



Made Right with God-Part 3
The Law of God
Pastor Mike Fabarez

Luke 18:18-30

The Journal of Preventative Medicine has spent a lot of time and money with an article that told us what we already know. The gist of the article was, their survey, their report was that men don't like to go to the doctor, which I thought -- OK, I didn't have to read this journal to figure that out. This peer reviewed, very important journal thing, saying, "Hey, men don't like to go to the doctor. Men, more than women, they like to downplay their health concerns, their health problems. And yet at least I thought it was fair, certainly in some of the articles that were written about this journal article and study, they said, "Well, women are not far behind, particularly these days." There is a shift in the way Americans see themselves and they like to see themselves as kind of rising above and they're courageous and they're bold and they're independent and they're overcomers and all these kinds of things and it really has trickled down into the fact that people aren't honest with their doctors about what's going on in their bodies and when they're not honest with their doctors, of course, their doctors can't respond rightly to the problems going on in their bodies. They don't get the tests they need, they don't get the kind of diagnostics they need and basically this article said that lying is injurious to your health, not because it's a moral problem, but because you're not getting the care, the health care that you need. And I thought to myself, you didn't have to spend all that money on this very extensive and meticulous report telling us this because Jesus has been giving us that insight for 2,000 years now. Right?

He was recorded in Matthew 9 as saying, the problem with people not coming to me is that really it's the sick that seek out a doctor. Right? The sick need the physician but the well, they don't have any interest. In essence that was the concern of Christ always with people, particularly those that look at themselves and said, "Well, I'm OK." In John 9, when he healed the blind man, here the Pharisees, after getting lectured by Christ, saying, "Wait a minute, are you trying to say we're blind? We got some problem?"

And Jesus said, "Listen, if you admitted that you had a problem, if you could be honest about your problem, well then I'd remove the problem. But as it is, you think you are seeing and because of that," here's how he puts it when he gets down to what he's really talking about, "your guilt remains." See, getting right with God is all about having our guilt removed. You and I have a problem. If you are drop dead right now, if I would have died today, we're standing before God, the real issue is am I guilty before this holy God. I want my guilt removed. Another word used for that is the word "justified" to be justified, to have this act of justification. I need to be right with God, I need that guilt removed. And as we've already been learning in Luke Chapter 18, you better be honest about your problem. And one thing God is requiring of you is to be honest, humbly honest, about the reality of your need.

And he started with this parable in our series about a man who thought he was better than other people, this Pharisee, and in fact comparatively, I suppose he was, arguably he was better than the tax collector. But when it came to God and his standards he wasn't really. He was categorically still a sinner but it was that sinner who felt his need, who beat his chest and he said what? "Have mercy on me, a sinner." He identifies himself as a sinner in need of God's mercy. And after that parable by Christ we then got that example of the children being called and the disciples said, "Don't do it, don't bother the teacher," and Jesus says, "No, bring them." And here he is with those children, even infants it says, and he says this is a perfect example of what I'm talking about. You have to have this

complete reliance, this dependence. We looked at biblical faith the last time we were together and then enter someone who seems antithetical opposed to a child who's depending on a parent. This man who is rich, he's wealthy, he's authoritative. He's an up and comer, he's got it all going on, this young ruler. And he looks like the opposite, at least on the outside, of some dependent child who sees his need. That's not at all what we seem to have here. And Jesus says, "Listen, you'd better see your need." I don't care what's going on in the externals of your life. And like a man who's walking through the doors of the doctor's office, Jesus right out of the gate, throws up the x-rays and says, "Hey, take a look. Look at what's going on in your life." And he was incredulous, he refused to believe it.

This is the story we have before us. It's the story of the rich young ruler and if you haven't turned there yet I'd like you to turn to Luke Chapter 18. We're going to look at several verses for us today. This entire story of Jesus' is encounter with the rich young ruler, verses 18 through 30, 13 verses. Let's look at these together. Follow along as I read it, I'll read from the English Standard Version. Luke Chapter 18 verses 18 through 30. "A ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' And Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.' And he said, 'All these I've kept from my youth.' When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come follow me.'" Verse 23. "But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad said, 'How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God.' Those who heard it said, 'Who then can be saved?'" Verse 27, "But he said, 'What's impossible with man is possible with God.' And Peter said, 'See, we have left our homes and followed you.' And he said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life.'

Let's see if we can understand a little bit of what Jesus is doing and it will help you and I, not only as we rethink our evangelism, if you sit here today thinking, "I know I'm a Christian, I need to think about how I'm relating this message of Christ to other people." Or perhaps you're saying, "Well, I'm not really sure." But let's see what we can learn about this man as Jesus says to him some pretty harsh things. I mean he's not quick to believe them, he pushes them off. But still Jesus is trying to diagnose a problem to get him to be where that tax collector was. All he's looking for in this man's life is what we've been seeing throughout this text. A childlike dependence on a father saying, "I need you to solve my problem. Have mercy on me, a sinner." Well, he's got some things to work through, this wealthy man who seems to, at least by his own admission, be living a pretty moral life.

Let's start with this word game that seems to be played in verses 18 and 19. The ruler ask him, "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Now if you read verse 19 with any kind of dispassionate, objective view you're going to say, Jesus seems pretty nitpicky about the answer here, I mean, come on, "Why do you call me good? No one's good except God alone?" Why are you so meticulous about the wording here? As a matter of fact, if you wanted to take Jesus at his own standard and take that word "good" in which, you know, the New Testaments written in Koine Greek, you could take that Greek word, "agathos" and say, "OK, all the times Jesus used the word, all the times the New Testament writers use the word, every time we see the word from Matthew to Revelation, is it always used as this exclusive description of a perfect God? Is that we're talking about? The answer would be "No" of course not. This word "good" is the most standard common

word for good that we have in the New Testament. It's used about all kinds of things and it doesn't always reflect some ethical or moral perfection. As a matter of fact, most times it does not. But he's saying, "Listen, I want you to think about this word that you just used about me, which is a unique way to address the rabbi. As a matter of fact, in the fourth or fifth century, the collection of Talmudic writings, we have all of these references, volumes of references to the rabbis and teachers among Israel, not once do we see this line, "Good Teacher" that appellation or a title of the rabbis who taught in Israel.

Nevertheless, though it's unique, it seems a little harsh for you now to be calling him on, throwing a foul, throwing a flag on this and saying, that's not right, you call me good, because if you knew what that meant you'd know that is ascribed specifically to God, which by the way, he is, so in fact, he's deserving of that title. Nevertheless, why is he doing this? Well, he's doing it because, as I said, once this man walks into the purview of Christ, he's now saying, "You need to look at your problem." He throws an x-ray up and says, let's think about your need. I want you to say, so that you can have eternal life, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." The first thing you need to see is the person you want this eternal life from is absolutely perfect and I want you to think of this in absolute terms, though it could be used in comparative ways. You used the word "good" you need to understand the ultimate usage of that word would be that God is exclusively good, perfectly, absolutely, without any flaw, good in every way. And that's true. We'd say only the triune God is that.

So if you and I want to follow in the footsteps of the rich young ruler, at least in hearing the lesson from Christ, let's start this way. If you're taking notes, jot this down, number one. We need to "Reconsider God's Absolute Perfection." We need to reconsider God's absolute perfection. Now, how could the Pharisee who sat there saying, "I'm glad I'm not like other people. I'm glad I'm not like that tax collector," who goes home without having his sins forgiven, without having his guilt removed, he's not justified, how could we get him, maybe, to get his forgiveness? Well, we'd have to get him to start by saying God is absolutely perfect. We'd have to see that. As a matter of fact, when we taught on him a couple of weeks back, I said to you consider Isaiah, when Isaiah saw in Isaiah 6 this image of a perfectly holy God, when the angels were crying out "Holy, Holy, Holy" his first response was to see his need, his sin. What were the first words out of his mouth? "Woe to me. I am ruined. I'm in trouble." Well, wait a minute, you're a good righteous prophet. For five chapters you've been saying righteous things, calling people to repentance and now you see God in this vision and all of a sudden you say, "I'm ruined, I'm in trouble before this God." Why would you say that? Well, because instantly in this image of the unmitigated, unfiltered, holy perfection of God, he says, "I'm a man of unclean lips. I live among a people of unclean lips." Now ten minutes before the vision he wasn't feeling that. Now he was because he saw this an unmitigated, unfiltered perfection of God. He saw his need. Apparently, what was going on with the Pharisee on the Temple Mount, he didn't see that. His view of God was not as exalted. It certainly wasn't as absolutely perfect as it ought to be because every time someone sees the absolute perfection of God, guess what, they always respond the same way, they always see their problem. In fact, here's something odd, they want to push away from it. Have you noticed that in the Bible?

We even saw Peter, did we not, when he starts to see that Jesus Christ has the power and authority and perfection of the Father, he sees him exercise authority over nature and the first thing he does is fall down and say, "Away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man." See, as soon as they see the great perfection of the Triune God, even John, who walked with Jesus all those years, when he sees the glorified Christ on the island of Patmos in Revelation Chapter 1, he falls down as though dead. He's not going to run up and hug him and give him a high five. See that's what the absolute perfection of God will do. In some sense it will repel you.

Now, with that statement that I've just made, can I take a little sidebar and talk to you about your evangelism? When you share the gospel with people and they come to you, maybe like this guy, and they say, "I'd like to have eternal life. I don't want to go to hell when I die. So how can I do that?" If you were to start to present this perfect, absolutely flawless image of a perfectly moral God, you know what you're shooting for, what Christ was shooting for, "I need you to see your sin and you have a hard time seeing that, so let me throw up the perfection of God here." Here's the response you're going to get from a lot of people. When you start painting that picture of a perfect God, they'll start pushing it away. Maybe not with the same motive as Isaiah or John or Peter, but they're going to push it away thinking, "I don't know that I want to hang out with a God like that. I don't think I like a God who's got these stringent rules and is absolutely perfect. I'd rather be in the remedial class. I want to be in the Gate class, right? I'm a "D" student, let me just... OK, maybe a "C" student, and I just want to hang with a god and a place, if there's a heaven, I'd like it to be a little more casual. So, I'm not sure I want this God." And that's the risk a lot of us take. And we take that risk by saying, "Well, wait a minute, I don't want to present God the way he really is because you'll push that away."

Now let me address this for a second. You need to do exactly what Christ did. We need not try to pull God down to our level so he'll be more appealing to your non-Christian friends and neighbors and co-workers. We need to keep God high and exalted and fully lifted up and even risk the fact that they're going to say, "I'm not sure I want that God." And then you need the rejoinder, you need to respond and the response is this: "Oh, yes you do. Oh, yes you do."

Now let me give three reasons. These may seem a little philosophical and quite a long sidebar in this message, but let me talk through some reasons. Number one, we need this God that, by nature, we will be recoiling from because this God, this perfect God, is a God who related to humanity that was perfect in the beginning and we now have fallen in Adam, and really all we want is to get back to that place of perfection with God. In other words, we're in a sinful state right now. Humanity has fallen from that position of perfection. Inherently we know that really what we want is a restoration to that place. Really we know that what we'd like to have is that perfection restored even though we're not comfortable with it at all. There is a sense in which in Adam our original state was such a perfect reality that we need to just start thinking the reason I do want this intuitively is because that's where humanity once was and as a part of humanity, I realize the core desire of who I am as a person is going to want that. Now, that may be a little too philosophical but if you like church history go back to Augustan who wrote in his confessions, and I know they always quote one line from that opening section of confessions, "That God has made us for himself and our hearts are restless till we find rest in thee." Remember that line? Smile at me if you remember that line. I need to read the context of all that. Augustan really starts with that same concept and that is because we are made in the image of God, what we really want is the thing that we recoil from, he doesn't use those terms, and that is we want to connect with his transcendent, perfectly majestic God, because in humanity we've lost that position, he doesn't go into all this detail, but if you think about what I'm saying and then read that opening section of Augustan's Confessions, you'll see that that's exactly the point he's trying to make. The fallen state needs to be restored and as a part of a fallen humanity, the fallen race of mankind, you know, really the desires I have are to be back to that state. I need to get back to the Garden. I need that position and I need that relationship with a perfect God, as uncomfortable as that might be.

Another reason is, you can appeal to your friends and co-workers when you really throw up this image of a perfect God, that you know is going to lead them to say, "Oh, I don't know. Away from me, I'm a sinful man. I'd rather be in the remedial class, not the Gate class." You understand this,

that everything they hate about this world is a sign of their desire for perfection. Let me put it that way. What we hate about this world, our angst and our frustration, is nothing other than a categorical aversion to the things that are opposed to what we want. I know this is a little philosophical but follow me here. When we see people shooting people from the upper floors of hotels and mowing them down, everyone's going to hate that. Now we get out the moral language of "evil" and we say evil, pure evil, evil, pure evil, and we get everyone talking in those terms. And we all hate it and we think this is not the way things should be. Now what you hate and everyone universally says, "Oh, this is horrible and horrific," is nothing other than an extreme expression of the imperfect that we all despise.

But you can start ratcheting that category back and saying everything that is not the way it ought to be is something my heart is repulsed by. I have, really, an aversion and a dislike and a disgust and an angst for all the things that are not perfect. In other words, I'd like to live in the Garden of Eden, ultimately, and I don't and there's nothing about this world that reflects that, at least in any perfect way. So I need to realize that my hatred of what I would call imperfect, or the extreme examples that I call evil, are really a reminder that my heart is designed for, in the image of God, though it's fallen, for a place that doesn't have any of that. I want to place extracted from that. I can go all the way down to my workplace, my desk, my computer, my parenting, I can look at my hobbies or anything else I do and say, "Really what I don't like, the way that things aren't the way they should be, the things that are the way they should not be, those are the things that remind me I'm made for a place that's not here, as C.S. Lewis said. I mean all of this frustration should remind me, I'm not made for this world. And so I need the perfect and the perfect though, if I look at in the evangelist encounter I'm having with my Christian friend who's trying to convert me, I push away this God of perfection because I'd rather be in the remedial class, but in reality I need that God.

A third reason, because of death. Death is the ultimate imperfect thing, is it not? And I don't care how old you are, when you bury someone who you love, you look at that and you don't say, "Well that was a good long life, I'm glad they're gone." No one's glad they're gone, not if you loved that person. Death is the ultimate "not right" thing about the universe. When you think back to the Garden they had a perfect relationship, with a perfect God, in perfect union with one another, in a perfect place and there was something that was never going to happen, they were never going to die, the eternality of their lives. And the Bible says, even in our fallen state, just to quote Solomon here in Ecclesiastes, God has put eternity in our hearts. We can't understand everything about it, as the next phrase in Ecclesiastes says, but we do understand that we have a desire to live forever and yet our ultimate problem is death, as it says in the New Testament, is the ultimate fear. We're enslaved to that frustration that life comes to an end here on this earth. And so we're reminded what we're really made for is the restoration of all things. I need the benefits of the perfect. I need this perfect one in my life. I need to relate to this perfect one because it's the only hope I have of the perfection that I'm designed for.

And in my fallen state, I'm willing to do this, in a sense, to the perfect God because I need what comes with that. I desire what comes with that. I need eternal life. He comes and asks that, "How do I get it?" Because he knows life is not what it ought to be. Oh, it's going really well for him, he's got a lot of riches, he's got a lot of power, he's young, he's got his health, but he still knows what I need lies beyond this life. What I need is a world where there's no crying, no mourning, no pain, no sickness. I need all that and your neighbor knows that. But now you're going to present a perfect God, they may sneer at that, "I don't know, sounds too strict. Hell sounds like it's going to be more fun than heaven. I don't know that I want to go there. If God's that stringent with all his rules, I'm not sure I'd like to be a part of that." And my answer is, yes you do. You desperately want to be a part of that. And if you get honest with yourself about the absolute moral perfection of God, as hard

as that is for us to swallow, that is what we want.

Let me give you one more just for homework here. In Hebrews Chapter 12 at the end of that chapter there's this picture of a God who is dreadful in terms of his perfection. So perfect that he's a, here's how it ends, "a consuming fire." Now if you're going to put a gospel tract together, you're probably going to put something nice and appealing on the front so your friends will say, "I want that God." That's why I remember the old-time tract rack in the back of the church when I grew up. You know, you had flowers, you had dogs, you had puppies, little girls running through fields, you know, "Here's the God you want." No one puts a consuming fire on the cover of a tract that says, "God loves you." Right? A furnace or something. No one puts that out there, because we think, well that's not what you want. But in reality, that's kind of the, you know, the schizophrenia, if you will, of human beings who know what they need and they know what they desire but to get to that, they've got to deal with a God who is completely uncomfortable in terms of who he is in relation to my sinfulness. The comparison in Hebrews 12 is, do you remember Mt. Sinai? He says, the writer of Hebrews, how scary it was, how dreadful it was, how no one wanted to get up to the mountain, if you touched it you'd die. We've come to something even more ominous than that. We've come to something even more dreadful than that, a consuming fire and it's so scary and yet, man, it's where you want to be. It's a festal gathering of angelic beings, it's the community of the first born. Man, it's where you've got to be. And that kind of tension is something all I'm trying to say is instead of you and your evangelism trying to present a God who is just kind of a cool guy, who you'd want to be with because he's all for you, we need to be comfortable with God's approach here, giving us this approach through the God/man Jesus Christ. We should let people realize that there is a greatness about God, an exclusive greatness about God, that will, in many ways, invoke a response that you may not think is moving them in the right direction. But just like Peter, just like John, just like Isaiah, knowing that we're going to recoil at the perfection of God in our imperfect state, it's still a necessary step that's going to take us to where we need to go and ultimately, intuitively, we want to go. Everyone who wants eternal life is going to have to deal with this God who's absolutely morally and, in every way, perfect, which, of course, is not going to make me feel too good about myself when I think honestly about who I am. It might lead me to that great crisis moment. I call it great, though it feels terrible to say, "Have mercy on me a sinner."

Versus 20 and 21. That seems to get nowhere. I mean it's an interesting statement and we don't know what's between 19 and 20, those verses, but we do know the next thing he does is he starts quoting the commandments.

Subtitle of this message is The Law of God. And here is Jesus enlisting the law of God, mostly on the second tablet here. If you know how the commandments in Exodus 20 are laid out, you've got the first four clearly about the relationship with God, and then a transitional command about our relations with our parents, and then all the commands that relate to our relationship with each other. Well, he starts quoting here about the second tablet: committing adultery, murder, stealing, false witness or lying, honoring your mother and father, back to command number five. So he starts to give all these commands that relate to how we're relating to each other, strategic, wise, smart. He's giving him a sense in which, "Here's the standard. How you doing with that standard?" And instead of dealing with God, which is where he's going next with an MRI and not an x-ray, he's going to go deeper there, but he starts with, "How are you and all these relationships?" And the man says, verse 21, "All these I've kept from my youth." Now, I don't want to be trite about it but you're a Sunday school grad, right? True or False? You could have someone who can look you in the eye, I don't care how young, say he's 22, 24-years-old, and can look at you and say, "Since my youth, since my Bar Mitzvah, since that kind of understanding of good and evil and choosing good and evil, as we read about in our Daily Bible Reading in Isaiah and as we quoted in various places in Nehemiah last

week, and we looked at the fact that people get to a maturation process where they can choose good and evil, at least they can understand the distinction. I just want to know, can anyone rightly say this is a truthful statement? "Since I was aware of right and wrong, I've always chose right as it relates to adultery, murder, stealing, lying, and honoring my mother and my father." And the answer biblically would be, "No". Why? Because God is absolutely morally perfect. And when you look at that moral perfection, at least theoretically, you can look at it more specifically in the rules that he gave and if you were honest about those rules you would say, "I don't measure up." But this guy's immediate response is, "I do measure up. I've kept those since I was able to know right from wrong. I've kept them." He's making an absolute statement about his worthiness, his godliness. And of course he's not getting the message. I'd like us to get the message and I'd like you, number 2, to rethink the extent of your obedience. And if you're an evangelist preparing to do some evangelism, I want you to get people who you deal with to consider, to rethink the extent of their obedience, because most people are going to say exactly what this man said and that is, "I'm OK. I'm good. I'm a good person." And by the way, ask your friends that this week. Think through the people you'll see on Monday. Think that through. Who are you going to run into Monday? Your Monday through Friday life. Think of those. See those faces? Those non-Christians at your workplace? Ask them the question, "Hey, are you a good person?" Just throw that one out around the water cooler. "Are you a good person?" What do you think the answer's going to consistently be? "Yeah... I'm pretty good." If the whole world you looked at, and let's just make the bell curve here, of "really bad" and then "really good." You have the whole humanity and you split it right down the middle, you said just based on statistics alone, you got bad, you got good. OK? And you ask people, "Are you in the bottom 50% or the top 50%? Just give you that. Are you good, are you bad based on that statistic?" See, if you've got people who are honest and you could do a survey of the entire world, you should have 50% of them say, "I'm on the lower half" and 50% saying, "I'm in the upper half." That would be a society that's fully clued in to their moral goodness. Am I right? Does that make mathematical sense? If you could poll everyone, half of the people should say I'm in the bottom half, half the people should say I'm in the top half, because if I'm asking the question, are you in the top half or the bottom half and there really is a top and a bottom half, you should have it split 50/50, because we're talking about 50% versus 50%. Well, that's the way the question was asked in several surveys. What do you think the answers are? What percentage of people would say they're in the top 50% of moral goodness. What do you think the odds are? Pretty high. 65% to 70%, which is all mathematically impossible. Right? 70% of the people cannot be in the top. No, that's not it. 80%? No. 85%? No. 90%? No. 95%? No. Do you know that 98% of the people consistently say they're in the top half of the moral goodness of humanity? That means that a lot of people are pretty deceived about where they stand on the scale. Right? And the 2% are really scary people who are, I guess, willing to admit it you don't want to hang out with those people. But you've got all these people, 48%, who are not even giving us a clear assessment of lateral comparisons, that's all I'm trying to say. If you want to make lateral comparisons your norm, 98% of the people say, "I'm on the good side, not the bad side of the bell curve of who's good and bad." All I'm saying is we live in a world where everyone is going to say, "Well, when it comes to the commandments, yeah, I'm pretty good, pretty good."

Jot these two references down. Philippians 3, Romans 7. When Paul looks at the Law, like the Pharisee on the Temple Mount, and he's all into lateral comparisons, now go back two weeks ago when we were looking at that, in your mind, here is the guy on the Temple Mount saying, "I'm glad I'm not like that guy. I'm not an adulterer, I tithe, I do all this, I fast twice a week," he's making lateral comparisons and he's saying, "I'm really good," and all those things that he's talking about relate to the Law. Paul does the same thing in Philippians 3, when he thinks about the law of God, the standards of God, and he is in the mindset of lateral comparisons in Philippians 3, he says things like this: "As to the Law, faultless. As to the Law, a Pharisee. I was in the top group of Law

keepers. Man, I was good. Talk about law keeping, man, I was a good law keeper." Now that's when he's thinking in lateral comparisons. When he's thinking like the tax collector with absolute good and bad, when he looks at those commands singularly, like the one he does in Romans 7, when he says, "Let's just think of the tenth commandment - coveting. When I think about coveting, where do I stand with God?" Let me just read it for you. "Had it not been for the Law, I would not have known what sin was. I would not have known what it is to covet if the Law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" He gets down and processing this logic, he says in verse 13 of Romans 7, "Sin was producing death in me." I finally saw it and I was realizing I stand condemned. "Through what was good," perfectly good, he had said about the Law, it's good, it's perfectly good. It's a reflection of a perfectly good and absolutely moral God. "In order that," if I really look at it without lateral comparisons, "sin might be shown to be sin." I can see sin and how sinful sin is. "And through the commandment," the more I looked at it, the more I pondered it, "it might become sinful beyond measure."

Now, when Paul thinks that way about the Law, then he starts saying things like this, "I was the worst of all sinners." Right? Christ died for me, the worst. Why does he think that way? Because when you think in terms of moral comparisons, you're going to think, "I'm certainly up here on the spectrum," but when you think exclusively in the vertical of the law reflecting what God expects without any lateral comparisons, you start to realize, "Man, I've got a problem" and it might lead you to do exactly what this man needed to do, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." See, the thing that stands between your neighbors, your coworkers and maybe some of you sitting here today, and salvation and having eternal life, is that you're not willing to see that, because you keep doing what I said we cannot do with the tax collector and the Pharisee, and that is making a lateral comparison. Let me put it this way. You say, "I know people who are worse than me. Matter of fact, I think 98% of the people are worse than me." And if you think that way, you are not going to see yourself as a sinner in need of God's mercy. That will, unfortunately, keep you from being justified. Just because you're better than others, we've learned that, we understand that and we don't need to beat that one into the ground.

How about this one? We often think, "Well, I may be a sinner but I could be a lot worse sinner. And because I could be a lot worse, and I know those times I was tempted and I didn't fall into the kind of sin I thought about, my imagination has taken me way down this line when it comes to sin, but I haven't done those things, I've only done these things, and because I've done these things, they seem like small sins compared to those things that seem like big sins, then I think I'm not really a sinner. I'm a pretty good person." How many people think they're good people because they, in their own mind know, "Oh man, I could've been a lot worse." I think everyone in this room could say, "I could have been a lot worse." And because you could have been a lot worse, you can start to say, "Well, I look at the law and I think, yeah, that law..." I mean, let's look at the law, adultery. "Yeah... could have been worse. I've done some things, maybe, that kind of pushed the limits of my vows. But, you know, I haven't done that, and I haven't done that." Or murder. "Yeah, I know I haven't really killed anybody. I understand that. In terms of holding bitterness in my heart? Yeah, I've done a little bit of that, but... I've assassinated people's character, you know, what I've even done it publicly on-line a couple times, but, you know, I'm not a murderer, so I'm OK. I could have been a lot worse. I felt like murdering the guy but he didn't murder the guy. It's not like bedding down the neighbor's wife. But I didn't do that, I restrained myself. I could have been a lot worse."

See, when you think that way, you can come out of it thinking I'm still a good person because I could have been worse. When Jesus talked about just those two commandments, by the way, back to back, he talked about several, but he made this comparison, "You've heard it said, but I say..." Now he's not replacing the Old Testament law with some new more stringent laws. He's trying to

point out that when God said don't commit adultery, he's talking about your fidelity to your spouse. This is a command that should say on this long spectrum, you should be faithful to your spouse. You got to be a one-woman kind of man, you ought to be focused on her, and that's the command. Now when you bed down your neighbor's wife, you've clearly broken this command. But he says, you know, even if you're lusting in your heart after another woman, you're already in the spectrum of that kind of sin. You're not being faithful to your wife. Can't you see that? I'm not changing the rules, I'm trying to show you that the law of God, properly pondered, is going to get you to say, "I'm guilty if I don't do exactly what was intended by this command and what was intended by this command was fidelity, it was focus, it was loyalty, it was a kind of romantic exclusivity that is not going to be interrupted by other people, in my thought life, in my vision or in my bedroom. And that's the picture of adultery and that's why he said, "You lust after women, then you're already breaking the commandment. I know you're not breaking it the way you could and you could have been worse but you're breaking the commandment. And the next, when he talks about, actually the one before it, he talks about murder. "You've heard it said, don't commit murder or you'll be liable to the judgment." Let me tell you what will make you liable to the judgment. I'll just read it for you, Matthew 5:21. "Whoever murders is liable to the judgment," that's what you've heard, right? But I say," verse 22, "whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment." Let's talk about hate crimes. You know, I don't there are any love crimes out there when it comes to murder for instance, right? Everybody who murders someone is angry with them. That's what they're doing. They're doing something out of malice and that kind of murder, the Bible says, is already brewing in the unchecked attitude of your heart in wanting to, in this passage, be angry and if you're angry with your brother you're liable to the judgment. "If you insult your brother," now there's an expression of it, "you'll be liable to the Council of the Sanhedrin," the ruling class of the Jews in the court, like the Supreme Court of Israel. And whoever says, "You fool," which was the Aramaic word "reka" you're calling someone a bad name that burst out of your mouth, this vulgar name, well "you'll be liable to the fires of hell." I didn't murder anybody. I didn't murder him.

See, the point is all of these commandments, if pondered, are right. You'll see the moral perfection of God being laid out in these commands and if you'd look at those you would start to see, you know what, I do have a problem, a serious problem. So for you to tell me, "Man, there's been no adultery." It can't possibly be true. "There's no murder." It can't possibly be true. You can go down the list, stealing, false witness, honoring your mother and father, I guarantee you, there's no app, there's no way you can go, "Check, check, check, check, check, check. Yeah, I've kept all those." There's no possible way and yet he can come out thinking, "I am a good, good person.

I read this guy who wrote a biography on Mike Tyson of all people. I don't know who's going to read that but, he did his research and I was reading a little bit about what his research said about this and he talked about the time after he bit off Evander Holyfield's ear, remember that one? That was quite a day, wasn't it? And if you're a young person and you have no idea, look it up on YouTube, it's worth watching, even right now, just keep the volume down while he bites his ear off of his opponent in the ring. Now, I know, here's the thing, he said he had reasons for it. Right? He's getting head-butted, or he claims, and the ref was doing nothing about it, so he bites Evander Holyfield's ear off in the ring. Well in the interviews that were done after, actually you can look it up, he says in explaining himself, "I'm a good person." I mean that's literally written right there in what he said, verbatim, "You know, I'm a good person."

Now, here's the thing. I guarantee you he's thinking, "There are fighters I've known who are far worse than me." I know he's thinking, "Bit off his ear? I didn't gouge out his eyes." Right? "I didn't knee him in the cup. I mean, I bit his ear off. Yeah, that was not good." If I could do an impression of Mike Tyson right now I would do it: "It's not good." Whatever. But you and I are going to say,

"Hey, let's pull out the rule book of boxing and I don't think it's in there anywhere that you can bite his ear off if you don't get the ref to say what you want about his head-butting. He will defend himself and say, "I'm still good even though I'm doing things that are bad, but those bad things are not as bad as they could be and they're not as bad as other people I know who are worse than me. All the people I know, a lot of people just kill people they don't like. I just bite their ear off. I don't gouge their eyes out." Now that's a comical, extreme example but I guarantee you all of us are having that kind of mental gymnastics going on in our minds that we can come out of our sin and say, "I'm not a bad person."

Let me give you another one. People say this to me all the time. "Well, I know I did that bad thing but I am not a bad person." If you call them on what they do, "I know I did that bad thing. But there's a disconnect between my behavior, my words, my actions and my heart. My heart is good."

How many times have you heard this? "My heart is good. I've done some booboos, you know, bad things, but my heart is good." Here's what Jesus said in Mark Chapter 7 verse 21. "It is from within, out of the heart of man, that come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All of these evil things come from within, and those are things that defile people," that make them sinners. Therefore, all of those sinful things that you do, cannot be disconnected from who you are. That's why when people in their evangelism will bring up the law and ask them, like our friend, you know, Ray Comfort saying, "If you've lied, what does that make you? A liar." Right? "Oh, I don't like that." Well, you don't like that, but you cannot disconnect your behavior from your actions and the Bible says your heart is the fuel for all those things. Therefore we've got to see, if you were to examine the extent of your obedience, I understand you're not as bad as you could be, I understand you're not as bad as others, and I understand this false narrative in your mind that you keep thinking, "I can do bad things but it doesn't mean I'm a bad person." And your non-Christian friends will say that all day long.

And you need to realize what God is looking for in all of us is to put the laws of God up and say, you bit off a man's ear in the ring, that's a bad thing, you are a bad boxer. Right? Whatever the moral equivalent is in your life right now. You are bad and therefore bad people against the perfection of God, are supposed to say, "Have mercy on me, I'm a sinner." That's the biggest obstacle to the Gospel and we've got to understand it.

Well, this guy didn't get it. Verse 18 and 19, didn't process it. Verses 20 and 21, incredulous. I don't think I'm a sinner. Verses 22 through 27, he says, OK, let's slide you into the MRI and just show you. You won't look at the x-rays, here's a diagnostic test, an empirical, scientific test that will prove to you that you are not willing to have me as your Savior, you go home justified, your trusting in me, you don't want my work to be your benefit, let me prove it to you. Here's something you lack. Verse 22, "Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, then you will have treasure in heaven." Now, if you read that first line, the question on the table, verse 18, is inheriting eternal life. Isn't that the question? "How do I get to be in the kingdom, how do I not bear my guilt on judgment day, how do I go home justified?" And now he says, "Sell all you have and distribute to the poor and you will inherit eternal life." That's not what he says, "You will have treasure in heaven." And yet clearly he's answering the question of eternal life. And yet he gives us a command that is not to be confused between you earning salvation by doing good works. You don't give enough money and then finally God says, "Great, now you're saved." He's doing a diagnostic test. He's showing that this man in his heart, he's not willing to see himself as a sinner and trust in Jesus to be the solution to his sin. He is making clear though, if you were to give away your stuff, give to the poor, you can have treasure in heaven for that. We're not talking about treasure. Why are you bringing

that up?

I'm bringing it up to show you that that's not the qualification to get into heaven. But it is a diagnostic to show you're not getting into heaven because you don't have an unqualified faith in me. You've got qualifications. I know you're not going to do this. You're not going to leave your stuff behind and follow me. I want to tell you to do that so I can prove that to you. And sure enough, verse 23, he hears that, he becomes very sad. Why? Because he was extremely rich and, by the way, a violator of the Tenth Commandment. Because he is holding so tightly to the stuff, he must have been a man with a covetous, greedy heart. Because when it came to separating his fingers from that stuff he had, he wasn't willing. And therefore God calls him on his sin, not to mention that if he's standing before the good teacher, who truly is the good teacher, he's God in the flesh, if he tells you to give something up, you give it up. And number one on the list of the commands in Exodus 20 is, "You shall have no other gods before me." Apparently, your money is the god calling the shots in your life and I'm calling you to give it up and you're not willing to give it up. This guy is a lawbreaker from start to finish, command number one, command number ten, a lawbreaker. And I'm going to prove it to you. Leave your idols behind, you covetous man, follow me, I'm God, put my agenda before yours. He's not willing to do either one of those. He goes away sad because, "I've got a lot to give up" and Jesus says, "You know what, that's the problem with people that have a lot. The more they have it seems they're not willing to lay it on the altar." You have a precious son after years of infertility, you can't possibly think that obeying God would in any way impact that relationship, so you're not going to be like Abraham willing to sacrifice something, you're just not going to give it up. If you're rich in relationships and you're rich in popularity or you're rich in wealth, you're rich in health, whatever it is, you're not willing to lay it all on the altar. How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God. Why? Because everything goes on the altar when you say to God, "You're going to be my savior."

Those who heard it say, "I don't understand." Verse 26. "I've always thought that someone who is rich and blessed by God must be in with God and God really likes them and so they're tight with God, it would be easy for them to get into the kingdom. It looks like they're already in the kingdom. It's phase one of the kingdom, God's blessing those socks off that person." Well, no, you don't understand. It's impossible for anyone to give up anything but especially with the rich, it's like jamming their camel through the eye of a sewing needle. But, you know what, verse 27, "What's impossible with man is possible with God." God can get you to a place of unqualified faith. That's what you need to recognize is going on here. This is not work-salvation. This is you proving that you have an unqualified faith.

Number three. Recognize the call in this passage "For Unqualified Faith." No asterisk, nothing held back. "I'll follow you as long as..., I'll be a Christian and trust you to the extent that..., I'll do this as long as you can promise me this..., I want a guarantee for that..." If you say, like the tax collector on the Temple Mount, "Have mercy on me, a sinner." And then God says from the temple, "Great. Go build an ark." Your friends will think you're crazy." Then you say, "I'll do it." Or, "Hey, drop your nets and follow me and be an itinerate helper to the rabbi" then you'll do it. "Hey, you need to go and stand before kings and testify about me and you might even be imprisoned for it, Paul." You say, "I'll do it."

The test of your implicit faith in Christ is whether or not when he asks you to do something, you'll do it. That's why, for instance, God gave us this very simple sequence of events: Repent and be baptized. Think about this. You put your trust in Christ and you repent. You're saying, "I want you to be my savior. I am someone who needs mercy from God. I'm a sinner." And he says, "Great. Here comes my faithful and just attributes on display and I forgive you and cleanse you from all

unrighteousness. Now, here's the first test. Get out from the crowd and go be baptized." Test number one, as our little book says that you have to read when you get baptized here at Compass, it is the believer's first act of obedience. And some of you think that you are Christians because you prayed some prayer or you made some call to say, "God, please be a savior for me" and then when someone said, "Great, let's sign you up for the next baptism," You go, "Well... that's not for me. Scary. Don't want to get wet in front of people." This is exactly what Jesus is doing to this guy.

Apparently you don't understand. Jesus is saying, "If I'm going to be the one you trust for salvation, like a child trusting a parent to get in the car and lead him, you'd better be ready to do whatever I say." We call it around here "Any Thing, Any Place, Any Time." It is the fundamental expression of saving faith. "Christ, anything you ask, I'll do it. It may be hard. Any place you want to send me. Ok, I'm there, any time you want it to happen. It's not my calendar, it's yours." If you want to sit here today and say, "I've put my trust in Christ and I know I'm saved. But there are certain things I had to have him promise to give me, because I'm not willing to give those things up. I'll trust you to this extent. I'll do it as long as you don't take that from me." Then you don't understand saving faith. Oh, it's not the giving up of those things that saves you, it's you recognizing your need like the tax collector. Can you imagine the tax collector had Jesus walked up and said, "Oh great, John the Baptist is baptizing right over here. Hey, you're a sinner in need of mercy, God has just granted it to you. You've come home justified. Now, I want you to go out here and stand with a crazy man, John the Baptist, have a cup of locust with him, you know, check out his new duds and get baptized this afternoon." And to have that tax collector say, "Nah, not for me.

See, when Jesus said, "Sell all you have, give to the poor and follow me" that's not the call of everyone saying, "Well, I got to give away all my funds to be a Christian." But it is that very clear underscoring and highlighting of the fact that we come to Christ with an unqualified faith.

In Luke Chapter 9, some time ago, we looked at three would-be disciples. The first one looks exactly like the rich young ruler. Let me read it to you, Luke 9:57. "They were going along the road, and someone said to Christ, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'" That sounds like this guy saying, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" This guy has gone even a step further, "I'm going to follow you wherever you want I want to take me." And yet Jesus looks with his x-ray eyes right through this man's heart and knows that he's holding something back and his qualification is as long as I have material security. He sounds a lot like the rich young ruler. I want a lot of things and I got to keep those things and I'll give up some but not everything. Because he starts talking about his home. He starts talking about the facts that foxes have a place to hang out. "They got their dens, they got their holes, the bird of the air, they have nests, they have a place to raise their young, but right now the Son of Man has no where to lay his head." I don't have a home and I've ask you to follow me. That means that if you really wanted to follow me, you'd be willing even to go with me even if you didn't get what you think you've got to have. And I know it's a negative response because the rest of this is all about people saying, "I want to follow you but, no, I really don't. Not if those are the terms" because the next passage is about someone Jesus puts his finger in their chest and says, "Follow me." And the guy says, "Well, I got to go back and deal with my father, my father's aged and my family thinks it's important, I got to take care of him until he dies." Whatever the scenario was, either he had just died and he's got to bury him or whether he's elderly and he's got to see him to his final years, Jesus says, "Listen, let the dead bury their own dead," let those who are not alive to me take care of your dead father. Now that sounds so non-compassionate, doesn't it? Just let him do that. Oh, the rich young ruler? Does it sound compassionate for a guy to work so hard in these early years of his life and not enjoy a dime of his income. That sounds harsh. All he's trying to do in both of these situations is say, "Do you really follow me? Are you willing to trust me? Do you have an implicit faith in me or are you just saying, 'I want the insurance policy and I'm

willing to pay these dollars but not those dollars?" This is where people are. See, to be his disciple, you have to give up everything, we learn in Luke Chapter 14 verse 33. To follow him everything is laid on the altar. If you are Abraham, is your son on the altar, is your wife on the altar, is your job on the altar, is your home on the altar? These are things that Abraham gave up, all of them. He let him keep a lot of them. He gave a lot of them back, but God wanted Abraham to say, "Hey, my faith is to trust you for my forgiveness and the leadership in my life." The first guy needed material security. "If I'm not going to get a house out of it, I'm not sure I want to follow you." The second guy wanted relationships at home to be guaranteed, "Family expectations are more important than following you." And Christ said no. The last guy comes on the scene, you might remember in Luke 9 verses 61 and 62, and he says, "I'll follow you, but..." You know we're already off to a bad start with that sentence. Right? "I'll follow you, but I do have one stipulation. I got to go deal with my hometown. Let me go say farewell to all those in my hometown." That seems so reasonable, doesn't it? So reasonable. And Jesus says, I'm making a point here, clarifying to you that if you're not willing to not be accepted in your hometown, to not have the proper farewell in your hometown, you don't understand. "It's like someone putting his hand to the plough out in the field trying to plow and go forward and instead you're always looking over your shoulder." You're not going to be very good plowman if you do that. Matter of fact, let me put it this way, "You're not fit for the kingdom." It may sound harsh, but all that is, is trying to clarify where you stand with Christ and today if you're not willing, right now, as we end this service in just a minute and we bow our heads and we start saying, "OK Christ, I'm a sinner, I need your mercy."

He says, "Trust me like a child would trust a father." If I say, "We're going to drive the car this way." You say, "OK." If you're not willing to say Any Thing, Any Place, Any Time, you've got a question what kind of faith you have. You have faith with qualifications. That's a problem.

I'm grateful in this passage it doesn't end that way. I mean that's a tough truth but Jesus says something after Peter pipes in with, "Well, we've left everything to follow you." Which, by the way, wouldn't your response be if you're Christ, "Oh, come on Peter. You left a measly fishing job and in some small dinky house in Capernaum or whatever. I mean, come on, this guy's rich. This guy has a lot of wealth. This guy is on some ruling council in some synagogue. This guy's important. You left nothing compared to what I'm asking this guy to leave." And instead of saying that and chiding Peter and putting him in his place, he says what I'm so glad God wanted recorded in both Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. I mean here is this response that this story to the rich young ruler, Jesus's lesson after this thrice repeated story and encounter. "Hey, I want to tell you. There's nobody who's left a house," there's no one who has had their marriage affected or their relationship with their brothers or their parents or their children, had that negatively impact, "no one, who has left those things for the sake of the kingdom, who will not receive many times more in this time and the age to come eternal life."

Now there's a switch again. He's asked about the issue of eternal life. He ends with a statement about you're going to get eternal life. Peter you're going to get it. He was willing to leave these things behind. But instead of answering what he said in verse 22 about that'll earn you treasure in heaven after you die, now he starts talking about you're going to get treasure in this life.

Is this the Benny Hinn verse that we finally have the prosperity gospel here? What is this? Right? The answer is "No" because, of course, that's not what he's talking about. It's not that I have the deed to all these houses, but I guarantee you this, just like me, I've got access to lots of homes right now. I've said this, I've given illustration before, my house burns down, do I have anywhere to go? I think maybe you could find a place for me, Carlynn and Stephanie tonight, would you? Why? Because we're brothers in Christ. Right? You could say to me, "Yes" and I'd say the same to you.

And because you are in the Body of Christ, you have earned way more houses, way more siblings, way more parents, way more children than you could ever. And if you've been firm on trusting Christ and he's led you down a path that is meant sacrifice in areas of finances. Right? I mean, most of us have to say that, if you are a faithful giver, which all Christians are, right, we give to the Lord. Think about it, you'd be 10%, at least 10% richer. You could do a lot with that. I guarantee you, you give up that 10%, if you will, I just want to use round numbers here. That's what a tithe means, a tenth. I'm not talking about tithing right now, but I'm saying if you're a giver, let's just think about that, you don't think you have way more than that? I mean think about it. We've just given a lot of money to our brothers and sisters in Christ in Houston, the body of Christ, not just here at Compass in our locale, but we got people who are going to help us, who do help us and will help us. And you think you're poor because you're obedient to Christ? No, you're richer, even in this age, in this life, in this time. Not to mention that the kind of faith that you have to obey Christ in baptism, in giving, in saying Any Thing, Any Place, Any Time. Wow, that's the kind of faith that's saving faith and I guarantee you that kind of faith is the faith he's looking for like a child toward a parent. It's saving faith, you get eternal life. Not because you earn it through any act of obedience, but because you, like Peter, and unlike the rich young ruler, were willing to say, "You told me to do something, I'm going to do it. You're my savior, you're the king." I'm so glad Peter spoke up. That's so encouraging to have Christ answer the way he did. You could focus on the sacrifice of your faith that leaves everything to follow him or you can focus on the rewards that God graciously promised in Christ. I hope that your focus is in the right place. We don't do it for the rewards, I understand that, and in a sense, we don't even put our trust in Christ to get salvation. I mean, ultimately, we do it because it is the right thing because God is worthy of obedience. We do it because God asks us to do it. And yet how great it is to focus on the rewards of what God gives in this life and the next life. Talk about eternal life AND storing up treasure in heaven. You sit here today really losing nothing. As in the old line the missionary said, right, "You're no fool, you're not a fool, to give up when you can't keep," because you can't keep anything here, your life, your money, your wealth, your relationships, "to gain what you can't lose." And God definitely has a good deal on the table for us when it comes to our faith. And it all starts with the law of God. The law of God may be a negative topic in a lot of circles, but as the Bible says in Psalm 19, "The law of the Lord is perfect," and you know what that does? It "restores the soul." Oh, there's a step in between that. The law that is perfect makes me feel like a worm and a sinner, making me cry out for repentance, letting me then have the wonderful forgiveness and restoration in Christ and, you what that does? That restores my soul. The law that is perfect in restoring soul. The idea of me this morning, looking into the law of God and feeling miserable because I'm a sinner, allows me to cry out to God like I hope you cry out, not just your first encounter with the gospel, but every day as a Christian where you're saying, "I know I'm a sinner, have mercy on me," and, you know what, God says, "I will have mercy on you. You're my child, you trust me." That's refreshing. That's great, that's a law of the Lord that as James put it, provides liberty. It's that kind of law is one that we look at. It's more effectual hearer and doer of that word and God says, even when you now stand up and start walking in that law, that truth that I've given you, and you're blessed in your doing. What a blessed thing it is that Peter was obedient and I hope you are too, not to earn your salvation but to show your implicit faith in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. God help us as we wrap the service up to think about our stand with you in faith, I trust, knowing that we are sinners and because of that confession, you say you're faithful and righteous, you forgive. And we're grateful for that and yet God how scary it is to know that men like this rich young ruler can have everything together on the outside of his life. People can think, "Wow, how is that guy not right with God?" And yet he walks away like the Pharisee. He does not go home to his house justified. He goes home in worse shape than he started because now he's been confronted with Christ and he doesn't see his sin, he doesn't cry out for mercy and he doesn't receive forgiveness. God, I know it would be a way huge, gigantic prayer request but I pray that everyone



in this room, right now, would be able to say to you that they are sinners and they know it. There's no asterisk on it, there are no qualifications, they're willing to say it and they're willing to trust you fully, and say, "God, provide for me." We know how he provides, it's not like the Old Testament, it's not even like in the pages of the Gospels here before Christ went to the cross. We know exactly how God provided for our sin problem. And let everyone in this room have that implicit trust that's willing to say, as they raise their heads in a minute in prayer and say, "Yeah, Any Thing, Any Place, Any Time. I love Christ, he's my savior, he's my king." God, I pray that that would be the kind of refreshment we get every time we open the Word and see the law that leads us to Christ and grace that we need so desperately, but also refreshes us because we know we get the mercy and forgiveness that we cried out for. And it guides our steps and makes us an effectual doer. And one that we're blessed in are doing, even in the faulty obedience that we bring to you every day. So God encourage us today, I pray. Make us effective in our evangelism. And I pray even today, some people may be getting right with you right now, because of these words, because of this passage, because of your truth.

In Jesus name. Amen.