

The Pharisee and The Tax Collector

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[0:00] Luke chapter 18, verse 9. We'll read verses 9 through 14. To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself.

God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

[1:23] We all love a good story, don't we? Children especially love stories, and it's something that, if we're honest adults, we never outgrow.

We get caught up in the storyline. We identify with the characters. We see the tension that builds and then is resolved, and it thrills our hearts to read a good story.

Well, Jesus was a master storyteller, and the four Gospels are full of the short stories that he told, called parables. They weren't told just to entertain people, but they were taught to teach important spiritual lessons.

Such is the story before us that Pastor Jason just read. Luke 18, a story that Jesus told about two men and their two prayers and the two different results of their praying.

And the lesson is the most important lesson you will ever learn. Now, there's a reason why Jesus told this particular story. Remember, he made up this story.

[2:37] He was free as the storyteller to tell the story as he wanted, and he made it just this way for a special reason. It was because many people have a wrong understanding about the way to be saved, how to be right with God.

And that's not something you want to be wrong about. So out of his great love, the Lord Jesus tells the story. Notice Luke tells us right up front in verse 9 that Jesus told this parable.

Why? He told it to some who were confident of their own righteousness. You see, that was their fatal mistake. They thought that they were good enough for God.

They were really relying on themselves, their own good deeds, their church attendance, their neighborly deeds, their giving of money.

Whatever good things that they had done, they relied on those things to make themselves right with God. God will surely accept me because of the good things that I do and because of the bad things I don't do.

[3:46] They were trusting their own self-righteousness. But you know, as Pastor Jason just told us, no one has ever been saved by their own righteousness.

And yet, most people today do believe this very thing, that in order to get to heaven, you just need to try harder. Try to be good. And if you work hard enough at it, well, you'll receive heaven in the end.

Even children think, well, if I'm just a good little boy, if I'm just a good little girl, I'll go to heaven when I die. Because hell is just for bad, bad, bad people. It's a lie we're all born with.

And Jesus comes to correct it. So Alan Jackson sings, where I come from, people are trying to make a living and working hard to get to heaven.

Where I come from. I don't know where he comes from, but that's where I come from, too. People who are wanting to go to heaven are thinking that by trying to go to heaven, by working hard at it, they will get there.

[4:52] But you see, it's not until I give up hope in all my efforts to get to heaven that I will turn to the only way that there is to get to heaven. And that's through what Jesus does for sinners.

It was the same in Jesus' day. People were confident of their own righteousness. And so Jesus, out of love, tells this story to correct them on the most important thing of all.

How to be right with God. How to have God receive you as his child and to be enjoying heaven with him forever and ever.

And so, too, those who were confident of their own righteousness. Christ tells this story. Notice that wherever there is this self-righteousness, there's also this Siamese twin that's ever found with it.

And what is that? Well, Luke says to some who were confident of their own righteousness, And look down on everybody else. You know those two go together, don't they?

[5:58] This holier-than-thou attitude that despises and looks down the nose at others. What's the connection between self-righteousness and looking down on others?

Well, just this. Your view of yourself affects how you view others. If you're seven foot tall, how do you view others? About the way that I'm viewing you.

I'm looking down my nose at you. I'm looking down. There you are down there. Here I am up here.

But if you're three feet tall, how do you view everyone? Well, you look up to them.

And they seem like giants to you. Well, what are you in your own eyes spiritually? What are you before God? Are you a spiritual giant?

Are you so high and holy that you think God ought to accept you into heaven because of your goodness? If so, you will look down your nose at other people around you and despise those who are not as good as you.

[7:04] You see, looking down on others, mocking others, is a symptom of a self-righteous heart. Have you ever noticed how self-righteous people are very judgmental and harsh and unforgiving of others?

Those who think they have it all together look down on those who don't. And according to Jesus, this is not just a coincidence. It's rather that when you think too highly of yourself, you will inevitably think too lowly of others and belittle them who don't measure up to yourself.

Just the opposite of a humble view of self, which considers others better than yourself, as Philippians tells us in chapter 2 and verse 3.

So your view of yourself does affect your view of others. Here are some people that had a self-righteous, high view of self and a low view of others. He had those people in the crowd that day.

It doesn't mean that they were telling everybody how wonderful they are. No, that wouldn't look humble, would it?

[8:17] And looking humble is part of what it means for them to look righteous in the eyes of everyone. No, it was a matter of their heart. It was an attitude in their hearts.

It was their inner thoughts that were full of their own importance and of their own goodness. And it was in their thoughts that they put others down. It doesn't mean they were out trash-talking everyone.

But in their thoughts, they had everybody pegged as beneath them. And as they're doing this, Jesus is reading their thoughts.

Because he's God. And nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid open before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

And Jesus sees this self-righteousness and this despising thing in the hearts of his hearers. And so in love, he's out to correct them. And you know how he does it?

[9:13] He writes them into his own story. As the storyteller, he can do that. And he writes his own audience right into his story. In this story, they will hear their own inner thoughts coming out of the mouth of one of the characters.

Will they recognize themselves in Jesus' story? Will they learn the most important lesson in life? Will you? Will I? Let's see.

religious garb that marked him out as a member of this elite religious group, the Pharisees.

It started as a reform movement within Judaism when they started mixing with the nations and the Greek culture and they stopped obeying some of God's commands. This was a reform movement to say, no, we need to get back to obeying God's word. And though it started out perhaps with the right motive, what it ended up is they started adding all their rules and all of their commands to what

God had commanded. And so, for instance, we find in the Gospels for them to be walking through the grain field on the Sabbath day and grab a handful of grain and rub it in your hands and pop it into your mouth. Oh no, you can't do that. That's working on the Sabbath. That's harvesting and threshing. No, Jesus corrects them. That's not harvesting and threshing. But you see how they had taken God's commands and added their own commands to God's and they had thousands of such traditions and laws these Pharisees did. They were so careful, at least not to break the external commands of God.

And by this time, they had turned their law keeping then into self-serve salvation as if their own morality and religious deeds and keeping all these traditions made them respectable in God's eyes. [11:38] They enjoyed such a high reputation in the eyes of the Jewish people that there was a saying that said that if only two men were allowed into heaven, no doubt one would be a Pharisee.

That's the first man in Jesus' story. The other man was a tax collector. Now, you must remember that at this time, Israel was living under the domination of the Romans.

The Romans, who occupied much of the then known world, had conquered them too. And there were bitter reminders of the bondage to Rome. Everywhere they looked, they would see them. There's the Roman soldiers in their streets. There was the Roman governor ruling over them. And worst of all, there were those taxes paid to Rome. Taxes.

The Romans hired Jews to collect these taxes from their own countrymen. And they would pay them a percentage of the tax that they collected with the bonus that whatever extra you can collect is yours.

[12:43] With a deal like that, it bred corruption. And so these tax collectors were known for their thievery and preying upon innocent people, charging them more tax than what they owed and lining their own pockets in doing so.

Many of them were wealthy men. And so their own people hated them.

No one was more hated than the tax collector. Not only cheating us out of our taxes, paying more than we have to. They knew what they were doing, but they couldn't resist it.

The Roman soldiers were there to enforce it. More than that, they were traitors. They're on the Roman side. So here he is, this thieving cheat, a betrayer of their country, and the mere mention of this tax collector going into the temple to pray, well, that would just have stirred up people's blood to boiling.

What's a scumbag like him doing in the holy place like the temple? Jesus is the master storyteller.

[14:03] In one line, he brings together both ends of moral respectability. The Pharisee, oh, he's up here. He's so high, he's got one foot in heaven.

He's on the top rung in what people thought of him. And this tax collector, he's so low that he's got one foot in hell already where he belongs. And Jesus brings them both right into the temple to pray. Two people went to pray. Now, there's already, then, an element of surprise. It's the presence of this tax collector in the temple.

But there are bigger surprises to follow. Jesus talks about their two prayers next. And, by the way, prayer is a window into our hearts, isn't it? Prayer lets us see what we really are.

So, look inside the hearts of these two men. That's what Jesus is inviting us. And first we hear the prayer of the religious Pharisee. Verses 11 and 12.

[15:06] The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. God, I thank you that I'm not like other men. Robbers, evildoers, adulterers.

Or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. Now, that's hardly prayer. He's praying about himself.

This is a man just preening his spiritual feathers before God. Patting himself on the back. And just telling God how fortunate he is to have such a human being on the earth.

He's exalting himself in the language of verse 14. The punchline. That's what he's doing. He's lifting himself up. He's full of himself.

And he's confident of his own righteousness. He thinks it's something that God should take a look at it. And so he starts out boasting about what he hasn't done.

[16:10] You know, there's a lot of people that boast about what they haven't done. He hadn't sinned like other men. And he chooses some real gems to compare himself with, doesn't he? Robbers.

Not like robbers. Thank you, I'm not like those evildoers and those adulterers. Or tosses his head in the direction of the tax collector. Or like this tax collector.

Other scornfully acknowledging his presence in the temple. That's not exactly stiff competition to compare yourself with, is it?

We can always find someone beneath us that we are better than. And that can make us feel good about ourselves. I'm not like him. I've never done what she just did.

And we feel self-confident and righteous before God. So he's rehearsing his own self-righteousness compared to the moral scum around him. As if God is supposed to sit up and notice and be impressed.

[17:14] Do you know there's only been one man that God was ever impressed with? And that was his own son. His own eternal son who became a man. He was born under the law.

And he obeyed the law. And God, with his scrutiny, looked upon his son. And he says, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased.

There's somebody worth taking a look at. There's someone worth sitting up and noticing and being impressed with their righteousness.

It's my son. He has a perfect righteousness in every aspect of heart and life. He lived in the same tempting world that you and I live in.

He had the same devil at his heels tempting him. And never once did he sin. In word. In thought.

[18:18] In deed. In motive. Perfect righteousness. There's none like him.

Who always did what pleased his father. And he alone has a perfect report card. Straight A's.

Before God. And so he deserves to get to heaven.

He alone deserves to get to heaven. He has a perfect report card. God is just that holy that he requires. Perfect report card to get into heaven.

And Jesus has it. That's what's impressive. But this guy's got plenty to say for himself. Jesus is the only one.

Who is impressive in God's sights. Everyone else must bring their F's and failures to God. And must plead for mercy. As a sinner.

[19:19] With nothing good to say for themselves. But this guy's got plenty of good to say about himself. You just hear him. Why? Because he's not comparing himself to Christ. He's not comparing himself to God's righteous standard.

His laws. He's comparing himself with other people beneath him. You can almost hear the contempt in his voice. Or like this tax collector over here.

Thank you that I'm not like him. God describes such self-righteous people. And tells us what he thinks of them.

In Isaiah 65. This is what they are heard saying. They say, keep away from me. Don't come near me. For I am holier than thou.

Do you ever wonder where that phrase came from? Holier than thou people. You've met some of those people that are holier than thou. It's Isaiah 65. 5. And God says, this is what they say.

[20:21] Whether outwardly or in their hearts. They're saying of everybody else, I'm holier than thou. So keep away from me. You know what God thinks about such people? He tells us.

Such people are smoke in my nostrils. A fire that keeps burning all day. Kids, have you ever got smoke up your nostrils? It burns, doesn't it? It stings.

It makes you cough, burn, and cry all at the same time. God says, that's what these people are like. And like a fire that keeps burning all day.

It's not just that you get one whiff up your nose. No. All day long that thing smolders. It gives you a headache. God says, that's the way these holier than thou people are.

These people who are confident of their own righteousness. Well, the smoke was thick in the temple that day as Mr. Holier Than Thou was praying. And the self-righteous people listening to the story find the very thoughts of their hearts coming out of the Pharisee's mouth while he prays.

[21:27] Well, the Pharisee shifts gears from boasting about what he doesn't do to boasting about what he does do. And these things that he does do distinguishes himself from many other people.

Notice his emphasis on two external things that he does. He boasts, I fast twice a week. Here's the first one. Jews were only commanded to fast once a year on the Day of Atonement.

Oh, this guy goes way beyond the call of duty. He fasts every Monday and Thursday as the Pharisee's rule was. Wow. Did you know it doesn't take a new heart to fast twice a week?

It doesn't take extreme godliness to fast twice a week. You just have to know how to shut your mouth to food during the day and then pork out at night. Nothing so spiritual about that when you examine it.

But, oh, it sounds so spiritual, doesn't it? It doesn't take any grace in the heart, any power of godliness within. Do you know Christless Muslims fast for a month out of every year?

[22 : 33] Again, it's all day long, not eating. And then after sundown or after, then they eat. Is God to be impressed with this Pharisee's fasting?

He inevitably thinks so. He offers it to God as something he's done. And then he says, I give a tenth of all I get.

He's not only impressed with himself for fasting twice a week, he's impressed at his tithing practice. And if you read Matthew 23, you find something interesting about these Pharisees. They not only tithed on their field harvest, as God's word commanded.

They actually went into their garden and tithed the herbs, the mint, cumin, and anise. But again, it doesn't take godliness to tithe.

You just need to be able to count to ten. And you take your little mint stalk and you pluck off one for me. Excuse me.

[23 : 43] One for you, God. And nine for me. One for you. Nine for me. And yet that's... He's pretty impressed about it and thinks God ought to be as well.

Well, God is not impressed, but the people listening to God's story would be impressed with this sort of external holiness. With this Pharisee and the way he is so different from us.

He's so righteous. And they would be impressed at his prayer. That if only two get into heaven, surely this one will be one of them. And so he is very impressed with his own performance and thinks it will make him right with God.

As if God owes him heaven for not sinning like other people do and for going beyond the call of duty like others don't do. His prayer is all about himself.

But did you notice? He confesses nothing. He asks for nothing. He asks for no mercy. No forgiveness.

[24 : 50] No, because in his own mind he doesn't need forgiveness. He doesn't need mercy. He flatters himself too much to detect his own sin. Psalm 36 tells us.

He's blind to what he really is. And how much he needs a savior. And needs mercy from God. Well, that's the Pharisee's prayer. And no doubt the people are saying, Yes, that's the prayer.

That's the prayer that will be heard in heaven. And then in stark contrast with the Pharisee's prayer, Jesus says, Then this is the prayer of the tax collector. And even his body language tells a story, doesn't it?

It reveals a humbled heart convicted of his sin and need. It says, But the tax collector stood at a distance. You see, he doesn't even feel worthy enough to come near.

He'll stay in the outer courts of the temple. He feels too unworthy of God to come up close. And he would not even so much as lift up his eyes to look to heaven.

[25 : 58] He's overwhelmed with his sin against God. You ever notice how people that sin against you won't look you in the eye? This guy knew his sin before God.

He was so guilty he could not look him in the eye. But instead he beat his breast as if to say, My greatest problem is not out there.

It's my heart. I'm a sinner. I'm a sinner. And I sin because I am a sinner. And so his body language is revealing.

But his words are even more revealing. They're not flowery words. They're not big words. They're not long words. There's not many words. But they come from his heart. And it's simply, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

He knows what he is. And he acknowledges it to God. God, I'm a sinner. I've wronged you. I've dishonored you. I've broken your law. And I deserve your wrath.

[27 : 11] And in contrast to the Pharisee, this tax collector has nothing good to say for himself. Does he? You'll read in vain to find one good thing that he's able to offer to God as to why God should show kindness to him.

Not one good thing. He has no righteousness of his own that he points out that God should notice and show kindness to him. No goodness to trust in to make him right with God.

He just casts himself hopeless, lost sinner that he is upon God's mercy. Have mercy on me, a sinner. Please don't treat me as my sins deserve.

The word is be propitious to me. Turn away your wrath from me. Don't treat me like I deserve or I will get wrath. Be propitious. Show me mercy. Give me what I don't deserve.

Your kindness. And about this point in the story, the self-righteous crowd would be chafing the audacity of that wretch to ask God for mercy after what he's done.

[28 : 11] And it's then that Jesus drops the biggest bomb yet as he quickly draws his story to an end. And he says, I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God.

Isn't it something that Jesus claims to know infallibly how God responds to people's prayers? We ought to sit up and take notice. This is more than just a man.

He is God. And he knows exactly heaven's response to these two prayers. He knows what's in our hearts when we pray. And he says, the wicked tax collector.

Here's the two results. The tax collector went home justified. That means that he was declared not guilty in the court of heaven. God brings down the gavel.

He looks at him and he says, not guilty. He goes home right with God. And the righteous Pharisee is declared guilty. The tax collector goes home under God's favor.

[29 : 16] The Pharisee goes home under God's wrath. And there is no way that the crowd could have been prepared for this conclusion to the story. It was exactly opposite of what they all expected.

They're both shocked and offended, gasping and asking one another, how can this be? And Jesus tells them how and why.

He gives the explanation of his surprising conclusion. Here's the reason, folks. Because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And everyone who humbles himself will be exalted.

That's the rule of heaven that determines the two responses of God to their prayers. The one who exalts himself will be humbled. The one who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now, that's a timeless truth. It's found throughout our Bibles, Old and New Testament. Jesus referred to it often in his preaching. And it applies to everyone.

[30 : 23] Pharisee, high respectable man in society, and the bottom man on the totem pole, a tax collector. It applies to you and I. Whoever we be, whether we're six or 16 or 60, this is the rule of heaven.

Whoever exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted. God sees to it that that's the response.

So it's either humble yourself or be humbled by him. Jesus says this explains the end of the story. The two different results of their prayers.

You see, the Pharisee was exalting himself all the way through his prayer. He was lifting himself up, confident that salvation was his because of what he hadn't done and what he had done. No reason to humble himself and confess sin and ask for mercy.

And so he receives none. Didn't ask for any. He receives none. He goes home just as he came. Very religious and yet very lost.

[31 : 31] Still guilty. Still under God's wrath. And on his way to God's eternal humbling in hell. Yes, the religious man. Because that's the destination of the proud road of the self-righteous.

It leads to an eternal humbling in hell. God is committed to humbling those who exalt themselves. Do you know there's no form of pride more offensive to God than this, self-righteousness.

Just live your whole life. Satisfied to live your life without Jesus. As if you don't need him. You don't need what he's done for sinners to make you right with God. Satisfied just to live thinking that your goodness will get you into heaven.

Oh, that's the worst way to exalt yourself in front of God who has sent his son to die for sinners.

Whereas, not only was the Pharisee exalting himself, the tax collector was humbling himself, wasn't he?

He was confessing his sin. He was seeking salvation. Not by anything that he had done. But from God's sheer mercy and undeserved favor. And so though he went down to the temple, guilty before God, he goes down to his home.

[32 : 50] He went up to the temple, guilty before God. He goes down to his home, justified.

Declared righteous. He went up, a sinner, on his way to hell under God's wrath. He goes home, forgiven, right with God.

On his way to the eternal exalting in heaven. For he who humbles himself will be exalted. So there's the story that Jesus told so many years ago.

What happened? Wouldn't you like to know? What happened? Did the crowd recognize themselves in the prayer of the Pharisee? Did they respond to Jesus' warning and correction about the only way to be saved?

Well, we're simply not told, are we? We're left hanging on that question. Because God doesn't tell us everything we want to know. He tells us what we need to know. And there's something more important that we need to know than what did they do with this story.

And it's what will I do with this story? Well, I see myself in Jesus' story. Do I see myself in the Pharisee's proud self-exalting of himself?

[34 : 13] Or do I see myself in the tax collector's humble cry for mercy to be saved from his sin? Well, if you see yourself like this tax collector, then humble yourself right now.

Humble yourself before the Lord. Tell him, you know that your Bible talks a lot about the sinner. That's me. That's me.

I've not loved you with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I've not done that one day of my life. And love my neighbor the way I love myself.

I haven't done that one day either. And I've not obeyed your commandments whenever they came and said to do something that crossed my self-will.

I did what I wanted instead of what you wanted. And I've coveted what was not mine. My neighbor's house. My neighbor's land. My neighbor's wife.

[35 : 13] And I've been unthankful for what I do have. And I've complained about what I don't have. And I've neglected your holy word.

I've neglected your church, your people. And I've neglected your day. The Lord's day. And most of all, I've neglected your son. The only savior and mediator between God and man.

The Lord Jesus Christ. I've served myself instead of him. And so all my best works, all my righteous works are like filthy rags in your sight.

Oh, Lord, if ever there was a sinner, it's me. It's me. It's me. It's me. It's me. Oh, Lord. Standing in the need of mercy.

I confess it. But there's more to humbling yourself than just confessing you're a sinner. No, you must beg for mercy in Jesus Christ.

[36 : 16] Do you know that all mercy flows to sinners through Jesus? All the mercy of heaven flows down to sinners like through a funnel. And that funnel is Jesus. And it comes to us through Jesus Christ.

And so I must beg for mercy through Christ. He's God's one and only son who came into the world to save sinners. I'm a sinner.

And I've read in your word, oh, Lord, that you sent your son to save sinners. And I believe what you tell me that he came to do to save sinners. And let me tell you two things that Jesus did.

He did many things to save sinners. But let me tell you two very important things. First of all, he kept all God's commands perfectly. As we said earlier, he's the only one to have a perfect report card in heaven.

Straight A's. Never sinned once. And so he has perfect righteousness. He has righteousness that impresses his father. He has righteousness that will stand you in good stead in the day of judgment.

[37 : 14] And he gives that righteousness to everyone who trusts in him. He says, you bring me your sins and I'll give you my righteousness.

I'll make you right with God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Not self-righteousness, Christ's righteousness because he kept all God's commands.

And then secondly, he died on the cross and suffered the punishment of hell that we deserve for our sins. He suffered the punishment that his people would have received forever and ever as God forsook him on the cross.

And he was separated from his father. And God's wrath was upon him. Not for his own sins, but for the sins of his people. You see, the same Jesus who's telling this story was going somewhere.

He was here in this life to save sinners. Not just to tell stories. Yes, to tell stories, to preach to men. But then he was also going to an appointment on a cross outside Jerusalem.

[38:26] Where he would suffer and hang on a tree and suffer the wrath of God for his people. So that whoever believes on him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And there he turns away the wrath of God from his people by suffering it himself. A newlywed couple was in Australia on their honeymoon.

They decided to go snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef. And they were enjoying all the little underwater creatures until a shark started to circle and immediately attacked them.

And he was coming straight for the wife. And the husband was able at the last moment to thrust himself in front of her, between her and the shark, and push her toward the safety of the boat. He took the full brunt of the shark's attack.

He lost his life to save his bride's wife. And that's what Jesus did. That's how the gavel can come down in the court of heaven for a tax collector or a sinner like you and me.

[39:34] And God can say, not guilty. Why? Because Jesus Christ, when the wrath of God was coming upon us, Jesus stepped in between at Calvary and he let it fall full force upon him that we might be saved.

This is what Jesus did. He did more than tell stories. He came to die that sinners might trust in him and in Christ have no condemnation, no wrath, but only heaven.

Christ died for sins once for all. The righteous for the unrighteous. For the sinner to bring us to God. And so humbling yourself not only means saying I'm the sinner, but it means begging God to have mercy on you for Jesus' sake.

Look what Jesus has done. Look what he did in dying on the cross for sinners. Look on him and pardon me. Are you humble enough to realize that and to own that you're so bad that it took the blood of the Son of God to wash away your sins?

The only way that you can get into heaven is if God's own Son must experience the wrath of God for you. Are you that humble? That you're willing to come and beg for God to have mercy on you for Jesus' sake because of what Jesus has done?

[40:54] Well, if you're too proud to beg, you're too proud to be saved.

Because those that humble themselves will be exalted. So, how will it be with you?

Martin Luther lived in the 1500s. He too was a sinner. And he too thought that by doing all kinds of religious deeds, he would have enough righteousness to make it into heaven.

So he became a monk. And he gave his life in the monastery to trying, trying, trying to get to heaven.

Working hard to get to heaven. And he found that the more he tried, the more he failed. He couldn't stop sinning.

[41:57] He couldn't stop a covetous heart. He couldn't stop inward sins. And so, one day as he was reading the scriptures, light flooded in upon him.

And he saw that salvation comes not through our righteousness, but through the righteousness of Jesus that we receive as a gift. And he put his trust on Jesus Christ.

He humbled himself. He confessed the sinner that he was. A monk. But a sinful monk. And he begged God to save him because of what Jesus had done.

And God did save him. And he lived a fruitful life. Serving God and loving his neighbor. And then he died.

And his friends found a little piece of paper in his pocket. And they opened it up. And it said, we are beggars. It is true. We are beggars.

[42:53] Are you humble enough to beg for mercy through Jesus Christ? If so, you know what he'll do? He'll exalt you. So you may have come in a guilty sinner.

You can go down to your home, an exalted, righteous one. A saint. A child of God. You came in under God's wrath.

Guilty of sin. You can go down to your home forgiven. You came in with God as your enemy. You can go home with him as your eternal friend. You came in spiritually bankrupt.

So you can go home enriched forever. You came in on your way to hell. You can go home on your way to heaven. You came in a slave of sin.

You can go home free. You came in without Christ. You can go home with him. And he will never leave you. Not one step in this life.

[43:50] Not in the day of death. And not in the day of judgment. And not in the days. The unending days of eternity. Come to this Jesus. You know, not very many people are concerned

about being right with God today.

And those that are, are working hard to get to heaven. The only way in is to come through the merits of Jesus.

Trust in what he has done. And this Jesus offers himself to you. Because he rose again from the dead. He is now in heaven exalted. And he will exalt any sinner to be in heaven with him who humbles himself.

He ever lives to save all that come unto God through him. Let's pray. You have dealings with us, God. He's willing to receive you today. Come to him and say what this man said.

God, be merciful to me, a sinner. And save me for Jesus' sake. Let's all pray silently. Father, how can we thank you enough for your son?

[44 : 59] How can we thank you enough for so loving this sinful world in rebellion against you?

That you would send your one and only son. Send him to the cross.

Send him first to obey every command of yours. And then to live that perfect life. And then send him to the cross to die for sins that are not his own. That whoever would believe in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

God, have mercy upon us all. For Jesus' sake. Thank you for the Savior. And we would sing of him. We would tell of him. We would rejoice in him and give you all the glory for our salvation. We come in Christ's name. Amen.