

Two Worshipers

#0314

Study Given by W. D. Frazee—January 28, 1978

This morning we come in the spirit of reverence to hear the Word of God. Let us turn to Luke the 18th chapter, verses 9–14. We've come to worship this morning, and this is a Scripture in which Jesus tells us the secret of worship. We've come to get a blessing, and in this parable, He tells us how to get a blessing. He also tells us how to come to church and go home without any blessing. I'm sure none of us want to do that. But He warns us about that.

“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner” Luke 18:9–13.

Some translations give it “*the* sinner.” “God be merciful to me *the* sinner.”

“I tell you...” Luke 18:14.

Jesus says.

“...this man...” Luke 18:14.

The publican.

“...went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” Luke 18:14.

Why do we come to church, dear friends? Why do we come to church? Well, there are many reasons people come to church. I'm sorry to say some people come to church to show off. The Pharisee did. Another reason people come to church is that it's a habit, and it's a good habit. But if that's the only reason we come is that it's a habit, it can easily get into a form, a routine, a ceremony.

The publican came to the temple that morning because he had a great sense of need. And in this parable, Jesus opens to us an interesting paradox, and that is

that the people that receive the greatest blessing are those that have a great sense of need and think that they're not worthy.

Now, I can't read your heart this morning. You can't read mine. This is as God intended it.

The Scripture says:

"...Let a man examine himself..." 1 Corinthians 11:28.

But my dear friends, young and old, here in this hour of worship, let us examine ourselves and see, "Why have I come this morning?" "Why have I come?" God grant that every one of us may have come to get a blessing.

Now, in getting a blessing, we need to be sure that we know what it is we're seeking. What was the publican seeking? Seeking mercy. What's mercy? Mercy's being treated better than we deserve. Mercy's being given what we don't deserve at all. You notice the Pharisee rolled up a list of his attainments and achievements. He told all the bad things he *didn't* do and all the good things he *did* do. Was he telling the truth? I believe he was. I don't think he broke the Seventh Commandment, at least not outwardly. I don't think he broke the Eighth Commandment, at least not outwardly.

Doubtless, he fasted twice in the week just as he said he did. And doubtless, he gave tithes of all he possessed. In fact, from Jesus' statements in Matthew 23, I conclude that he was even found out in his garden picking off the little leaves of the mint to be sure that he had every tenth leaf turned in. I think the Pharisee was telling the truth. I don't think he was lying about a bit of it. He was all that he claimed to be. And as the result, he had a good feeling.

You know, when you can look at yourself in the mirror, and everything's in place, the tie's on straight, and your hair is combed and face cleaned and all, you say, "Well, I guess I'm ready now." "I guess I'm ready to go to dinner," or "I'm ready to go to church."

The Pharisee had looked at himself, and he looked all right. In the mirror that he had looked in, he looked all right. The publican, on the other hand, was just the opposite. He had a great sense of not being ready, not being prepared. In fact, he was so downcast in his heart that he didn't even lift up his eyes to heaven. His head was down, and he smote upon his breast, and he said, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Now, it's interesting what the Pharisee got out of it. He got exactly what he expected, friends. The Pharisee got the approval, doubtless, of those who admired his righteousness. And most of all, and most important to him, he got his own approval.

If you had heard him after meeting, you might have heard him say, "We had a wonderful meeting up at the temple today. I feel good. I feel good."

But the publican went up there for one thing, to meet God and get some, what? What did he pray for? Mercy. Did he get it? Yes.

Notice, what Christ says there in the 14th verse:

“...This man went down to his house...” Luke 19:14.

What?

“...justified...” Luke 19:14.

That means made righteous, accounted righteous. And I want to tell you something, friends. When God justifies a man, it isn't whitewash. We must never get that picture of justification—that justification means taking a sinner and whitewashing him so that he can pretend now that he's righteous and God will pretend that he's righteous. No. The righteousness that Jesus gives us when we're justified is a true righteousness, His own righteousness.

Let's turn over to the book of Romans, the third chapter, and notice this. First, let's notice Romans 2:13 and notice who are justified:

“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” Romans 2:13.

To be justified then, means to do what? Do the law. That's right. Do the law. All right. Now, the third chapter that we're going to read, beginning with the 19th verse:

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” Romans 3:19–20.

Why is it, dear friends, that by doing the law, none of us can be justified? Why couldn't the Pharisee be justified by keeping the law? Because he hadn't kept it. That's why. It's very simple. He hadn't kept it.

The “doers of the law shall be justified” we read in Romans 2:13, didn't we? Yes. And if a man had always kept the law, he would be what? He'd be righteous. He'd be just. Sure. You can't get any better than that, can you? To do everything that God says? So, “the doers of the law shall be justified.”

But Paul tells us in Romans 3:19 here:

“...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” Romans 3:19.

Why? Because we have all done what? We've all broken the law. And the Pharisee didn't seem to realize that. Do you see? He thought that what he had done the last week and the week before and the week before measured up to the law, and he presented that to God like Cain brought his offering, his gifts, the fruit of the ground.

But the publican was like Abel. He brought a lamb. Who's the Lamb? Jesus. Abel knew that he had no righteousness of his own, and he presented the lamb to be accepted for him. And the publican pled the mercy of God:

"...God be merciful to me the sinner" Luke 18:13.

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin"
Romans 3:20.

Now, watch:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" Romans 3:21–24.

Notice, that God is manifesting a righteousness apart from the deeds of the law. Who is in that? Jesus is in that. It's in Him. When I come to Jesus like the publican did and plead for mercy, the reason God can be merciful and forgive me is that Jesus stands there to plead in my behalf, and His beautiful life is imputed to me just the same as if *I* had done all that *He* has done.

Wouldn't that be wonderful, friends, if my whole past life had been filled with good deeds just like Jesus did when He was here? Wouldn't that be wonderful? That's the way God counts it the moment I accept my Lord. But remember, this is not some whitewash put on to cover rebellion. No, no. I give up myself, and Jesus stands in my place. I give up my sins, and His righteousness is accepted instead of my sin.

But dear ones, let me make it very simple. In order for Jesus to be accepted *for* me, He must be accepted *by* me. In order for His life to cover me, I must accept it as my way of life.

Let me illustrate it in a very simple way. Suppose that I haven't known about the Sabbath, and I've been breaking the Sabbath every week. Finally, I hear about the Sabbath, and I'm convicted.

I say, "Lord, I've been breaking Thy law. I've been breaking the holy Sabbath. I'm sorry. I want You to forgive me."

Will God forgive me? Yes. For whose sake? For Jesus' sake. And then, the beautiful Sabbath-keeping life of Jesus covers all my sin. Is that right? Covers my life.

But I want to ask you something. Suppose I say it this way. Probably nobody would do it quite this blunt and bald and bold, but just let me illustrate it this way.

Suppose I say to the Lord, "Now Lord, I see that the seventh day is the Sabbath, but it isn't convenient for me to keep it. But I do believe in Jesus as my Savior, and I want His beautiful life of Sabbath-keeping to stand for me while I keep on breaking the Sabbath."

Will that work? No. Well, why not? Jesus didn't die to save rebels that hang onto their rebellion. The righteousness of Jesus is not a cloak to cover the sins that we cherish and won't give up. The reason the publican found mercy was that he cast himself sin and all upon a merciful God, and he went down to his house. Jesus says, how? Justified, made righteous. He came up a sinner; he went back righteous. Thank God, friends, every one of us can leave this chapel this morning justified, justified. But in order to do it we must avoid the road of the Pharisee.

We mustn't look back over our lives and say, "Well, Lord, I've done this, and I've done that, and I've done the other thing that's good, and therefore I think I'm pretty good." No, no. That's not our satisfaction.

If we look into the law this morning, no matter what God did for us wonderfully ten years ago, or a year ago, or a week ago, we see in our own sinful human nature a great need and a great lack. Don't we, friends? Yes. For, while God forgives us in a moment, the work of changing our inner hearts and lives is a gradual work, a gradual work. That doesn't mean we need to be defeated again and again. We may be, but we don't need to be. It does mean that every time we draw near to God on our knees in private devotions or here in public worship, we will sense that there is a great need in our lives.

Turn over to the ninth chapter of Daniel the third verse, and I want you to see the spirit of one of the best men that ever lived in this world. Daniel was an old man at this time. Daniel is one of the few men in the Bible of whom no fault is recorded. I don't mean by that that he never committed any mistake, but there's nothing recorded. He lived very close to the Lord. But I want you to notice his spirit and attitude.

"I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments" Daniel 9:3-5.

Then his prayer continues verse after verse in which he associates himself with his people. Do you think Daniel put that on? Was that an act? No, no. Daniel felt an identity with the church. He felt a part of Israel. Was he? Yes, he was. He was a part of Israel. And not only that, Daniel recognized that in his own human nature, he was weak and unworthy, that he had a sinful disposition. Every one of us has that.

Do you notice the difference between Daniel and the Pharisee?

The Pharisee said, "Lord, I thank thee that I'm not as other men. I don't do this, and I don't do that, and I don't do the other thing. And I'm certainly not like this publican, and I'm so glad for that."

That was his prayer. But Daniel, who was a million light-years closer to heaven than the Pharisee, gets down on his knees, humbles himself, and says, "Lord, I've come to make my confession and the confession of my people. We've sinned and done wickedly. We need help" [a paraphrase of Daniel 9:3–5].

His prayer was the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13).

Did he get help? Did Daniel get an answer? Why yes. Here comes the angel Gabriel, the highest angel in glory, in the 21st verse. And notice what Daniel was doing when Gabriel came:

"And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation"
Daniel 9:20–21.

Who came? Gabriel. When did he come? Why, while Daniel was down there praying and pleading the promises of God and confessing his sins and the sins of his people.

Notice, Daniel wasn't feeling, shall I say, on a high. He was in a low. And sometimes people feel that they can't have any experience with God when they're feeling low. Brother, Sister, friend, when you're depressed, when you're down, when you don't feel accepted, then is the time to urge the prayer of Daniel and plead the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13).

You see, our confidence must not rest in what we are. It's in what Jesus is. And in our need, it is our heavenly Father's delight to bestow upon us great blessings, not because we're worthy but because we're unworthy. Our *need* is the qualification that gives us the assurance that we shall receive the gift.

A number of years ago, I was stationed in New Orleans and held meetings there. One afternoon the phone rang, and someone asked me to make a special call on a man who was lying sick in one of the big hospitals there. So, I went down there. I'll never forget that great building, hundreds and hundreds of patients in it. And as I went in, I noticed across the door, the name "Charity Hospital." You know how you get in that hospital? Have nothing, have nothing.

Suppose I'm a sick man and I decide I want to go to that hospital.

I call up the administrator, and I say, "Sir, what are your rates? I have what it takes to pay them. How much a day?"

Does that impress him? No, no. Whatever words he used, the message would come through plenty clear: "If you've got money to pay, you go to some other hospital." The only way I can get into *that* hospital is to have nothing and know that I have nothing, and it's apparent. That's the way I get in.

My friends, that's the way you and I can come to God. Oh, I'm so glad for it! And really, whether we know it or not, that's the condition we all are in. All our righteousnesses are as, what? Filthy rags [a paraphrase of Isaiah 64:6]. But thank God, in our need, in our ragged, dirty, filthy, sick, sinning, sinful condition, we can come to Jesus and as that publican prayed, "God be merciful to me the sinner" (Luke 18:13), thank God we can go home justified.

Suppose that this room was all dark. Suppose it were possible to turn out these lights and stop these windows so that this room is just as black as midnight. That's the condition of sin and sinners.

Now suppose I say, "Oh, I wish I had some light."

And somebody says, "Well, you can have some light, provided you're willing to have light instead of" what? Darkness.

And so I say, "Yes, I'd rather have light than darkness."

And so, somebody opens the windows. What comes in? Light. What happens to the darkness? It's gone.

But suppose I cling to it, and I say, "Oh, but I want some of that darkness."

There's only one way to get the darkness, and that's to shut the light out. Is that right? Darkness is the absence of light. Do you see? And so, if I'm to accept the righteousness of Jesus, it's not merely a clever way to keep me from getting a whipping. It's not some scheme to avoid meeting the penalty while I continue in transgression.

To accept the righteousness of Jesus is to say, "Lord, I'm a sinner, and I know it. I deserve to die, and I know it. But Lord, I wish I hadn't done it. I'm sorry. And I want not only to be counted righteous, but I also want to be made righteous. I want

the righteousness of Jesus not only *on* me to cover my past. I want that righteousness in my heart and life to be worked out in my daily experience.”

And when I pray that prayer, my dear friends, God puts the righteousness of Jesus to cover me, and I’m accepted just as if I had not sinned. That’s “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:22).

But I say, “But I can’t see that.”

No. That’s the reason it has to be by faith. That’s just the reason it has to be by faith. Faith is believing what God says just because He says it, no matter what the appearances are.

And so this morning, thank God, thank God, no matter in what condition of mind and heart we’ve come, we can all go home justified like the publican. “God be merciful to me the sinner” (Luke 18:13). Thank God for His wonderful love.

Now this morning, part of the worship of God is in our personal response, so I want to give opportunity this special Sabbath for each of you who would like to stand up and give your testimony of response, thanking Jesus for His wonderful love.

[Man from congregation] May I share something that I found this morning?

[Elder Frazee] Yes.

[Same man continuing] I was reading in Deuteronomy the sixth chapter, and so much of the first few chapters of Deuteronomy is Moses’ plea with the children of Israel to please keep God’s commandments, don’t forget them, do them. And don’t let prosperity and other things cause you to forget. And he goes on and many times repeats himself on this matter.

And then finally, in chapter 6, verses 24–25 it says:

“And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness...” Deuteronomy 6:24–25.

And a literal translation of that reads:

“...And righteousness will be credited to us...”
Deuteronomy 6:25.

Now, I kind of like that. That’s Christ’s righteousness credited to us. That’s not righteousness by works. Keeping God’s commandments is not righteousness by works. It’s righteousness which is credited to us. And I’m thankful that Jesus is our righteousness today, and I want Him to be *my* righteousness.

[Elder Frazee] Thank God.

[Man from congregation] I was thinking when he was talking about these filthy rags, you know, we have some favorite pair of pants or some clothes that we like to wear. I've thought of this when my wife was—a number of times I'd have some clothes, and she'd say, "I wish you'd quit wearing them."

And I thought of this in our individual selves as he was talking about this. You know, a lot of these favorite clothes we like to hang onto. We also have our favorite sins we like to hang onto. It's hard to give them up. But we can thank the good Lord that He will help us to overcome them, only through Him.

[Elder Frazee] Amen.

[Man from congregation] I was just thinking, Elder Frazee, my church in Rochester is just finishing up their worship service, and my heart sort of goes back to those dear people there. The Lord always takes care of us. Just when I needed a spare pastor, one come in. It's the way He looks after us.

You know, after your sermon today, I am thinking of a song found on 583 [Old Adventist Hymnal (1941)] that fits in so well, and if you don't mind, I would like to sing this one. I'll ask the lady that's been playing the organ if you would play for me. I would appreciate it.

The words to this particular song mean more to me, I guess than any song that was ever written because it tells me what I need to do and what is necessary for me to do and tells a little bit about this life that I live.

I'm going to sing just the three verses of it. I could sing all four of them, but I'm here for a rest and not to work.

"Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine,
Living with Jesus, a new life divine,
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine,
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

Never a trial that He is not there,
Never a burden that He doth not bear,
Never a sorrow that He doth not share,
Moment by moment I'm under His care.

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment I've life from above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.

Never a weakness that He doth not feel,
Never a sickness that He cannot heal;
Moment by moment, in woe or in weal,
Jesus, my Savior, abides with me still.

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;
Moment by moment I've life above;
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine."

Old Adventist Church Hymnal (1941), #583 first, second and fourth stanzas.

[Elder Frazee] Thank you so much, my dear brother. So glad you're here.

[Same man continuing] You know, Elder Frazee, it was some years back that I was singing in opera here in Chattanooga and the Lord took my voice from me, and I'm going to tell a little of that story in the MV over at Wildwood this afternoon.

You know, the Lord gives us talents, and I found out one thing. He knows how to remove them, also.

[Elder Frazee] And then put them back.

[Same man continuing] Well, not like I had them before, but when I get to Heaven, I'll be able to do more.

[Elder Frazee] What time is that this afternoon?

[Same man continuing] I think it's five o'clock.

[Elder Frazee] All right. Five o'clock at the Wildwood chapel.

[Recording ended in progress]

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