

## **No One Good Enough** **BY CHARLES HODGE**

**No one is ever good enough. Soak this in.** It solves most of our religious misunderstandings. Read, re-read Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Familiarity breeds contempt; therefore the familiar must be read more closely. In a sense, we must read the Bible as if it were the first time. Human tendency is to read the familiar with former conclusions, pet ideas, yea even idols. **We don't like thinking outside the box.**

### **Priorities**

In Bible study, we must start with basic understandings (in logic we call this a priori). God is God and man is not. God never says badness is better than goodness. Luke 18:9-14 is not a parable where Jesus gives precedent to a man "too bad" over a man "too good." Both were bad. One knew; the other did not. One repented; both needed to. Never rejoice with badness.

Read carefully. Both were Jews, people of God. Both were at God's temple at the same time doing the same thing (praying). Neither was an outsider, heathen, pagan, Gentile, alien. This parable does not tell sinners how to be saved. Tragically, modern religion titles this, "The Sinner's Prayer." This parable has nothing to do with sinners being converted. This parable focuses upon two Jews going to church -both lost! It is never good to be bad.

**No one is ever good enough.** Preachers fail at funerals trying to preach the dead into heaven. **Moderns have the idea we must be good enough to go to heaven. No one has been, will ever be! God never commanded us to be good enough.** Heaven cannot be bestowed, earned, bought, deserved. "But God would not send my precious mother to hell." God doesn't send people to hell. We go on our own. Has any deserved the right to go to heaven? Such thought eliminates grace. "But other religions have saints too!" Can any sinner be saved apart from Christ and grace? Christians are not saved because they are good enough. No man will ever make it to heaven on his own (Romans 3:23). Others hide behind the excuse, **"I am not good enough to go to church." No one is!**

**Christians are saved by faith, not perfection.**

We are all lost. When a ship sinks in the middle of the ocean, all drown .... those who cannot swim, those who can dog-paddle, Olympic champions. All of us are sinners lost in sin. We cannot save ourselves by ourselves.

### **Righteousness - Not Self-Righteousness**

The Pharisee was not condemned for righteousness. Most of us overestimate our spirituality. The apostles did (especially Peter). The Pharisee bragged; the publican begged! No one can brag about his worship or humility. Our goodness may not be goodness. Our goodness may become our badness. Only the good can be hypocrites. God and pride don't mix. God will have nothing to do with a proud man or a proud church. Pride shrinks our hearts while swelling our heads. The Pharisee prayed to himself, not God. Prayer starts with God.

Too many conclude, "Get out of the comparison business." No-no - no! We are to be holy like God (Matthew 5:48). Jesus had only one command, "Follow Me." Paul told us to follow him as he followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). We don't get to pick whom we compare. "I am just as good as those hypocrites down at church." Don't be proud of being bad. "I am not a hypocrite." Maybe so. But you are still a lost sinner. We all can be as wicked as the publican and as proud as the Pharisee. Sinners have sins; **Christians have sins!** Watch out! It is pathetic to look at those who are worse to make you feel better. Even criminals have a caste system. This parable was given to/for me.

**The answer is neither badness nor goodness; the answer is repentance.** One did; the other did not. We live in repentance. No one is too good to go to hell; no one is too bad to go to heaven. Two men went to church, prayed, returned home. One's prayer was not heard; he returned home unsaved. The other's prayer was heard; he returned home forgiven.

Did either know? Could it be some brethren cannot know they are saved because they are not good enough? (Emp. Mine, w.d.) **(Charles Hodge, Gospel Advocate, September 2006, pg. 48)**