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(unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp)

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Finally, brethren
WHATEVER THINGS are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely
are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Jesus so came, so lived, and so taught that those who hunger for godliness are drawn to him and enlightened by him, while those who despise the grace and love of God are repelled and blinded. (J.W. McGarvey, **Fourfold Gospel**. 618)

Question from Ethiopia

Question

I have a question please. Can we count the saints every Sunday service or can someone should ask how many people in your church and count the saints after dismissal prayer. Because the Christians feel, I have seen when someone comes and calculating them every time. Please tell me if it is scriptural necessary.

Answer

There is no direct command to count the members of the local church by whatever method. Rather, we are acting under general authority, that which includes "any thing, method, or means of execution that comes within the class or order of the precept, example or thing commanded" (Roy E. Cogdill, **Walking By Faith**. 15). For example, when the Lord commanded, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every

creature" (Mark 16:15), He did not say how to go. Philip ran and rode in a chariot (Acts 8:26-36), and Barnabas and Saul sailed in a ship (Acts 13:1-4), but in each case they acted under the authority of Mark 16:15 as well as the direct command of the Lord to them to go. Obviously, someone at least estimated the number of disciples who first composed the church in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41). If for no other reason, it helps to know how many disciples compose the local church in order to gauge the relative faithfulness in attendance of those members (Hebrews 10:24-25). To do this we have to count both those who have joined the local church (Acts 9:26-28) and those actually present at each assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18). How, when, or even whether this is done is a matter of liberty (1 Corinthians 8:9) to be decided by each local church for itself.

Question from Nigeria on the Judgment

Question

The bible Heb 9:27 says it is appointed for man to die once and after death come judgment. Are we judge immediately we died? Luke 16 story of Lazarus and the rich man said Lazarus went to bosom of Abraham and the rich man to a place of torment, Is that judgment because we can see separation or will there be a second judgment as the appearing of Christ as in 2timothy 4:1. What happens to Christian when we died, are we judged immediately to warrant separation like Lazarus and the rich man?

Answer

Hebrews 9:27 states that judgment follows death, but it does not state it follows immediately. Christ will judge all people when He returns (Matthew 25:31-32; Jude verses 14-15). And yes, immediately after death we will know our fate (Luke 16:19-24). I have heard explanations of why there will be a general judgment, although each already knows his fate, but these involve human wisdom. It is best to simply accept by faith what the Scriptures reveal.

Jamaica Patois Wisdom, #22

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

(The Jamaican Patois dialect is colorful, unique and humorous. It is my desire to share some of the philosophy shown in this mix of colorful phrases that are witting as well as thought-provoking. I hope readers both profit and enjoy. In my quarter-century plus of teaching there, I have come to appreciate some things about their culture. - **Jefferson David Tant**)

Patois - if yu lie wid dog, yu wake wid flea

English - If you lie down with a dog you will wake with fleas

Meaning - One who keeps bad company will reap unfavorable results

Patois wisdom and the Bible are in agreement. Paul warned, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals'" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Paul had warned earlier about the danger of the church tolerating the behavior of a man who was in an incestuous relationship with his step-mother. "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough?" (1 Corinthians 5:6). We know that it doesn't take much leaven or yeast to have a significant effect on a lump of dough.

But it is so easy for people to think they are strong. When parents warn their children about some of their friends, the response may be: "Well, I know they do some things that are wrong, but I'm strong enough to resist getting into trouble. They're my friends, and I enjoy hanging out with them, but I don't do everything they do."

The Psalmist put it this way: "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (Psalm 1:1) Here we see the picture of one who walks by where bad behavior is taking place, then perhaps returns to stand and watch, and the first

thing you know, he's sitting right in the middle of it. So the writer pronounces a blessing on those wise enough to stay away.

In picking friends, there are basically two types. (1) There are those who influence us, and (2) there are those that we influence. We must use wisdom in choosing our friends. Yes, we need to have contacts out in the world if we are to be effective in leading others to Christ, but the danger comes when they are our best friends, the ones we spend the most time with. James warns that "...whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

There are biblical examples of those who allowed others to have a bad influence on them. There was Amnon, who raped his sister Tamar at the urging of his friend Jonadab (2 Samuel 13). Absalom took bad advice from Ahithophel in rebelling against his father David (2 Samuel 16:20ff). Even Peter denied his Lord as he was influenced by those standing around him (Luke 22:55-60).

The book of Proverbs is filled with advice about the type of companions we should choose. "Do not associate with a man given to anger; or go with a hot-tempered man, or you will learn his ways and find a snare for yourself" (Proverbs 22:24-25). Solomon's advice to his son on the matter of choosing companions begins in 1:10 and then shows the consequences of bad choices in the following verses. "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (1:10).

Choices have consequences, and these choices are sometimes eternal. It may be that we are in circumstances where good friends are hard to find, but we do have one who always wants to be our friend. "You are My friends if you do what I command you" (John 14:15). Make sure He is your friend, and then you won't have to worry about waking up with fleas.

Paul, To The Ephesians | Ephesians 2:8-9

By Grace Through Faith, #2

Patrick Farish | Lancaster, Texas, USA

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Grace, the unmerited favor of God, abounds in our lives. The food we eat is produced from seeds empowered by God. Men have tried to make seeds. They analyze seeds of fruit or vegetables to determine of what materials they consist, and they create their own "seed" with those materials. To resounding failure: the seed they got out of the ground is connected with the grace of God carrying life: and the "seed" they made is not. Yes; we prepare the ground, put the seed in it, water and fertilize the seed - and God makes it grow. We could do all this stuff to the "seed" human wisdom has concocted, and still nothing would happen, because the power of God is not present in it.

Grace through faith: in life on this planet, and in the hope of heaven.

Paul says, "by grace you have been saved." These were dead people, dead in trespasses and sins who have been "made ... alive together with Christ." Their salvation, like the tomato growing, did not happen apart from the power of God. The seed had to be sown - whether a tomato seed or that which is the word of God (Luke 8:11). Their trust in God led them to obey God.

"Through faith." As with everything that grows for man's nutritional well-being, so with the provision of salvation: human effort is involved. That essential human effort is not meritorious, the efforts with the man-made seed show that there is no merit apart from the power of God - but as with God's tomato seed there must be preparing, planting, and tending to bring about the harvest. The soil (heart) must be prepared, the seed (which is the word of God) must be sown - and none of these things earn the reward. Which is

probably why Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."

"And this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God." What does "this" refer to? Many think that "this" refers to faith: that faith is the gift of God. The Bible teaches, rather, that faith comes from hearing "the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Even the devil knows how faith is produced, Luke 8:11-12 (and confer John 20:30-31). The Bible further teaches that the real gift of God is salvation, "the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The effort to make faith be the gift of God grows out of the notion that some are predestined to be saved, and others to be lost, irrespective of the manner of their lives. According to this view, God picks the one He will save, and bestows faith on them. This idea, false from the start, has had more effect on the views of some preachers than we might like to admit.

Salvation is the gift of God, because "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"Not a result of works, so that no one may boast." This is a favorite place to which they fly who would impugn baptism, or the obedience of faith. They miss the mark in this, also. There are, certainly, works which are not involved in salvation; but the works which are excluded in this passage are works about which "one may boast." What is there to boast about in being baptized? Would Naaman have boasted about being immersed in the Jordan River? No; what could a "commander ... a great man ... a mighty man of valor" (II Kings 5) have to boast about in such an awkward activity? Of what could the children of Israel boast, having marched around Jericho thirteen times? No, they were granted these blessings by the grace of God, "not as a result of works, so that no man may boast."

The works that are excluded are works man could boast, or brag, about. If Naaman could have confronted a mighty army, and defeated it all by himself, it would have been glorious; but dipping in the Jordan? -- nothing to brag about there. If the children of Israel could have stormed the walls and defeated the people of Jericho because of their bravery, it would have been a feather in their cap; but marching around the city? -- nothing to brag about there.

If one wishing to convert to Christ could deny himself in some heroic fashion, many would be drawn by such a glorious prospect; but allow oneself to be immersed in water for forgiveness? -- nothing to brag about there.

God wants us to understand our frailty, our dependence on Him. He has carefully and specifically given instruction that emphasizes our dependence. Notable in this list would be Gideon, in Judges 22. The reason for all the action in this chapter is set forth in verse two, where Jehovah tells Gideon, "The people with you are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hand, lest Israel boast over me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me'." So, Jehovah had Gideon reduce his army (which was already outnumbered) from 32,000 men to 10,000, to 300; so that the Israelites would not think "my own hand has saved me."

God's demand is that the person desiring to be forgiven and saved show his faith, submit to baptism -- which makes no sense, according to human wisdom. The point is, that no one being baptized to wash away sin is going to think that by his mighty right arm, or by his soaring intellect, or by whatever else one might try to lean on, his salvation was accomplished. God did it.

The Ephesians were saved "by grace ... through faith." In terms of their conversion, what did salvation by grace through faith call for? We read about their conversion in Acts 19. In speaking with some people there, and learning they had been baptized with "John's baptism," Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus. On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus ... There were about twelve men in all" (verse three through five).

The problem with John's baptism was that, though in earlier times it had been valid - Jesus was baptized

with it, and He also baptized others, John 4:1,2 - with the day of Pentecost baptism in the name of Christ was prescribed for remission of sins, Acts 2:38. And apparently, these Ephesians were baptized with John's baptism after Pentecost.

So: salvation by grace through faith required believing in Jesus, and being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus - which twelve men immediately tended to.

Mark Well Her Bulwarks - No. 9

Tommy Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

The last article about God's bulwark, "the mission and work of the church," dealt with the fact that many congregations of the Lord's church have lost sight of the reason for the church's existence in the first place. The mission of the church is to save souls through evangelism, edifying those who are saved through worship and teaching, and caring for its own members when they are in physical need of help. Instead, brethren have made the mission and work of the church primarily that of caring for people's social needs by building church kitchens, fellowship halls, and family life centers. They say the purpose of these things is to get people into a building where they can be taught the gospel. They think that God's way of drawing men to Christ through the preaching of the word of God is old-fashioned and out of date for modern society.

They ask, what is wrong with doing these things? People are brought together so they can be taught the gospel. First and foremost, in doing this, people are being taught by actions, if not by words, that the gospel of Christ by itself has lost its power to save. This is contrary to what is taught in the New Testament. The pure gospel preached simply and plainly, without addition or subtraction, was (and still is) the power of God to save those who believe (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21; 15:1-4). The gospel reveals the Christ who was lifted up (through His death, burial and resurrection) to draw men to Himself that they might be saved (John 12:32; 1 Corinthians 2:1-4). How are they drawn? By being taught of God, i.e., hearing and learning the scriptures (John 6:44-45). If the power of the gospel doesn't move men to obedience (Romans 1:5), nothing else will. Filling people's stomachs and satisfying their human cravings will not convert people to Christ. Only the gospel has this power. Take time to read carefully Romans 14:17-19 and Acts 20:32.

Some just can't understand why there is such an opposition to preaching a social gospel that turns the church into some type of social club. They are confused because they don't know the real reason behind the objections. They think the opposition is simply an objection to eating and drinking in the church building (1 Corinthians 11:18-34). What Paul wrote is true, but this is not the real issue. Others think the reason for our objection to the social gospel concept is that we believe the church building is sacred. Yes, the church building has been built with the Lord's money for spiritual purposes, so if it is not used for the spiritual purposes for which it was built then it would be a misuse of the building. But, the materials used to construct and furnish the building are not sacred.

But the above thoughts do not get to the real issue about this bulwark. The real issue goes back to the points made at the beginning of this series. Where are the scriptures that justify the church building, maintaining, and performing these activities? Since the church has been designed to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21), then it stands to reason the church can do nothing religiously that God has not authorized (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). Every bulwark of God that I have discussed in this series rests upon the word of God, what God has said. If there is no scriptural authority to do a thing, we have no right to do it in the name of God.

Think about this. What activities is the church authorized to do? Years ago, Franklin T. Puckett listed what the New Testament authorizes the church to do. 1. The church is authorized to have an assembly of the saints (Hebrews 10:24-25; Acts 20:7). This command authorizes a building to provide a place for the assembly. 2. When assembled the church is authorized to observe the Lord's Supper on the 1st day of the

week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:33). To do this the church provides the things necessary to do this. 3. To sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), so it can purchase song books. 4. To pray together (Acts 2:42; 12:5). 5. To preach/teach God's word (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 14:26), so the church can furnish materials utilized in doing this. 6. To lay by in store (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7), so plates can be furnished to do this. 7. To support the preaching of the word (Philippians 4:16; 2 Corinthians 11:8), so preachers can be supported to do this. 8. To provide for the needy saints (Acts 4:34-35; 2 Corinthians 8-9). This authorizes the church to do the things necessary to take care of the needs. Now, scripture has been furnished for each of these things, what else is the church authorized to do? If so, where is the scripture?

I know I have not fully covered all the aspects concerning the mission and work of the church, but I have shown what the purpose of the church is. So where does socializing and entertaining fit in as authorized works? If so, produce the scripture.

But as I close on this "bulwark of the faith" I want to write this. To oppose the church doing these things as a church activity does not mean that brethren getting together for food, fun and games is wrong. There is a place for social activities among brethren, but it is not with the church collective. Jesus ate with Matthew after He called him to be an apostle (Matthew 9:10-11). In John 2 Jesus attended a wedding feast. In John 12:1-2 He socialized with Lazarus, Mary and Martha. The early church socialized Acts 2:46, but nothing suggests that the church was providing the place or the meal. The breaking of bread in verse 46 is not the same as in verse 42. They were two different occasions, one spiritual (verse 42), the other physical or material (verse 46).

This issue concludes a discussion on the bulwark of faith referred to as "the mission of the church." It also concludes this series of articles on "Mark well her bulwarks," at least for the present time. What I have written are my convictions about these things, and if you have any questions about, or disagreements concerning the things written please contact me and I will be glad to discuss them with you. As Peter wrote, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Offending My Liberty | 1 Corinthians 8

Chuck Richardson | Corinth, Mississippi, USA

"Now concerning things offered to idols: we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies." Paul is dealing with things offered to idols in chapter eight in light of spiritual maturity. Many of the Gentile Christians once practiced idolatry by offering meat sacrifices to gods. Based on this chapter, we can ascertain that these Gentile Christians were sincere and fervent in their worship of idols; "However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; **and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.**" Paul says the Jewish Christians, (who understand an idol is nothing, and therefore any meat sacrificed to an idol is nothing), need to look beyond this and see their brother (who once believed this idol to be something, and the meat sacrificed to it as something) (verses 4-7). Paul says to be considerate and be aware of your brother's needs; hence love edifies (verse 1).

When would the occasion present itself to offend? The ancient world of pagan gods of various kinds had temples where priests sacrificed meat brought to them by the pagan masses. The pagan worshiper believed their god, in the form of an idol, was inhabited by a deity and these deities were many, but with various and differing powers (Albert Barnes - **Barnes Notes** 1 Corinthians. 141). It has been conjectured that the left over meat that was not burned up would be sold in market by the pagan priest, and therefore the occasion would arise for a Jew to purchase this meat for consumption (1 Corinthians 10:25-26). The Jewish laws of purification and sanctification of meats (Kosher) would prevent them from purchasing and consuming pagan meats. However if this meat was purchased, then we might assume it was not an unclean meat and did not come into contact with unclean things.

I may make the argument that a Jewish Christian would have no concern of clean or unclean (Acts 10:9-16). "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (verse 15b). But the difficulty is that most Jewish Christians, because of traditional practice, would not have eaten meats sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 10:18). Based upon these considerations, we can understand that going to the idol's temple to eat meat sacrificed to an idol would be seen as worshiping an idol. However purchasing meat that had been sacrificed to an idol at the market would not be wrong.

I believe Paul is using an absurdity in chapter 8 to demonstrate the limitations on liberty, for a Jew would not go to an idol temple to eat meat sacrificed to an idol, nor would he be associated with meats sacrificed to idols. Paul says an idol is nothing and therefore the thing offered to an idol is nothing (verse 4).

The key to our liberties is found in love, and all of our actions are to be governed by love. If our actions do not edify, we need to forsake them (1 Corinthians 8:1-3,13). "**Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble. I will never again eat meat. lest I make my brother stumble.**" What might be an example of limiting liberties today? One particular example comes to mind: A Christian converts from Catholicism. Catholics revere the birth of Christ as a religious observance to the extent that they conduct a special worship service. Especially among Hispanic Catholics this is prevalent, so much so that Christmas becomes a troubling holiday for most. So, how do we make the application?

I would not sin if I celebrated Christmas as a secular holiday, but if I knew brethren who saw this holiday primarily as a religious holiday, and thus might violate their conscience, I would not invite them to my home to celebrate this holiday, and would perhaps need to consider not inviting them into my home during this holiday. Of course, there may be a situation in which I would suspend my practice for the edification of my brother. Celebrating or not, does not edify, for it does not matter to God (verse 8). We need to understand the import of Paul's dissertation: "**But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak**" (verse 9) .

We might explain Paul's argument this way: A Jewish Christian who purchases meat offered to an idol at the market needs to consider his brother, who is a Gentile Christian but once a pagan, before he invites him to dinner or makes a public display of his purchase. Of course, it may be that he needs to refrain from purchase at that particular market. There must be a stumbling block in order to offend. Paul is not saying because I believe Christmas is wrong, because its origin is pagan, that my brother offends when he practices Christmas as a secular holiday. Am I tempted to practice Christmas if I believe its origin is pagan? Is Christmas practiced as a pagan holiday today? This argument is weak and has no application.

I discuss this because some would restrict my liberties when there are no legitimate offenses, and thus pervert God's instruction on our liberties. We must confine the limitation of our liberties to protect the conscience of the weak and not indulge the whims of the difficult. Paul addressed this issue in Galatians chapter two verses one through five.

"And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (verses 4-5).

We need to be careful to resist the insubordinate and idle talkers of whom Titus gives charge to the elders by sound doctrine to exhort and to convict those who contradict (Titus 1 :7-11).

The salvation of the weak is the focus of chapter eight and we need to heed Paul's instruction to be patient and considerate of the brother who has not come to the knowledge of a mature Christian. "**And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish. for whom Christ died?**"

Our love for our brother should be stronger than any personal practice we engage in. The challenge we have in deferring our liberties is great considering the freedoms we enjoy in this nation. Who among us can say we have never been upset when the local, state, or federal government challenges our freedoms? We

may not have much recourse with the governing bodies, but who accepts a challenge to his liberties from his neighbor? I am saddened by the churches which have split because of division over liberties. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another" (Romans 12:9-10). Would you give up meat if it caused your brother to stumble? (verse 13)

It is a serious thought when you consider the salvation of a soul; we need to be sober minded the next time we think to hold to our liberties without regard to our brethren. We can protect and maintain our liberties in Christ that do not scripturally offend our brother. We need to "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). Good judgment and reason need to be applied when dealing with offenses but it will be made easier when we remember to let all things be done in love, for love will remain after faith and hope (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Four Things Lost In Luke 15

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The Pharisees and scribes complained about Jesus receiving and eating with sinners. This prompted Him to state some parables about things that were lost and then found. This is the very reason He came to this old sinful world, so sinners could be received by the Father and have fellowship with Him (Luke 19:10). Each time, when something had been lost and was found, there was rejoicing in heaven (verses 5,6,7,9,10,23,24,32). It seems to me, there are different reasons for each thing being lost. This should be a warning to each of us.

The sheep – its own negligence (verses 4-7). This animal had strayed from the ninety-nine and was lost. How many people are lost today because they neglect their own salvation (Hebrews 2:1-3)? They have no one to blame but themselves. In the parable of the sower, the seed that fell among the thorns, sprang up yet was choked with cares, riches and pleasures and brought no fruit to maturity (Luke 8:7,14). Does this not describe the lives of so many today? They get so involved in their personal lives, there is no time for the Lord. Many excuses are offered for their negligence, yet none will suffice when they stand before God in judgment.

The coin – the negligence of someone else (verses 8-10). The coin was lost, but the lady was the one who misplaced it. People have gone astray because others have not fulfilled their duties and responsibilities to them. It is not enough to lead someone to Christ. We must do everything we can to ground them in truth, so when they are faced with temptations, they will be strong enough to endure. We should speak words of encouragement to them, even when reproof is necessary, it should be done in a spirit of love and humility. Every faithful member in a congregation should be loved, appreciated, and accepted by all. I'm afraid, in some churches, a few feel like they are on the outside looking in because of the way they are treated. How sad to think of someone being lost because of my negligence!

The younger son – because of his choices (verses 11-24). He was the one who made the decision to travel into a foreign country and waste his inheritance on prodigal living. Thankfully, he finally came to himself, returned to the father, and was forgiven. Have you ever made any bad decisions that involved sin? We all have done this on various occasions, for which we had to repent. Yet, there are many who have made the same bad choices, refusing to repent, continuing to live in sin. Some times pride stands in their way; they don't want to admit they have been wrong. They may be enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25), refusing to give up their sinful practices. Regardless, they, like the prodigal, are the ones who must come to themselves, admitting their wrong, and return to the Father who mercifully waits for them.

The older son – because of his attitude (verses 25-32). This son could not find it in his heart to rejoice over his younger brother's return home. He was angry and upset over the celebration the father and the servants were having because of this son's repentance. It seems to me, this older son represents the

Pharisees and scribes that were complaining because our Lord was receiving and eating with sinners. Our relationship with God is affected by the attitude we have toward other people. If we are going to receive forgiveness, then we must be willing to forgive others (Matthew 6:12,14,15). The attitude of heart, needed by all of God's servants, is given in the sermon on the mount. We must be poor in spirit, able to mourn, meek, a people who hunger for the right things, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and able to endure persecution (Matthew 5:3-12). God will mold us into this kind of people, if we will let Him. Simply follow His word.

If you need to repent, why not do so today? Angels in heaven will rejoice over your repentance. And I'm sure, that good brethren, who love the Lord and souls of men, will rejoice as well.

Is That Really What It Means?
Saved By Grace Through Faith
William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

Every serious Bible student understands that grace and faith are essential components in any discussion about salvation. The Bible is emphatic, using the words grace 128 times in the New Testament and the words faith and believe (from the same Greek word) in excess of 300 times.

Hear what Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

...by grace you have been saved ... by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.
(Ephesians 2:5, 8-9)

Several years ago, I participated in a written debate with a Free Methodist on the topic of salvation by faith alone. As he drew his first article to a close, he made the following declaration:

...salvation is gained by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone!

He's not alone in his conclusion. In fact, this may be one of the most popular doctrines in Christendom. But, is that really what Paul was saying in Ephesians 2? Did Paul teach that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone?

Let's address the fallacy of the statement. Words have meaning, and for communication to work, we need to use words correctly. The word alone is defined as:

...without anyone or anything else : not involving or including anyone or anything else : separate from other people or things. (m-w.com)

By definition, something or someone cannot be alone if other things or people are present. If grace, faith and Jesus Christ are all involved in salvation (and they all are), then salvation is not by any one of them alone. And it is nothing short of foolishness to say salvation is by grace alone and faith alone and Jesus Christ alone. That's not alone! In the debate mentioned earlier, my response to my opponent's statement was like this:

...he doesn't even believe this doctrine of salvation by "faith alone," for he sums up by saying there are at least three essentials to our salvation. He believes that these three elements alone, together, account for our salvation. If he is willing to go this far, what is keeping him from accepting the rest of Scripture?

If more than one thing is linked with our salvation, then salvation is not by any single thing (or three single things, as the case may be) alone. And even simpler than this, take a look at Ephesians 2:8 again and notice how many times the word "alone" appears in the text? If your count is the same as mine, it is a grand total of 0. And yet this is the text used to teach that salvation is by faith alone, or in the words of my

friend, "by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone."

In defense of a doctrinal position, some have let zeal for their teaching keep them from seeking the whole truth. Certainly the Bible teaches the necessity of grace and faith, but it is not grace and faith alone. The Bible identifies several things that are essential for salvation. Consider:

- Jesus (Matthew 1:21)
- Jesus' name (Acts 4:12)
- Jesus' death (Romans 5:9)
- Jesus' life (Romans 5:10)
- God's longsuffering (2 Peter 3:15)
- God's mercy (Titus 3:5)
- God's grace (Ephesians 2:5, 8)
- God's word (James 1:21)
- The gospel (Romans 1:16)
- Knowledge of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:15)
- Power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18)
- Doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16)
- Faith (1 Peter 1:5, 9)
- Loving the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10)
- Confession of Christ (Romans 10:9-10)
- Godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10)
- Forgiveness of sin (Luke 1:77)
- Calling on the Lord (Romans 10:13)
- Denying self (Matthew 16:25)
- Faith and works (James 2:14)
- Obedience (Hebrews 5:9)
- Sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- Baptism (1 Peter 3:20-21)
- Endurance (Matthew 10:22)
- Works (Philippians 2:12)
- and more...

When we study the Bible, we need to take into account all it says on a subject. Are we saved by works? No, for Ephesians 2:9 says "not of works," and yet once verse later, Paul states that we are saved unto good works. It is not a matter of meritorious works - we cannot earn heaven. And yet we must obey the commandment of God, and if we do not, we cannot have the hope of heaven (James 2; Romans 6:17).

Salvation by faith is a Bible doctrine; salvation by faith alone is not.

1 <http://media.lookinguntojesus.net/pdf/faithalone.pdf>

Oh My God!

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Jesus cautions us about the words we use. He said, "But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the Day of Judgment" (Matthew 12:36). An idle word is a "careless word" (ESV) that is said without any thought of its moral implication. In the context, He was addressing those who condemned Him and associated His works with the devil (verse 24). Their thoughtless judgment would come back to haunt them on the Day of Judgment, "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (verse 37). These instructions should serve as a warning for all us in what we say, especially those who say "G-D" and "Oh my God" in response to disappointment. We will

regret we ever said those things when we meet God in judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10).

One of the Ten Commandments God gave the Jews was to respect His name. "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). If you and I were to list the top ten things people should do to be righteous, I doubt any of us would include a caution about how we use the Lord's name. It is not as offensive to us as the other Ten Commandments: lying, murder, adultery, and so on. But to God, it is just as wicked to use His name as a common word as it is to murder someone. Both are acts of irreverence and ungodliness. He expects people to respect His name, even today (1 Timothy 1:20).

If I got mad and cursed your mother's name, would you be upset? If I used your name in association with evil, would it bother you? Well, "Oh my God" and "God D_" are no different to God. These are taking His name in vain by using it in a common and disrespectful manner. Our Creator deserves a better response from us. Indeed, His judgment will demand a better response from us!

Samson

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In my opinion, one of the most fascinating narratives in the Old Testament is that of the man Samson. From the reading of Judges, chapters thirteen through sixteen, we will see an average man with life struggles and common emotion; a witty man with an excellent sense of humor. Samson had a love for God and His people, so he despised the Philistines who burdened Israel. The difference between Samson and every other person is his strength that we will consider at length later in this article.

Although the conception of Samson was prophesied by the Angel of the Lord to his parents, they are given little additional information. Three things are told to them: (1) they would bear a son; (2) he will be a Nazirite to God; (3) he will "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13:5). Interestingly, Samson's most interesting feature, his godly strength, is not mentioned by the Angel.

Samson was to be a Nazirite. A Nazirite, according to Numbers 6, was either a man or a woman who took a vow to separate themselves to the Lord for a certain period of time. During this time they could not eat or drink anything that was produced from the grapevine (wine, vinegar, grape juice, grapes or raisins). Such who took this vow could not cut their hair for the full length of time that they had consecrated themselves to the Lord, nor could they go near a dead body (no exceptions). Samson's case was unique, in that he was chosen by God to be a Nazirite throughout his entire life, unlike most Nazirites who choose for themselves to take the vow, and that vow lasting only for a time, not their lifetime. In fact, in Samson's case, he is named a Nazirite while in the womb, therefore, his mother had to take the responsibilities of the vow until she bore him.

Do you have a picture in your mind of this Samson? Is he a little taller than most men? Maybe you even picture him as a giant. Is he more muscular than any man you've ever seen? Does he look like a god among men; an image like the mythological Hercules? If so, I would challenge you that Samson looked like every other man in physique. The bible never gives us any indication that Samson had any more muscular definition than the average male who does not attempt any body-building activities. The biblical text makes note that Samson's strength comes directly from God's divine involvement (Judges 14:6; 15:14) and that it was evident to the eyes that his physique did not explain his strength (Judges 16:6). So then, contrary to common belief, Samson does not seem to be blest with enormous muscles, but only by the divine strength of God would he be known as the famous strong man.

Now that it is established that it was the Spirit of God that was the source of strength inside Samson, a new question can be presented: why did God do this for Samson? The answer is in the words of the Angel in Judges 13:5, "he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines." God would use one man to remind Israel who their God is. Likewise, God would use one man to show the Philistines who the God

of Israel is. Read through the pages of Judges 13-16 and you will see the will of God being accomplished against the Philistines through Samson. Even through the poor decisions that Samson sometimes made, God still accomplished His will.

Speaking of poor decisions, the most well-known choice of Samson was that of telling Delilah of the only thing that would separate him from God's strength. Breaking the Nazirite vow which separated Samson unto God would have a devastating effect on Samson's relationship with God; for Samson would be breaking a very high commitment to God. Many might recall the actions of Delilah, how she had Samson's head shorn while he was sleeping, thus breaking his Nazirite commitment and losing the incredible strength he once enjoyed.

Through a foolish mistake he was made weak, and the Philistines took no time to seize and torment him; putting out his eyes, binding him with bronze chains, and enslaving him with hard labor in prison.

God said that he would use Samson to "begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines," and He accomplished His will not just through the life of Samson (Judges 15:3-5, 8, 15), but also through ending the life of Samson (Judges 16:28-31).

Hebrews 11:32 names Samson among the concise list of people who did tremendous things because of their faith in God. The writer goes on to say of some of these individuals: "out of weakness were made strong" (verse 34). This is certainly something that could be said of Samson. I suppose that Samson learned more during his time of weakness in prison than any other time in his life when he was strong. The narrative of Samson exhibits to us one of the most important truths of God; we are strong while we continue living by faith. Samson demonstrates this fact through the physical, but the application for us is through the spiritual. When life overtakes us with worry, cares and anxieties, we find ourselves barely dragging through life. Looking back at Samson, we will see that it is only through trust in God was he made strong again, and able to overcome that which he was not strong enough to overcome himself. This life is too difficult to live without faith in God, and a heavenly eternity is impossible without first a life of trust in God on this temporary soil. Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear! We could have the strength of God with us, but we often opt out.

Samson demonstrated to us that poor decisions in life have a disastrous effect on our life of faithfulness to God. This is why we are told to stay awake, alert and careful while on this earth. Ephesians 5:14-17: *"Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.' See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is."* God teaches us to walk in wisdom and thus minimize the amount of bad choices we will make. Ultimately Samson teaches us to rely on the strength of God to save. Many will put their trust in other forms of strength (Isaiah 31:1), but God makes those strengths stand or fall at His command (Obadiah 1:3-4). He is in control whether we trust in Him or not. May the narrative of Samson exhort us to live by faith in the God of strength and rely not on any other source.

Faithful Christians

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It is easy to read over the opening verses and statements that the apostles might make in addressing their epistles. We can dismiss them so easily because we know the letter is not addressed to us personally. However, we might miss a learning opportunity when we do dismiss those few verses.

Take for instance Paul's descriptions of the churches in Ephesus and Colosse. "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus..." (Ephesians 1:1). And "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse. Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Colossians 1:2). While these verses are not

packed with doctrinal nor great theological arguments, they do show a proper description of the children of God. Paul describes the Christians in those churches as “saints” or those who are set apart for a particular work and life that God has designated for them. Also, Paul describes the church as faithful.

“Faithfulness” means reliable, trustworthy and obedient. It is one of the parts of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Being faithful involves having faith in Christ Jesus, but it speaks more about how we act in accordance with that faith. Are we reliable in our service to Christ and to other Christians? Are we dependable in edifying our brethren upon the first day of the week? Have we cultivated relationships and trust between our fellow Christians so they might come and confess their faults to us and have us pray on their behalf (James 5:16)? These are aspects of faithful service to God.

We should not fall into the trap of thinking that being a faithful Christian is limited to attendance at all church services. Our attendance is absolutely a part of faithful service, but it is not the entirety of it. Too many Christians limit faithfulness to just a few items, when it is really meant to be an entire way of life.

One passage that we might consider that offers a Biblical view of faithfulness is found in Colossians 1:9-12.

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”

The first sign of a faithful, committed Christian is their desire for spiritual growth and achievement. Paul describes the saints in Colosse as those who have gained wisdom, knowledge and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9-10).

As children of God we are to always be learning. We should strive for maturity, not remaining only on the milk of the word, but going to the meat (1 Peter 2:1-2). Our focus should be on the development of our faith, heart and mind. When we are designating time to study God’s word then we will never plateau or flat line.

Energy and commitment towards spiritual growth is important to faithfulness. Many times we use Hebrews 5:11-14 to show that we are to always be increasing in knowledge so we might become teachers. That is vitally true, but there is another implication in our study and growth – a moral implication. By knowing God’s word, we learn the differences between right and wrong (Hebrews 5:14).

Faithfulness also carries with it the expectation of how we are to live in service to the Lord. We are to “walk worthy of the Lord” (Colossians 1:10). We do not remember when we first learned to walk because walking is almost instinctive to us, but we did have to first learn how to hold ourselves up and take that first step. Walking is a learned trait. Just as many people tell young parents, “your child will walk when they are ready to walk;” we see that walking takes effort and determination. We walk where we intend to go, for some purpose. Walking is a metaphor in the New Testament to describe the pattern of life we are engaged in. Before becoming Christians we walked according to the former lusts of this earth (Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 3:5-7). Now we are called to walk as God has created us, as the new man (Colossians 3:8-10). Our walking in a manner which is pleasing to the Lord is a distinct characteristic of our faithfulness.

Another mark of the Christian’s faithfulness is their attitude and dealings with others, especially within the local church. We are to deal patiently with others, suffering along with them through trials, struggles and bearing their burdens (Colossians 1:11). We need to characterize our relationships with each other with mercy, grace, forgiveness and love (Colossians 3:12-15). Without these qualities in our life and in our attitude towards our brethren then could we truly be faithful to God? Can we appreciate God’s mercy,

grace, forgiveness and love towards us if we do not reciprocate it to others who are new creatures in Christ? Faithfulness must be defined by our positive actions and treatment towards other Christians.

Finally, the mark of a faithful Christian is defined by giving thanks to God (Colossians 1:12). Of all the things that God has done is that He has made us partakers of the inheritance as children and saints in light. He has saved our souls from eternal condemnation in hell. We should express our attitudes of thanksgiving upon the first day of the week when we worship Him, but also when we pray and meditate upon His word throughout the week. We are not restricted by time, location, or circumstance to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God. Faithful Christians recognize all of the blessings we receive are from God, and He is worthy to be praised.

The early church practiced all of these elements in some way. It is interesting to read in the book of Acts how the church started to praise God through prayer, studying, contributing to the needs of others, and the atmosphere of total commitment to God. It is expressed rather succinctly in Acts 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Many times we focus on what the church did. However, notice how they did it. It says they "continued steadfastly." They were unshaken in their commitment to serving God and serving others. That is the essence of faithfulness!

Are we serving God faithfully in everything that we practice and do? Have we modeled ourselves to be as the saints in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42), Ephesus (Ephesians 1:1), or Colosse (Colossians 1:2)? God has described the manner of life He is expecting of us. The Scripture's admonition for Christians is to live faithfully for the Lord and to walk in a way that is pleasing to Him. This is reliable, faithful and dependable living for God and Christ.

Why do Men not Respect the Word of God

False Teachers

David Cooper | Evening Shade, Arkansas, USA

One of the greatest reasons men no longer respect the word of God is that they are followers of false religious leaders. I am on the front-line of this phenomenon as a teacher in a prison. I once tried to become a chaplain in the prison system, but I would have been compelled to teach things that are in abject defiance of Gods law. As I talk to the inmates that I am charged with, I learn that they have been told by chaplains that are forgiven of all wrong as long as they believe in Jesus Christ. I must ask if the devils are forgiven that believed in Him (Luke 8:28-30; James 2:19).

These chaplains are only one example of the corrupt leaders that fill and deceive the religious world. Those who teach doctrines like "once saved always saved" (1 John 1:9-10), "faith only" (James 2:24), "baptism is not necessary to salvation" (1 Peter 3:21), "we must keep parts of the old Law to be saved" (Galatians 5:3-4), and the myriad of other false doctrines that abound are all contributors to this deception.

This is hardly a new problem. Israel fell because it followed false shepherds (Isaiah 56:10-12). The same was true of Judah (Jeremiah 50:6). Israel called good evil and evil good (Isaiah 5:20). Isaiah said they would be destroyed because, "they have cast away the Law of the Lord of Host" (Isaiah 5:24). When Hosea says, "my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge," he is addressing and condemning the priests who had failed to teach them (Hosea 4:6).

I hear many say that the word of God is only one source of truth. They question why we, the church of Christ, do not use books like the Quran, The Book of Mormon, The Vedic Writings of the Hindu, Zoroastrianism...etc. After all, they say, "all are books of wisdom." Paul did not think so, for he called the God of the Bible the "only wise" God (1 Tim 1:17). Paul further stated that that "only wise" God is revealed through the Scriptures and is to be glorified through Jesus Christ (Romans 16:26-27). Jude also says that all glory, majesty, dominion and power lies with that "only wise" God (Jude 25). Jesus said he was the only

way to the Father (John 14:6). I believe my Lord.

The Bible tells us there would be false teachers among us (Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2:1-2). We should not be taken aback by the appearance of such false teachers. The question is why so many are falling for their lies.

Today's leaders seem to worship men and not God. Leaders are afraid to buck the system that is obviously corrupt. This sometimes is for remuneration (Titus 1:11; 2 Peter 2:3). Sometimes it is for prestige like Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9), Elymas, which means wise man, (Acts 13:8), and Diotrephes (3 John 9). It is also a result of much learning without ever reaching the Truth (2 Timothy 3:7). One character possessed of all false teachers is their lack of love for God (2 Timothy 3:4). They also lack respect for His power over them (2 Timothy 3:5).

If we continue to willingly follow such corrupt shepherds we will be destroyed as Israel and her sister Judah were (2 Peter 2:20-22). We should not be ashamed of his word (Romans 1:16). We should follow those who press on toward the high calling of Christ (Philippians 3:14-17), because Paul says there are those who would deceive us for gain (Philippians 3:18-19). We should mark and avoid false teachers and their doctrine (Romans 16:17). Finally, beloved of Christ, we should seek leaders who will stop the mouths of the gainsayers, not ignore or follow them, as Paul instructed Titus when he sent him to appoint elders (Titus 1:9-11).

Parables of the Master

Self-Righteousness vs Humility

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector - Luke 18:9-14

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

Introduction

Two men prayed. God heard one man's prayer; the other just talked to himself. The Master used the occasion of prayer to teach, not just the right attitude in prayer, but the proper spirit in which we at all times are to serve God. One man was justified before God; the other congratulated himself on his righteousness but was not right with the Lord. Wherein lay the difference?

The place they prayed wasn't the difference, for, as was proper for Jews (1 Kings 8:28-54), they both went into the temple to pray. Nor was their posture in prayer the distinguishing factor, for they both stood (Luke 18:11,13). Posture in prayer is unimportant - whether one falls on his face (Joshua 7:6-10; Matthew 26:39; Luke 5:12; 17:16), kneels (Ezra 9:5; Daniel 6:10; Acts 20:36;), stands (Luke 18:11,13), or spreads out his hands (Ezra 9:5; 1 Timothy 2:8) - except as it expresses the attitude of the heart. Why was one man justified before God and the other not?

The difference was in the men themselves.

The Two Men

Surely the Pharisee was the one God received. The Pharisees grew out of a sect of Jews that arose during the second century before Christ known as the "*Hasidaeans*" a transcription of the Hebrew '*chasidim*,' i.e., 'pious ones,' ... a society of men zealous for religion" (Vine). The name "Pharisees" means "separatists." They "carefully kept themselves from any legal contamination, distinguishing themselves by their care in such matters from the common people" (**ISBE**). "They considered themselves as protectors of the law; they were accused of 'building a fence around the law,' which meant they built around the law a wall of their own traditions" (Lightfoot. 141). They "despised," that is, they "viewed ... with contempt" (**NASB**), the common people, thinking them to be ignorant of the law of God" (Luke 18:9; John 7:47-49). The Pharisee was on the top rung of respectability and honor.

Conversely, the tax collector wasn't even on the ladder! The Romans followed a system of taxation borrowed from the Ptolemies, the rulers of Egypt before the Romans, that virtually demanded corruption. Rather than collecting taxes themselves from their conquered subjects, they gave the job to the highest bidder. The head tax collector had an assessed amount he had to provide the Romans. Whatever he collected in excess of this was his to keep. Roman soldiers enforced the collection. Common people were ignorant of the tax laws and easily defrauded. So the tax collectors were infamous traitors and thieves. They were lumped with notorious sinners (Matthew 5:46-47; Luke 7:34). They didn't win any popularity contests!

A Prayerless Prayer

The Pharisee didn't really pray. He talked to himself under the guise of prayer (Luke 18:11). He pretended to thank God, but this was a cover for self exaltation, bragging on himself (Ibid). He was very thankful he was better than other men. It's easy to think we are righteous if our standard is other sinners (2 Corinthians 10:12).

He was not an extortioner, one who takes "the goods of others by force and violence" or takes "advantage of the necessities of others, the poor and the oppressed," to "extort their property" (Barnes), an apt description of the typical tax collector, and, by the way, of many Pharisees (Matthew 23:14). And he was certainly not like that despised tax collector way back there in the back of the auditorium making a scene beating on his chest! Who let him in?

And his goodness wasn't just negative. He fasted twice a week. Although the Law only demanded one fast a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 6:29-31), the Pharisees fasted every Monday and Thursday, because Moses supposedly ascended Mt. Sinai on Monday and descended on Thursday. He gave tithes, not only of his income, as the Law demanded (Leviticus 27:30-33; Deuteronomy 14:22-23), but of everything he possessed (Luke 18:11).

By doing even more than the Law demanded, he trusted in himself that he was righteous (Luke 18:9), that is, he thought to have earned his right standing before God by bringing God into debt to him. That is a spiritually fatal mistake. None of us can ever do enough to bring God into our debt, that is, to earn our right standing before Him. We have all sinned (Romans 3:23), and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). From the day the first sin entered our lives throughout all eternity, on the basis of earned righteousness, we will always "come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). You can't do enough community service to negate the death penalty! Besides, nothing we can do benefits God (Job 22:2-3). We have nothing He needs (Psalm 50:12; Romans 11:35). When we do everything He demands of us, we remain "unprofitable servants," in debt to Him (Luke 17:10). You cannot earn your salvation.

The Pharisee thought he was spiritually self sufficient. He didn't confess his sins; he announced his goodness. He asked nothing from God, and he received nothing.

A Real Prayer

The tax collector's prayer manifested his humble realization of his own unworthiness. He would not even approach the altar but stood far away. His head was bowed in shame. He beat his breast in anguish over his sins (cf. Nahum 2:7). His prayer consisted of just seven words. "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (Luke 18:13, **NASB**). He pleaded for mercy, the help of the helpless, from God (Romans 9:16; Ephesians 2:4-7; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 1:3). In his own estimation, he wasn't just a sinner, he was the sinner, the chief, the foremost, of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

The tax collector went home justified before God rather than the Pharisee (Luke 18:14).

Conclusion

It took some nerve for the Master to portray a tax collector favorably. Furthermore, they often were found in His company (Matthew 9:10; Mark 2:15; Luke 5:29). In fact, Matthew, also called "Levi," one of the

Lord's apostles, was a tax collector (Luke 5:27; Matthew 10:3). But the tax collectors willingly heard Jesus (Luke 15:1), and they entered the kingdom ahead of the Pharisees (Matthew 21:31). Why? Because the Pharisees "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" and the tax collectors, in grief over their many sins, humbly sought the mercy of God. Two men went into the temple to pray. One really went to brag. One went to seek the mercy of God. The bragger went home a sinner; the sinner went home justified. Which pictures us?

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