meet you," God said. "I'll meet you and I will commune with you on the mercy seat."

That is what this man has prayed. "God, be propitiated. Be propitious. Be merciful."

You know the first thing a sinner wants is mercy, forgiveness. And forgiveness springs from grace and the mercy of God can only come to us through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ who redeemed us by his blood.

So this is his prayer. God, "Be propitiated. Be reconciled. Be merciful to me." Notice his last line. "I am a sinner. I am a sinner."

This other man didn't say he was a sinner. He said, "I am not a sinner." So this man says, "I am a sinner." What a difference here. There is no boasting here, no word of boasting. There is not a word of what he has done or a promise of what he will do. This man's words are the words of David in the psalm of repentance. I am just sure he read that psalm many times. Have you? Psalm 51?

David said, "Have mercy upon me, oh God, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Be propitiated. Be reconciled. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity. Cleanse me from my sin. Purge me with hyssop. I will be clean. Wash me and I will be whiter than the snow."

The good man's prayer that was no prayer. The bad man's prayer that was a genuine prayer seeking mercy.

And our Lord said, listen, in closing. Two men left the temple. Two men went up to the temple. Two men prayed. And two men left the temple, the bad man and the good man. And our Lord said, "I'll tell you. I tell you now..."

Do you know when our Lord says, "I tell you," it would be a good idea to listen, wouldn't it? He said, "I'll tell you now." The publican went down to his house justified.

What does that mean? Forgiven? More than that. What does that mean, justified? Pardoned? More than that. It means not guilty. It means just as if you had never sinned. All sin gone, remembered no more. The Pharisee went to the temple full of righteousness and confidence and self esteem. He went home empty, rejected of God, condemned.

The publican came to the temple empty, poor, lost. He went home justified, full of grace, rich in mercy, justified before God.

"I tell you," Christ said. "I'll tell you. I'll tell you." The Pharisee justified himself and God condemned him. The publican condemned himself and God justified him.

Now if you don't see what I am saying I hope you will, I hope you will study. The Pharisee justified himself and God condemned him. And the publican condemned himself and God justified him.

And our Lord said, "I'll tell you. Every one that exalteth himself is going to be abased. And he that humbleth himself will be exalted. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time. Humble yourself in the sight of God and he will lift you up."

Old John Jasper, I love John Jasper's writings. *Rhapsody in Black*. People used to ask him questions just to hear his wisdom. He has been dead for years. But a man said to him one time, "John Jasper, when you get to heaven's gates and you are standing there and someone asks you, 'What right have you got to be here, John Jasper? What right have you got to be in heaven?' What are you going to say?"

John Jasper said, "I am going to say, 'I got no right to be here at all because I am not here on my rights. I am here on the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ who saved a sinner like me.'"

You want this tape, "The Bad Man and the Good Man or the Good man and the Bad Man." You write for it. Send two dollars and we will mail it to you. Until next week, God bless you.