

# Trusted in Themselves

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, back to Luke chapter number 18. I've asked Charlotte and Jonathan to stay up here for a moment. Steve Green can be seated. And don't worry, I won't be singing for you today.

But I'm going to need some instruments that will be played here in a moment. What a beautiful song. This is a great truth. As we're going to look in the scriptures here at the prayer of a Pharisee and the prayer of a publican.

How many of you have ever been to a church at the altar or maybe in a prayer room? When you began to pray, everybody in the room began to pray out loud. How many of you have ever experienced that?

All right. Oh, a lot of you. Okay. You've got Georgians in here. All right. I didn't know that growing up. And I remember the first time that I went to a church here in Georgia. And we went to the altar to pray.

And everybody started praying at the same time. God wasn't overwhelmed. I was slightly for the first time in the moment because I wasn't expecting it. And I learned to love it. And as I saw it more and more, and I just think it's beautiful.

[ 0 : 59 ] And I'm not opposed to it all. But I'm just talking about my immediate reaction to it of not being accustomed to it. And so I'm by a guy and he's praying. And it was so beautiful to hear what he was saying and me encouraged.

But as a young guy, 21, 22 years old, and thinking, well, these people, the thing that I went to, they would call preachers from the floor. Any of you all familiar with this? You don't know who's going to preach.

They were just going to call somebody from the floor to be ready. And I wondered, how do they know who they're going to call? And then I thought, maybe we're all kind of applying the preach right now by however we pray.

You know, that's what I'm wondering. They're thinking, maybe if I bring down a fire from heaven, they'll let me preach. And so as I was there and I should have been praying, I'm thinking, how do I create my preaching resume right now?

And I'll say, point number one, Lord. You know, and all these thoughts were going on. And they did that in real sincerity. I wasn't, I had a perplexing of my mind of what I was supposed to be doing.

[ 1 : 59 ] But here in Luke chapter number 18, verse number 11, this Pharisee, he prays, he stood up, he thanked thee, he said, I'm not as other men. The Pharisees wanted, he was building a resume.

This is a prayed resume of a Pharisee, a prayed resume of the Pharisee. And what is the first thing that the Pharisee wanted the people to know? It was this.

He wanted them to know that he was a moral man. I thank God I'm not as these other men, unjust, adulterers, extortioners, or even as this publican.

He wanted everybody in the room to know that he was a moral, that he was a good guy. But what we know from God's word is that behavior, no matter how good it is, that is based on a flawed view of God, is not pleasing to the Lord.

That behavior, no matter how good it is, if it's not based upon a proper view of God, is not pleasing to him. Isaiah has that verse that always seems so extreme to us that says that all this righteousness is as filthy rags.

[ 3 : 06 ] And that's hard for us to understand. Again, morality has to flow out of a true view of God. And to reject Jesus Christ is an absolute flawed view of God. So I won't say that I'm raising my kids to live out Judeo-Christian ethics.

I raise them to know that they are sinners that have been forgiven and then react to that truth. Because in the New Testament, it's written to say that those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father.

And so it isn't just about getting people to practice good morality and good behavior and some type of ethics. It's us living from the inside out where we recognize that no, we are not good.

No, we are not righteous. No, we are not religious. No, we are not moral. No, we are broken and we need forgiveness. And then in receiving that, then our lives should flow from it. No good behavior motivated by self-interest is glorifying the God.

1 Corinthians 13, 3. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profit me nothing.

[ 4 : 13 ] That these behaviors that aren't rooted in a sincere, true love for God is going to profit us nothing. A little bit, we'll look at Philippians and that's how Paul expresses how he feels about all these things in life.

They're not. But so what we have here is we have a dilemma because on Sunday morning that seems to make a whole lot of sense to us. But what about sinful goodness? That's an expression that Jonathan Edwards, he quotes.

He says, So what are the actions of our unbelieving family, friends, and neighbors that are actually morally good? How do we say that they are bad when they seem that they are good?

And how do you say something is good if it isn't glorifying to God? How does this get lived out in our lives with the moral people that are around us? What is the value for me to say that they're not being good when it seems that they're good?

But how can they be doing good if it isn't glorifying to God? A friend of mine wrote an article and he said that you cannot have a good marriage unless Christ is at the center.

[ 5 : 15 ] Well, many unbelieving people said we are not believing, but who's to say that we don't have a good marriage? I've been with my wife for 50 years. Who are you to tell me that I can't have a good marriage outside of Christ?

And so they appear virtuously beautiful, but with a limited perspective. It is good. It is beautiful with a limited perspective.

So I have brought to the finest musicians that we know today on Help Me Out Here, okay? And so we have, I'm going to ask Jonathan to play something, and I didn't tell him what to play, so I'm a little scared right now, okay?

I'm going to ask Jonathan just to play a little something that we would consider beautiful or nice. All right.

That sounds nice, doesn't it? All right. You better stop. They're about to fall asleep. That was just like taking us somewhere. All right. All right. Now, you keep playing that, and now, Charlotte, you play something as well with him, okay?

[ 6 : 20 ] Go ahead. All right. You can stop here, okay? And so do you see what's happening here?

These two are so in sync that it almost didn't work because it's that no matter how beautiful what Jonathan was playing, it has a limited beauty because it isn't in harmony with the song that is supposed to be being played.

And so that's the picture that we have here. And so that's the picture that we have here is that it has a limited view of beauty. This is how Jonathan Edwards, y'all can be seated. Thank you very much here, okay? And this is how he put it.

And before I read this quote, I wanted you to see it so you could kind of understand it because when I read it, I had a chance to kind of chew on it and meditate and get up to speed on it. But he says this, As a few notes in a tune, taken only by themselves in relation to one another, may be harmonious, which is what we saw in Jonathan, which when considered with respect to all the notes in the tune or the entire series of sounds that are connected with, may be very discordant and disagreeable.

So when the actions of a person's character seem to be in light of all their desires and all of their intentions and all their desired outcomes, it may not be of the nature of true virtue after all.

[ 7 : 39 ] So that beauty, it looks good for us from our limited perspective, but it's from God's perspective who knows us completely, who understands what are their intentions. Why was the good thing done?

Was the good thing done for you or was it done for the glory of God? What is the desired outcome? So I can look at it with my limited view and I can say that is right, that is good, that is moral, moral, I appreciate it.

But from God, he understands what the entire song is. He goes on to say this, and I love it, All that is truly good and beautiful testifies to the reality of the good and the beautiful.

Nothing in this world is truly good or truly beautiful if it doesn't testify of the one who is truly good and truly beautiful. But it puts us at an odd place, doesn't it? Because from our limited perspective, it seems to be good.

But that good deed can be condemning the people when they believe that it's going to merit them, their salvation. The good deed that could be a reflection of God's doing something in their lives to bring honor and glory to God, but when it's done to earn or to merit salvation is not beautiful or good, but it is very dangerous.

[ 8 : 51 ] I told you all a couple of Sunday nights ago, a young man explained to me his false religion and saying, isn't this beautiful? From his perspective, his limited perspective, it was beautiful. But from a godly perspective, it most certainly wasn't.

So first thing that the Pharisee wants you to know in his resume that he's building on his prayer is, I'm a moral man. I'm a good man. Secondly, he wants you to know, I'm a religious man.

I fast twice in a week and I give tithes to all that I possess. You see, the Pharisees didn't just fast on special occasions on the Jewish calendar. They would fast on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Way more dramatic. That's why we meet on Thursdays. I'm just kidding. If you're new to vision here, okay, we don't. We meet so we can see our missionary friends on Thursday nights. But Tuesdays and Thursday, a very serious fast they would have.

And they would say, remember we looked and already seen in Luke how they were giving tithes of the wild herbs that were in their garden. And they're very particular down to it. I fast twice a week. I tithe on anything that comes into my hands.

[ 9 : 53 ] I am very religious. That's what the man is trying to tell us. I am moral and I am religious. But we should have no confidence in our morality or our religion. This is how the Apostle Paul says it.

Because I can give testimony today that I am the most moral and religious. But the Apostle Paul says it like this. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh, if any other man thinketh that he hath whereof, he might trust in the flesh.

I more. Circumcised that day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuted the church.

Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. You nobody stacks their resume up against him. Born into the right family, at the right time, doing the right things, studying the law, understanding the Torah, following all of these things.

And if you don't think I'm zealous, I have been persecuting the church. They laid the coats of Stephen when they're stoning Stephen. They take their coats off before they stone the first martyr in the New Testament.

[ 11 : 00 ] And they lay it at his feet. He is in the middle of it. His resume is very extensive. And this is what he says about his resume. But what things were gained to me that I counted loss for Christ.

None of that matters. In all of eternity, my morality, my religion. Nobody's more moral. Nobody's more religious. None of that matters. But glorifying Jesus is the only way not to trust at our own accomplishments.

In verse number 3, he tells us that recognizing this, that we're not enough, doesn't lead us to despair. But it says, For we are the circumcision which worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

We rejoice in the fact that we know that we're not enough. We rejoice in the fact that it's not based upon our own goodness. And then he said this, that this is, there is no place to be safe except in trusting in him.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe. I love that verse because I think about how often on Sunday mornings, as we go through the gospel stories, I am sharing the gospel message to a group of people that I've heard your testimony.

[ 12 : 19 ] Some of you, I was there when you came to put your faith and trust in Christ. And I'm going to tell the story again, and I can tell you it is not grievous to me to tell you this story one more time. It's not grievous for me to consider the implications upon our lives, but for you it is safe.

In this truth is where we find our safety. And everything else is shifting sand. Next week, we will look at how Christ became the replacement for all of Paul's resume in verse 9.

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. So not only did he want them to know his moral, not only did he want them to know the religious, but he wanted them to know I'm humble about it, all right?

Not only am I great, but I'm very humble about it. And that's where we, in verse number 11, when he says, I pray thus to himself, God, I thank thee. All right? He is saying, I have all these things, but they're given to me of God.

And so he shows this nod towards being humble. Not saying, I haven't done these things, but it was that God did this. But what you will see missing in his prayer, very much you're going to see what's missing, is there's no sense of need.

[ 13 : 31 ] There's no sense of need in his prayer. Jesus is continually highlighting the people when he meets them, and they come up full of themselves with a long resume, and he'll say, well, sell everything that you have, or you must be born again.

He is always questioning what is the basis for which they believe they have become righteous. You know, seeing people that are lost become saved really isn't that difficult.

Lost people want to become saved people. What is difficult is seeing good people realize that they are lost people. That's what keeps so many people destined for hell.

The moment you realize that you're lost, you go looking for a savior. The day that I realized that I did not, could not, and certainly was on the path to earn my own salvation, I wanted salvation.

I wanted somebody. I rejoiced in hearing that Jesus Christ's death on the cross was for me. So he was a self-justified man. The basis of his peace, of his conscience, rests squarely on the fact that he was a good person.

[ 14 : 43 ] I am not as other men. I fast, I give, I, of what I possess, all of that is self-justifying. But the story of our justification is what Jesus has done, not what I do.

That's what we're looking to. And now we get over to the contrast. The heartfelt plea of the publican. Verse 13, I believe it's in this verse that we get our tradition or habit, which I believe is a good one, that most often times when we pray, unless you're a pastor's kid, you close your eyes.

You know what I'm saying in here, don't you? All right. Most often times not, because in the Old Testament, many times we wouldn't see them closing their eyes. They would lift their hands and look towards heaven, which is certainly nothing wrong with that.

I'm so uncoordinated that sometimes I'll go to a drive-thru and I'll close my eyes when I'm leaving to pray because I just think that's what I'm supposed to do. And it's quite dangerous. And all right. It just becomes, it becomes a habit of doing that.

And I believe that we would find where that would come from, from this understanding, is that we are just, we come to him humble. You are God, you are mighty. And so when we're not at a place we could lay down or the kneel, we'll say we'll close our eyes.

[ 16 : 05 ] But it's representing something. Everything about it is coming with brokenness. I lifted up my eyes on his disciples. Luke 620 says, And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

This publican is going to leave justified because he came poor. He was broken. He knew that he could not earn his own salvation. How would we say it?

We just have no confidence in the flesh. One man smote his breast and said, I'm confident in the flesh. The publican said, I'm not. I have nothing to glory in. He does not ground his hope for acceptance with God on anything that is in him.

All throughout the scriptures. David says it so clear in Psalm 51. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.

Not on my resume. Not on who I am. But upon your loving kindness towards me. So what is Jesus' point? His point is that nothing we do is the basis for God's acceptance of us.

[ 17 : 11 ] You know, growing up, I heard this said a lot to me from my mom. And then now I hear Stephanie saying a whole lot to my oldest son, which is, why does it really matter?

Like this argument that you're in right now, Trent Thatcher, does it really matter? And it really does matter because boneless chicken wings are not chicken wings, all right?

They're just not. And if people are going to live their whole lives pretending that they are, they're never going to recognize what a real chicken wing is. And so it's life or death here, okay? Does it really matter?

It doesn't. It doesn't. And I have spent so much of my life wasted in trivial type of arguments that don't matter. But church, can I tell you that salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ, it matters.

It matters. If there's anything in your life that you want to give your life to, we don't defend it. It's true. The declaring to revealing from the scriptures is that salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ, it matters.

[ 18 : 14 ] So give your life explaining it. Give your life the bringing up in conversations. Give your life the rejoicing in it. Jesus and Jesus alone is the basis for God's acceptance of us.

Verse 9. According to verse number 8, this is the purpose of the passage. And it says, And he spake this parable on the certain which trusted in themselves. Verse 9. That they were righteous and despised others.

There's those who will trust in themselves. You know, many people will appear to live such a full and a good life, but they will have such an empty and sad funeral.

When people talk to me about the goodness of a family member or a friend when they're living, it just sounds like a story. But when you're at a funeral service and people stand up there and try to give eulogies, and they just try to speak about all the good things that this person has done, and then you try to take the good things they have done and really put it on the scale, and you believe that it would outweigh their sin, we all know that it feels empty.

And we all know that it doesn't seem to make any sense. And so why wait till the end to recognize that in our lives? Moral men and women still need a Savior. The religious and outwardly moral man, he rejects the counsel of God.

[ 19 : 27 ] John the Baptist, he comes preaching repentance. And it says about those many received him and were baptized, received the message of repentance, they repented and they were baptized. But what about those that don't?

It says in Luke 7, 29 about them, it says, And all the people that hurt him and the publicans justified God being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.

What we see there is a deep division in the thinking of people, those that would listen to the words of Jesus and those that rejected the counsel. So those that were baptized of John repented of their sins, and they showed their sincerity through that, agreed with Jesus, acknowledged that God's way was the right way.

But in contrast, the Pharisees and the experts of the law, they rejected God's purposes for themselves. And by refusing it, they did not accept the message of repentance or accept the kingdom.

There's so many moral and religious people that are rejecting the counsel of God. And I pray that you are not one of them today, that you are not rejecting the counsel of God.

[ 20 : 38 ] Because what you need in here is more than a new religion. You need a new life. That's how Jesus puts it. It's at the heart of what he tells Nicodemus. Jesus answered in John 3, 3 and said unto him, Verily, verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

You know, Jesus has a category for people that are living yet dead. It shows up several times in the gospel records. Luke chapter number 9, verse 59. We saw not long ago, he said, Jesus said unto them, Let the dead bury the dead.

Let the living dead bury the dead dead. All right? Let those that appear to be living but are really dead, let them bury those that are physically dead.

He's describing those that appear to be living, but they are dead, and their sins and trespasses against them. What was it said about the prodigal? When the prodigal comes home, the father looks at him and said, My son who was once dead is now made alive.

You feel like you're alive today because you walked into this room, but according to God's word, that if you're trying to find your righteousness in your own good works, that you are spiritually dead, and you will stay in that state for all eternity, separated from a God who loves you.

[ 21 : 59 ] And so today is a day to recognize that you can be moral and you can be religious, but you can still be spiritually dead. We sing about it so many beautiful ways.

Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. What a great line, isn't it? Nothing I bring to him, I just cling to the cross. For in Christ alone, who took on flesh, fullness of God and helpless made, this guilt of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones he came to save, till on the cross Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied, for every sin on him was laid, here in the death of Christ I live.

In his death I now live. We've already sang it. One of our favorites. Complete in thee, no work of mine. May take thee, Lord, the place of thy. Thy blood has parted but for me, and I am now complete in thee.

Everything in my life that I've ever been given, I have messed up. Every opportunity, I have not fully ever met. And if the God of heaven would have handed me my salvation, and left anything on the table for me to do, I would be lost on my way to hell today.

But he did it completely for me. He did everything for you today. And so why would you hold on to what you're doing when something that is so great is being offered to you?

[ 23 : 30 ] Reject your own goodness. Step away from your own morality. Step away from all your religion. And find a new life that is available because of the death of Jesus Christ in your place.

God's mercy, as demonstrated, by the death and resurrection of Jesus, is the basis on which we can be forgiven, accepted, and declared righteous.

And all God's people said, Amen. Every head bowed and every eye closed. Let's spend some time praying together. If you understand that today, would you pray for those who do not understand that?

Those in this room, those watching online, those around the world who do not know that message, would you pray for them at this time? Here in a moment, I'm going to ask you to stand and we'll pray together.

And then we'll stand and we'll lead this day singing one of those wonderful songs and rejoicing together as we should. But as you will, if you will stand with me, I want to speak to you just for a moment.

[ 24 : 31 ] And I want you to stand and I want you to consider what your response should be to the Word of God. Not to my words, but to the words of God. It says that this passage that was given to us by Jesus was written for them who trusted in themselves.

Are you trusting in yourself today? Have you built some type of resume that you really believe that you're going to walk into heaven someday and sit down at the feet of a crucified Savior and believe that that should allow you to be there?

If so, reject that today. Reject that. With every head bowed, every eye closed, nobody looking around, I want you to answer that today. If that's you in here today, would you raise your hand acknowledging it first and foremost before the God of heaven that today you want to reject that resume, that today you want to plead for His mercy upon your life, which He will so willingly give.

For those of you in here as myself who are just so forgetful of this, who has forgotten how completely incapable we were of ever doing anything there in our salvation, but now we have it and now we are safe.

Would you say a word of prayer to our Heavenly Father and thank Him and allow that rejoice in the overflow in your life to other people. Let's spend some time in prayer at the altar at your seat.

[ 25 : 52 ] Now close us in a word of prayer. – Thank you. fold-up USD Bond Bond Bond Bond Bond Bond Bond Bond Heavenly Father, I do not understand, but I absolutely love that a room full of people could be praying and that you would hear every voice and every word that is said.

And Father, I love that around the world today, there are people that are singing songs about the cross in so many different languages. On the mission field with our missionaries, Lord, and in places around the world and rooms and some having to hide the day, they sing of the cross and they sing of the complete work that has been done on their behalf.

And so, Father, I ask, and I know that you already are, that you would listen to us today. That when we sing complete in thee, that you would see not moral behavior, not just right words, but even pass those words deep into our hearts.

That we are not people, Lord, trying to build a resume, but we are people, Lord, that have been changed by your forgiveness. And that this singing unto you, Lord, would truly be worshiped, and that you would be pleased by it.

Lord, thank you for sending your son in our place. And Lord, we recognize that it is the only basis that we could ever be made righteous. Reject this world's wisdom.

[ 27 : 46 ] And this is the message we desire to declare throughout our week. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.