

# A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expositional Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**  
**Chapter 18- Luke 18:9-14**

288- What Jesus Taught about Justification- Part 2

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## **Luke 18:9-14**

**9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed 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 stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.**

**12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'**

**13 "But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'**

**14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

To the Glory of God

Now this Parable is about how lost and wicked sinners are "justified" before God. Jesus said in the first part of verse 14:

## **Luke 18:14a**

**I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other...**

So "being justified" is the "Act of Justification" which is defined as:

God's sovereign Act in removing the guilt and penalty of sin (Forgiveness) while at the same time declaring a sinner "Righteous" through Christ's atoning Sacrifice.

So contrary to popular opinion- we see that "Justification" has *two* parts:

1. Forgiveness
2. Righteousness

And as we have studied- there were two main issues that ignited the Protestant Reformation 500 years ago:

- *Who* or *what* has Final Authority in the Church
- *How* and *why* lost sinners are forgiven and made "Just" or made "Righteous" before God

These two issues divided the visible Church then and keeps it divided today. They are the "demarcation line" of Theology. Roman Catholics believe and teach that the pope- in his office as "Peter's successor" and as "the supreme pontiff" and "vicar of Christ" is the "final authority" in the Christian Church. And so Catholic theology says that when the pope sits in the throne of St. Peter and speaks of matters of faith and morals- what comes out of his mouth is absolutely infallible.

Protestants teach that that is absurd since the historic reality is that there have been many popes who held office at the same time- each excommunicating the other and some of them were bought and paid for with money. But, theologically- Protestants affirm that this is absurd since popes have issued "Ex-cathedra statements" which have contradicted other "Ex-cathedra statements", and have been anything but infallible. So Protestants teach that since all men have the capacity to err, and to err grievously- that the supreme authority in the Christian Church that has the power to *overrule* all personal opinions and ideas, and that has the power the "bind the conscience" of the believer is the 66 Books of the Scriptures and the Scriptures alone. And the Latin phrase that signified this Doctrine is "Sola Scriptura" or that all doctrines and all teaching and all correction and all counselling and all instruction must come from the Scriptures alone.

The second issue that divided the Church then and keeps it divided today is the issue of Justification- which is *how* and *why* God forgives and makes the sinner "Righteous" or "Just". And Roman

theology teaches that Justification is a "process", while Protestants teach that Justification is an "event". Catholics believe and teach that Justification begins at infant baptism, extends over their entire lives- including a few hundred thousand years in Purgatory, while Protestants believe and teach that Justification *instantly* and *permanently* removes all guilt of sin and allows God to declare the sinner to be "Just" or "Righteous".

And so Protestants and Catholics are not divided over silly or unimportant reasons. We are divided over huge and eternal issues- because we do not agree who has final Authority in the Church and how lost people are saved- which I suggest to you are not insignificant issues.

Now what is interesting is that *both* believe and teach that for a sinner to enter into Heaven- he must be Righteous. But Roman theology- teaches that it is the personal intrinsic righteousness of the individual that has to be developed in order for the sinner to go to heaven, while Protestants teach that sinners are made righteous by God "imputing" Christ's Own spotless Righteousness that is imputed to the sinner by the agency of faith alone. And the Latin phrase that illustrated Justification by faith alone is "Sola Fide".

And Jesus is dealing with the issue of Justification in the Parable that Brother Andy just read to you. And the key to understanding this entire Parable is to understand what Dr. Luke was telling us in verse 9:

**And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:**

... and what Jesus was telling us at the end of verse 14:

**... for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.**

So the issue at stake here is not merely doing good deeds- but in trusting in yourself. And the issue here is not that doing good deeds is bad but that by doing them- they will cause us to exalt ourselves.

Now the Bible declares clearly and repeatedly that for anyone to enter into Heaven with God- that they must not only be forgiven- but

they must also be Righteous. And we must be just as Righteous as God Himself is Righteous.

And almost all religions and human philosophies agree with that- which is why they all stress doing good things to try to earn Salvation. But we have to know that these false religions do *not* stress what human beings have to do to earn God's Favor because they are concerned about *Forgiveness*. *None* of those efforts even deal with the issue of Forgiveness- but with the issue of Righteousness- of sinners being made "Just" or "Righteous" with God. So basically, they teach that sinners must "do" various things so they can be "good enough" to go to Heaven. And being "good enough" is Righteousness- not Forgiveness.

And we believe that, too. Christianity believes and teaches that in addition to being forgiven- that lost sinners must also become "good enough" to go to Heaven. Where we differ- and what sets Biblical Christianity apart from every other humanly engineered religion on earth- is in how we *obtain* that Righteousness.

Now as the visible Church on the earth has become more worldly and more pragmatic and more entertaining and less Biblical- they have become warped. And so they stress some aspects of Truth that are good- but they minimize or dismiss or outright ignore other aspects that are equally true. So for example- the "gospel" that many preach today has these characteristics:

- ✓ A Jesus without Deity
- ✓ A Jesus without Sinlessness
- ✓ A Jesus without Calvary
- ✓ A Jesus without a Resurrection
- ✓ Sinners without a Fall
- ✓ Forgiveness without Repentance
- ✓ Wholeness without Obedience
- ✓ Victory without Submission
- ✓ Beliefs without Objective Absolute Truth

... in other words- they preach a "Justification" that is without any "transformation"- which is why they stress that lost sinners must "accept Jesus into their hearts" rather than stress that sinners must repent of their evil deeds and trust in the finished Work of Jesus Christ.

And the net result is that most, if not all, teaching in the modern

Church centers around lost people merely “adding” Jesus to their already planned out lives- so that they may use this “genie in the bottle” to “accomplish all their goals” and “fulfill all their dreams” and so they can “be all they can be” and have their “best life now” and hit more home runs and so their teeth will be whiter and brighter.

And so Biblical Concepts like “dying to self” and “denying self” and “crucifying the flesh” and “killing the deeds of the body” and “suffering to the Glory of God” and “pursuing Biblical Holiness on purpose” and “running hard after God” and “striving against the lusts of the flesh by the Power of the Holy Spirit to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to the Authority of Scripture in our daily lives- all to the Glory of God”- concepts like that are as foreign to most people in the modern Church as is French Medieval Real Estate Law. And that means that the issue of Righteousness is also foreign to most people in the modern Church.

And so the visible Church is long about Forgiveness and very short on Righteousness. They are twenty miles wide on being forgiven but paper thin about being Righteousness.

Now I shouldn't have to do this- but because of the current climate in our culture I am required to not only tell you what I *trying* to say, but also tell you what I am *not* saying. I am *not* in any way *minimizing* the glorious and precious and wonderful Forgiveness of our sins through the shed Blood of Jesus Christ. Without being forgiven- nothing else matters. So I am all about being forgiven.

And I am also not in any way *minimizing* the Death of Jesus on the Cross as He shed His precious Blood that provides for my eternal Forgiveness. And that is why I preach and teach, and why we sing a lot about the Cross and about the Blood and about the Crucifixion. So do not take anything I say today to mean that I am in any minimizing that.

I confess to you that Jesus Christ died on the Cross as a Propitiation for my sins. And that without that- I would not be saved. All I am saying this morning is that that is not all Jesus did. That is not all that the Bible says that Jesus did and that is not all that 2,000 years of Christian Teachings says that Jesus did. But it *is* almost all that the modern Church talks about. And that is wrong; that is *not* the whole Gospel and that is being warped. And so I am suggesting to you that it is all Jesus and Jesus paid it all and Jesus did it all- but Jesus did more than die on the Cross.

For example- the Bible says that in addition to Jesus dying on the Cross- that Jesus also rose from the dead, and the Apostle Paul was moved along by God the Holy Spirit to say this in **1Corinthians 15:17**

**and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.**

And that means that if you do not believe that Jesus also rose from the dead- then you're still not saved- even though Jesus died on the Cross and you have supposedly "asked Jesus into your heart". So, according to the Bible- belief in the physical and literal and bodily Resurrection of Jesus after His Death on the Cross is *mandatory* for Salvation.

But we can't even stop there- because I would suggest to you that Jesus did more than die and rise again. And by saying that I am in no way *minimizing* either His Death or Resurrection. The Bible also says that Jesus was born- as a real human baby- by a real human biological mother at a particular date and in a particular city and in a particular manner. And even though there are literally millions of births going on all over the world every day- that Birth- changed everything- because that Birth is the greatest miracle in the History of the world. Because for the first time since God created the Universe- God became part of His Own Creation.

Because that particular Birth was the Omnipotent Owner and Creator of the Universe- taking on human flesh and sovereignly inserting Himself into the womb of a little woman and gestating there inside His mother for nine full months- just like every other baby and being naturally born- just like every other human baby.

Only this baby was God Almighty in a body; he was Yahweh draped with flesh. He was the incarnate God- "incarne"- the fleshing of God. Which means that Jesus was fully God and fully Man in the same Body at the same time without conflict or contradiction. And this Birth was so astounding that the Christian Church spent the better part of the first 1,000 years of its existence trying to figure it out. And so in addition to Jesus dying on the Cross and rising from the dead- He was also literally and physically born- as the God/Man.

But we can't stop there. Because this God/Man lived on this earth for about 33-1/2 years. This terrestrial ball was graced with the literal

and physical Presence of the Incarnate God for about 12,410 days. And even though many people live 33-1/2 years- nobody lived like Jesus lived.

The Bible makes the claim that Jesus lived every day on this earth- entirely sinless. Without fault. Without ever sinning a single time. In other words- Jesus obeyed the Law of God- perfectly. Jesus was in perfect submission to His Father. Jesus was led by God the Holy Spirit- perfectly. Without ever failing in any point. Jesus never lusted, Jesus never coveted, Jesus never was unkind, Jesus manifested perfect Love- perfectly. Jesus is the only Person in the history of the world Who loved the Lord God with all His Heart and with all His Soul and with all His Mind and with all His Strength. Nobody before or since has ever loved God like that. And Jesus loved His neighbor to the very same extent that He loved Himself. And nobody before or since has ever loved their neighbor to that extent.

Now that is not simply information that makes us smarter than the average bear. You now must see that in addition to dying on the Cross and in addition to rising from the dead and in addition to being born- Jesus lived. And He lived perfectly and He lived sinlessly and He lived absolutely and he lived in perfect obedience; perfect submission and perfect Love.

So *why* did He do that? Why did Jesus live for 33-1/2 years on this sin-cursed earth if all that matters about our Salvation is that He died on the Cross? If Calvary is all that God is concerned about- then Jesus could have come down to this earth as a full grown man on Friday morning and died on Friday afternoon and gone back up to God on Sunday evening. But He didn't do that- did He? No, and you either think that is merely a cosmic coincidence or else it has a deep and profound meaning that absolutely affects our Salvation.

Now I could also mention other things that Jesus did and will do that are all *in addition* to Him dying on the Cross- that also affects our Salvation like:

- ✓ His 3 year Ministry on the earth
- ✓ His 40 days with the Apostles after His Resurrection
- ✓ His literal, physical, and bodily Ascension into Heaven
- ✓ His continual Intercession for us now at the Right Hand of God
- ✓ His Second Coming

... but that is for another sermon. Suffice it to say there are at least eight unique and separate things that Jesus did- *all* of which affect our Salvation- that are all *in addition* to Him dying on the Cross and shedding His Blood for the remission of our sins.

So there are at least nine things that Jesus did- *all* of which are important and *all* of which pertain to our Salvation. But only one them- dying on the Cross and shedding His Blood- provided our Forgiveness. And so all I am saying is that *everything* that Jesus did is important, and *everything* that Jesus did pertains to our Salvation, and so we should know and understand and value and celebrate *everything* that Jesus did for us- not only that He died on the Cross.

And the reason that Jesus was born and lived a life here on the earth for about 33 years *before* He died on the Cross, *before* He shed His Blood for our Forgiveness, and *before* He rose from the dead has to do with the issue of Righteousness- and not Forgiveness. The Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 5:10**

**For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

So *part* of our Salvation pertains not only to the Death of Jesus- where He shed His Blood that provides for our Forgiveness- but here Paul says that part of our Salvation also pertains to His sinless Life as well. And we have to ask why that is. And the answer is that in *addition* to needing to be forgiven- we also need to be made Righteous in order to go to Heaven. And that both Forgiveness and being made Righteous are part of the overall Salvation of lost sinners called, "Justification".

Now as I told you last week- that even though we use Biblical terms interchangeably all the time- Salvation itself consists of at least 13 different separate and unique parts- all of which work together to provide comprehensive Salvation to unworthy sinners. And they are:

1. Sovereign Election
2. Establishing Righteousness
3. Fulfilling Righteousness
4. Providing Forgiveness
5. Effectual Calling



6. Regeneration
7. Repentance and Faith
8. Justification
9. The Imputation of Righteousness
10. Adoption
11. Sanctification
12. Death
13. Glorification

And only two of them:

#6- Repentance and Faith

#11- Sanctification

... involve *our* cooperation and participation. The other eleven are done solely by God alone- *sovereignly*- all by Himself- without any help, assistance, or cooperation from us.

And so on the chart- you will notice that Justification is #8- meaning that there are seven things that happen *before* Justification- and of those seven things- God does six of them all by Himself- without any help or cooperation from us. But look at the seventh one again:

## **7. Repentance and Faith**

Now this is where human beings must repent, and we must "have faith in" or "trust in" the finished Work of Jesus Christ in order for God to justify us (#8). So this is something that *we* do. God does not do this- we do. And the result of us repenting and trusting is that God justifies us- or He forgives us and makes us Righteous. And *this* is the part that most people are talking about when they say they "got saved". The first thing they remember about Salvation is that they "went down front" or they "got on their knees" as they were overwhelmed with the realization of their own sinfulness and lostness and they cried out to God to forgive them and save their souls.

And they don't know about the first six things until after they are saved and they begin to read and study the Bible and they see that God was busy- providing them with a way to be forgiven and made

Righteous- way before they prayed the prayer and way before they were born- even way before God ever made the world!

Now it is true that *nobody* is justified unless and until they repent and put their full faith and confidence in Jesus and in His finished Work. And it is also true that we repent and trust because we *choose* to, because we *want* to, and because we make a conscious *decision* to do so. That is absolutely correct and true.

But it is *also* true that the only reason why a person who is "dead in trespasses and sins" ever comes to the place where he "wants" and "chooses" and "decides" to repent and trust in Jesus- is because God Almighty has already *sovereignly* done six things for Him- *without* his choice and *without* his decision and *without* his desire or cooperation.

Now last week- we went over the first one- Sovereign Election- and today I want to look at the second one-

## **2. Establishing Righteousness**

Now it is very common today to hear people within the visible Church talk long and hard about Grace. And I understand that. Without Grace- none of us would be saved- because they think that Grace is synonymous with Forgiveness. Now I don't believe for a second that most people today really understand what Grace is- but I understand why they would talk about sing about it. So do I. But the Bible includes *another* aspect of Salvation that is not talked about nearly so much- and that is "Righteousness."

And as we have discussed- in order for any of us to stand before God- we need to not only be forgiven- but we need to also be Righteous. But in order for anyone to attain Righteousness- the Standard of Righteousness had to be established. And God did that when He *imposed* His Eternal Morality on all of Humanity. Please turn with me to read about this from **Exodus 20:**

### **Exodus 20:1-20**

**1 Then God spoke all these words, saying,**

**2 "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.**

**3 "You shall have no other gods before Me.**

**4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.**

**5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,**

**6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.**

**7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.**

**8 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

**9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,**

**10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.**

**11 "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.**

**12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.**

**13 "You shall not murder.**

**14 "You shall not commit adultery.**

**15 "You shall not steal.**

**16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.**

**17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

**18 All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw *it*, they trembled and stood at a distance.**

**19 Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die."**

**20 Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."**

Now, there are many things to say and to teach and to learn from these Ten Commandments- all of which are very, very important. But we need to focus this morning on the issue of Righteousness. So here with these words- God is *establishing* Righteousness on the earth. And He is establishing Righteousness by sovereignly *imposing* His perfect Standard of what Righteousness is and what it looks like- Moral Perfection. And the bottom line is that absolute adherence to these simple words will produce perfect and spotless Righteousness in every single human being who follows them without flaw.

And, so, the Old Covenant teaches that the person who obeys these Commandments perfectly without flaw will be "Just"- he will be Justified. Or in other words- he will be Righteous in God's Eyes and he will earn an entrance into Heaven.

So as God gives the Ten Commandments here- He defines what Righteousness looks like. So God is *establishing* the Standard of how to have a right relationship with both God and Man with these words. And unlike the ceremonial and dietary elements of the Old Covenant- this Standard of Moral Perfection is *eternal*- because it is based upon the Personal Character and Nature of Almighty God. So this is the establishment of Righteousness.

### 3. Fulfilling Righteousness

So now that the Perfect Standard of Righteousness has been *established* by God- we are all set- right? Wrong. I want you to notice again what the middle of **Exodus 20:20b** says:

**... Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you...**

So a healthy reverential respect of God, or this godly "fear", is supposed to "remain with us" or *dwell* with us, or *continually* abide *in* us and *with* us to the degree that our thoughts and word and action reflect this godly reverential fear of God in knowing Who God is in relation to who we are. And so all our thoughts and all of our statements and all our actions and the way we handle our money and the way we raise our children and the way we conduct business and the way we treat our family and the way we order our own sexuality and

the way we respect other people and the way we worship God- flow out from a full and proper and correct understanding and adherence to what God says here.

In other words- the only way that human beings may *appropriate* the Perfect Standard of Righteousness that God has established to themselves- or the only way that we can make this Perfect Standard of Righteousness apply to us- is by perfect adherence to it. And that is where the problem is. Look what Moses said as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit at the end of verse 20:

**... so that you may not sin.**

So God defines “**sin**” as any thought or any statement or any action or any intent of the heart that operates in opposition to or rebellion to what God says here. And that very same logic carried forward into the New Covenant because the Apostle John said in **1 John 3:4**

**Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.**

So for anyone at any time to operate or think or speak or even imagine contrary to this Perfect Standard of Righteousness is *transgressing* against God's Law, he is *violating* it, he is *demeaning* it, he is *dishonoring* it. And dishonoring God's Law is the same thing as dishonoring God Himself- since the Law is an extension of Himself.

And that *dishonoring* or that *transgression* is called “sin”. So sin is anyone at any time and in any way- operating *outside* of God's Standard of Perfect Righteousness in thought, word, deed, or even in the intent of the heart. And by definition- violating God's Law *cannot* and *does not* bring God the Glory that is due Him. Which is why the Apostle Paul said this in **Romans 3:20**

**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,**

Now with the issue of Righteousness- it is either all or nothing. You are either righteous or you're not. You are either *totally* and *completely* and *fully* righteous, or you are not righteous *at all*. There is no such thing as somebody being *almost* righteous but not quite, or

somebody being *partially* righteous, or somebody being *somewhat* righteous. If you are not in full and complete adherence to all of the Perfect Standard of Righteousness in thought, word, deed, and intent- then you are unrighteous. You are nothing but a transgressor of the Law and are, in fact, "lawless", meaning you are living in opposition to the Law of God. Look what the Prophet Hosea wrote as he was moved along by God the Holy Spirit in **Hosea 14:9:**

**Whoever is wise, let him understand these things; *Whoever* is discerning, let him know them. For the ways of the Lord are right, And the righteous will walk in them, But transgressors will stumble in them.**

So in *that* respect- God's Perfect Standard of Righteousness is very simple. It is profound- but it is *not* complicated. It is very cut and dried. If anyone wishes to attain to the Standard of Perfect Righteousness- or in other words- if anyone desires to be Righteous- so that he may enter into Heaven and dwell forever with God- all he has to do is live in perfect and continuous adherence to this Standard in thought, word, deed, and intent- 24 hours every day and 7 days every week- without ever failing.

Now as this Truth begins to dawn on people- the first thing they think about is how hard this is and how impossible this is and how that God must be really, really mean and cruel to set things up like this- since nobody can attain this. But I want to show you something that defies that thinking. Please turn with me to read what Jesus told a man from **Matthew 22:35-40:**

**35 One of them, a lawyer, asked Him *a question*, testing Him,**

**36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"**

**37 And He said to him, " '*YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.*'**

**38 "This is the great and foremost commandment.**

**39 "The second is like it, '*YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.*'**

**40 "On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."**

So we see here that in reality- these Commandments are not mean or cruel at all- but are, in fact, the purest and best expression of genuine *love* that the world has ever known. Because if a person really loved God with all his heart soul, mind, and strength, and if a person really loved his neighbor to the same degree that he loved himself- he would automatically obey all ten of the Commandments with no fault and no problem.

So the *real* problem with Humanity is *not* a lack of effort to obey, it is *not* a failure to exercise more will power to submit to God's Perfect Standard, and it *isn't* that we fall short on decision making. None of those things is what causes us to be sinners. No, the *real* problem with Mankind is that- because of the Fall of Adam in the Garden- we do not love. We do not love God and we do not love other people either. We love ourselves and we love sin. Jesus said that this is what was wrong with people:

**John 3:19-21**

**19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.**

**20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.**

**21 "But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."**

And so the fallen emotion that we call "love" and that we talk about all the time and sing about all the time is- most of the time- very self-centered and very selfish, and is actually the exact opposite of true love. True love – loves and values and seeks to glorify God. And true love seeks to selflessly reach out to our neighbor with the same degree of care and concern and urgency that we tend to ourselves.

And so that emotion that *caters* to self, that *enjoys* sinning against God, that *delights* in excluding God and does *not* value God- that emotion isn't really love at all. In reality- *that* emotion that we *call* "love" is actually *self-centered hate*.

And so Jesus came and lived a sinless life here on the earth- fulfilling all of God's Righteous Requirements- *perfectly*. So the Righteousness that God *established* in the Commandments was *fulfilled* in the sinless Life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why Jesus had

to do all the things He did while He was alive, and that is why He told John in **Matthew 3:15b**:

**... Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.**

... Jesus *didn't* need to be forgiven- He was sinless. But He *did* need to fulfill all Righteousness. And He did that- by living a sinless life.

Okay- good for Him. He fulfilled all righteousness by living a sinless life. But what about us? We are not righteous. We have not fulfilled all righteousness. So how are we made Righteous? How are we justified? Well, after Jesus lived a perfectly sinless life and fulfilled all Righteousness- He died on the Cross and rose from the dead so that we could love- so we could love God above and beyond anything related to self and sin, and so we could love each other. The Apostle John said in **1John 4:19**:

**We love because He first loved us.**

And this love- *cannot* be produced through human effort, and it *cannot* be manufactured by rubbing the two sticks of human willpower and decision together. And we do not already possess this kind of love in and of ourselves. No, this love must be *given*, it must be *granted*; it is a gift. So we must understand that our love for God is a gift from God. Nobody possesses love for God on their own. So this is an *external* love that God grants to those whom He saves.

And so another way to define Salvation is that it is the granting of love for God- by God- and at great cost to God- (the death of His Son)- so that those to whom this love is given- will then love God.

And the physical and visible and tangible *manifestation* of this true love- the *results* of having it, the *fruit* of it- is humble and joyful obedience to God. Look what Jesus said in **John 14:15**:

**If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.**

And again in **Luke 6:46**

**Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?**



So Salvation is all about the radical transformation of lost sinners by and through what God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit did- to the degree that we now love God to the extent that we find the fullness of Joy in gladly obeying Him. And that is why it is so wrong to suggest that saved people do not need to obey God, or that obedience to God is somehow *optional* to believers.

So Righteousness is defined then as our joyful *obedience* to God's Commandments to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor to the very same degree that we love ourselves. And we don't do that in our fallen state. And that means that we are *unrighteous*. And the Bible says that the unrighteous *cannot* inherit the Kingdom of God. So on the one hand- John says:

**1 John 5:17a**

**All unrighteousness is sin...**

And on the other hand- Paul teaches

**1 Corinthians 6:9b**

**... do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?**

And so what I want you to take away from this Message today is that it isn't merely that the "unforgiven" will not inherit the Kingdom of God- but that the "unrighteous" will not inherit the Kingdom of God. And so to be "justified" is to be "made righteous"- that is what the term means. So, being "justified" means much more than merely being forgiven. It also means that we have been made righteous.

Now we might want to stop right here because we have now defined Righteousness. It is loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and loving our neighbor as himself. And we also know that Jesus Christ fulfilled the Righteous Standard that God established. Okay. So now that we have defined Righteousness- we all need to get busy so we can labor very diligently to reach this Perfect Righteous Standard of Divine Love- right? Wrong.

Here is the problem. And here is why I have spent the last two weeks talking about this. Jesus told us in the first part of **Luke 18:14a**:

**I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other...**

... showing us that the issue at stake here is not merely that this man was forgiven- but that he went to his house "justified" meaning that he went to his house "righteous". So this Parable begins with this wicked and evil tax collector- a man who had betrayed his people by purchasing a tax license from the pagan Romans- so he could inflict great financial damage to his own people through the imposing and collection of taxes. So there was no way that a human being could be any worse off than this man. A tax collector in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century was the worst of the worst, the lowest of the low- a man who had no scruples and no decency about himself.

And the imagery here is breathtaking. This man is a wicked and evil sinner in the eyes of both Man and God, and yet Jesus says here in verse 14 that he went to his house "justified", or in other words- he was "righteous". But how could this be?

This man has *not* been perfectly and joyfully submitted to God's Law. He hasn't obeyed God at all. He hasn't loved God at all. He is the very *epitome* of lawlessness. He is the very *epitome* of an unrighteous man. And so by definition- he was not righteous at all. And yet Jesus says here that he *is* "righteous" or he *is* "justified". So *how* did that happen?

In fact- I want you to notice that this man has not done *anything*. He has *not* made amends to those he had defrauded. He has *not* given back the money he stole. He has *not* gone to the Temple to offer a sacrifice. He has *not* done anything. This man hasn't done a single good or noble or righteous deed. All this man has done is to cry out to God. Look again at **Luke 18:13**:

**But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'**

Now by contrast- look at the many righteous acts that the Pharisee has done in **Luke 18:11&12**:

**11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.**

**12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'**

Now before you throw rocks at this Pharisee- let me ask you some very serious questions that I want you to ponder this coming week:

- ✓ Isn't it good that he was not a swindler?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he was not unjust?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he was not an adulterer?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he was not like that tax collector?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he fasted?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he gave to God?
- ✓ Isn't it good that he gave God the Glory for all of it?

And let's turn these questions around and ask them another way:

- ✓ Would you call a swindler, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call an unjust man, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call an adulterer, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call a tax collector, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call a man who never fasted, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call a man who never gave to God, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?
- ✓ Would you call a man who never gave God all the Glory, "righteous" or "unrighteous"?

And yet Jesus said that the man who was guilty of all these things and who did not give God any Glory was "justified" or "righteous". And Jesus said the man who *didn't* do the bad things here and did all the good things and who gave God all the Glory was *not* "justified"- meaning he was *not* righteous! And I really want you to consider these issues this coming week and Lord willing, we will find the solution to all this next week.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.