

Luke 18:9-14 (NLT2) ⁹ Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: ¹⁰ “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector!’ ¹² I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ ¹³ “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Romans 10:3 (ESV) ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.

On the cross our sins were placed on Jesus. Simultaneously, our sins were gone forever and the absolute perfect righteousness of Jesus was placed inside of us. Jesus bore our sins in order for us to bear his righteousness. There is enough truth in that one statement to thrill you and me to the bone. We have been given the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our sins are atoned for. **1. God is 100 percent for you and will never turn against you.**

Our second Lenten sermon this past weekend made this point. By pondering daily the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, by preaching it to ourselves, the power of the Gospel inside of us motivates us to give the Gospel away. It becomes part of our everyday speech, our everyday conversation; it is so powerful that it has to come out. Paul says, “I believe therefore I speak.” **2. To ponder the Gospel daily is first to confess to God that we have sinned and yes, even name those sins. After confessing we can thank God for forgiving all of our sins. The blood of Christ washed them all away.** **3. Instead of only seeing yourself as a dirty rotten sinner, you can be lifted up by knowing the perfect righteousness of Christ that dwells within you. No matter how big the sin, God’s grace is bigger still.** The ministry of Jesus on the cross is so significant that when we see Jesus, the marks of the cross will be visible to see. **Revelation 5:6 (NIV)** ⁶ Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain,

standing in the center of the throne. The work of Jesus on the cross will never be forgotten for all eternity.

I have a visible reminder of Jesus on the cross sitting on the altar. I know not all appreciate a crucifix. If you are one of those people, you have your reasons and I highly respect those reasons. The reasons I appreciate a crucifix are twofold. Jesus literally bore all of my guilt and shame on the cross. On my worst of days when I am struggling with my personal struggles, being reminded of Jesus' work bearing my guilt and shame helps me all the more to give it over to Him for He already bore it. After preaching this truth to myself, I do feel uplifted by God. It gives me a spiritual boost. **4. I like the crucifix on the altar for it means to me that Jesus died on the cross for every one of you.** Greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends. Every one of you sitting before me is a person Jesus died for. Pondering that, preaching that part of the Gospel to myself softens my heart toward all of you. I can't have a bad attitude toward any of you because Jesus bore all your sins. Jesus' love for you has been proven on the cross. That love is in us. The cross says to me. "Terry, Jesus loves them and that is your job too." I hear that loud and clear. Of course, we all have people in our lives that bring out the worst in us. By pondering the cross, by daily preaching the Gospel to ourselves, being soaked in the Gospel can and will help us to love the unlovable.

5. The people that put me most to the test, the number one enemy of the Gospel is the attitude of self-righteousness toward people and God. (Bridges, pg. 41). The most blatant form of self-righteousness that I have ever heard goes back years ago. The leader of the study told us that he goes days on end without sinning. He told us that many days he does not have one sin to confess because Jesus gives him the ability to be victorious over sins. Theologically, this is called instant sanctification and this theology belongs in the manure pile. The teacher was sincere and truly believed in what he was saying. I got so fed up with his teaching and I knew I had to say something. "Sir, I have listened to every word." "You actually

believe what you are saying is true. On the other hand, what does your wife think. I am sure your wife has a completely different point of view.”

6. The sin of self-righteousness is a killer. Today, people think so highly of themselves and their own personal opinions that they will do anything and everything to destroy people who disagree with them. Police and other first responders are shot at. In the prolife movement which I support, a few wackos thought it right to kill those who perform abortions. There are also wackos that threatened the lives of the Supreme Court Members who are prolife. Self-righteousness, thinking you are morally superior is a killer in many ways. Self-righteousness kills friendships. A self-righteous friend does nothing to build you up and is a pro at naming everyone else's faults and weaknesses. And even if they say something kind to you it is at the expense of someone else. “I enjoy spending time with you because I can't stand spending time with

“_____.” **7. Self-righteous people see themselves as better than most, smarter than most, and do their best to put up with people who are obviously inferior to them which is the majority of us.** When you are around them, they can make you feel like you don't really know anything and it is up to them to teach you and raise you up to their level, whether it be music, politics, theology, sports, education, whatever. **8. Often they are intellectually brilliant but never learned the art of properly relating to people.** Self-righteous to the max, people as such are best to stay away from and avoid unless you enjoy being viewed as less than and inferior. It is not fun to feel like you do not know anything compared to the self-righteous person or couple.

A self-righteous Christian believes God has given to them the gift of criticism for they criticized everything, nothing or nobody meets their expectations. Friend there is no such thing as the spiritual gift of criticism. Spiritual gifts are given by God to build up the church, not tear it down. Satan's goal is to steal, kill, and destroy, the very goals of highly self-righteous people. One super self-righteous can person can destroy a church and they will do the same thing at the

next church. They are every pastor's worst nightmare because the pastor is beneath their level of thinking.

Now we turn a corner and speak of a self-righteous attitude toward God. **9. In one sentence speaking to God, "I'm doing well; surely I deserve your blessing." "You owe it to me"** (Jerry Bridges, pg. 42). Let me explain. **10. Every blessing we ever receive from God is based on the merit of Jesus, not ours. We only have demerits if anything on our own.**

We cannot strive or earn God's blessing based on our own personal righteousness outside of the righteousness of Christ. **11. Every blessing comes through the cross of Christ due to His atoning work on the cross.** **12. We have God's approval.** **13. We have access to God, to God's Holy Presence.** **14. God has accepted us and brought us into God's family, the community of Jesus Christ.** **15. We will be admitted into heaven.** **16. God empowers us and strengthens us so we are able through Christ to live the Christian life.** All of this is

based on the work of Christ, His righteousness within our lives, and not any of our own merits.

Thinking we are good enough to earn or deserve God's blessing could not be more wrong and downright dangerous. **17. Appropriation of our daily sustenance is provided by God. God**

takes care of His people. **18. If God gave us what we truly deserve, it would be hell. The perfect righteousness of Christ inside of us is God's gift to us.** Our own personal

righteousness does not impress God. The Bible says God sees our own righteousness as filthy rags. The Bible says, "None are righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). The Bible also says,

"This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:22). In

other words, our best of works, our best of intentions, do not merit God's favor. It is God's favor to give to us the righteousness of Jesus and thus every blessing that comes our way is due to Jesus, not us. It was this truth, found only in the Bible that turned Luther around and saved him

for all eternity. The righteousness that God requires of us is not something we do. It is

something we receive from God. It is a gift of grace, not works. "Thereupon I felt myself reborn and entered the gates of paradise through the words of Paul" (my own paraphrase).

Whenever we are self-righteous toward God, we nullify grace (ibid.42). **19. Self-righteousness sees oneself as the source of blessing and not God.** "Friends, grace changes everything, now and forever. Its cost to God was infinite; its value is incalculable. So the thought that we could somehow forfeit the experience of that grace should make us shudder," writes Jerry Bridges" (pg. 43). The quote continues. "Do you see how this approach treats Christ as if he died for no purpose? \Self-righteousness is a gospel enemy because it disregards, devalues, and discredits, the gospel provision of the righteousness of Christ – the sinless life He lived for us and the sin-bearing death He died for us. Self-righteousness turns grace on its head because it views the sinner as deserving God's blessings rather than as undeserving" (pg. 43). As I said earlier, the only thing we truly deserve from God is hell. Therefore everything God does give to us is all of grace, not based on our personal performance or deeds. Jesus paid for it all on the cross, every amount of grace and blessing we receive from God.

When I was in college a dear friend of mine asked me this question, "T.B. do you see me growing in the Christian faith?" This was my answer. "If God were to die today there would be no power loss in your life. You are a completely self-sufficient Christian, relying on God for nothing and depending on yourself for everything." He felt like I put a knife into him, but it was a knife that was necessary. He began to really trust in God for his very life and his witness of Jesus took off like a rocket. It is key for us to repent of our sinful self-sufficiency, our self-righteous way of thinking, and depend solely on the grace of God, the sufficiency of God's grace. It is all based on the merits of Christ. Self-sufficiency and self-righteousness annuls grace, they are grace killers.

I close with this. Years ago, when my mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, my father said to me, "I never thought Norma would have Alzheimer's after all the great Bible teaching she did in Bible Study Fellowship." My father was making an honest comment and his heart was hurting at the decline of my mother. I did not give to him a lecture on grace and blessings. Friends, it is all the work of Christ's perfect life, Christ's perfect righteousness, Christ dying for our sins, it is all due to the merit of Christ that we receive blessing upon blessing upon blessing and on top of that heaven. It is all by grace. Amen and Amen.