

The Folly of Trying to Justify Yourself

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to the gospel of Luke 10:25 and following, since we've been screaming through this gospel at lightning-fast speed. I think we're going to be able to spend only a year in chapter 10, and we'll be able to move on to 11. There have been some great things we've been learning in chapter 10, and every chapter, so why go fast? I do want to preach [on] some other books, though, before I die, so I'm trying to go as fast as I can and [still] live with my conscience.

There are some who profess to believe one thing but they do another. Solomon speaks of one such individual in Proverbs 23:6–7, where he says: “Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, Or desire his delicacies; For as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, ‘Eat and drink!’ But his heart is not with you.” In that little proverb, we learn [that] there's [a] kind of person who has great food, sees you, and says, “Oh! You need to come over! Come over any time for dinner!”

You say, “OK,” and you show up sometime.

He says, “Oh, friend, welcome! Sit down! Sit down!” He kills the fatted calf and puts the big feast before you. But his heart isn't with you. All the while he's treating you [to this fine meal], he's [thinking] this: “Freeloader. How dare he come in here, stop by unannounced, and eat all my food? I mean, look how much he's got on his plate!” The man is consumed with selfishness. Solomon's point is [that] it's not what a man says that makes

him what he is, but as a man thinks within himself [that] is what he truly is. So, [Solomon] says, “Don’t eat the bread of a selfish man. Don’t go there. He will hate you for it. Though he offers it to you, and gladly, with a smile on his face, just tell him, ‘Oh, I just ate.’”

How many communist leaders have lived at a standard of living far above the common people? Think about it. Here they are, the leaders of communism, the ones promoting everything, [and they’re saying], “Everybody should be equal. Everybody should be the same. Everybody should live in the same kind of house, the same apartment, the same place. Equal, equal, no partiality,” but they themselves are living in their lavish houses in luxury, far above the standard of the average person. They deny with their lives what they promote with their lips. Communism is great, except not for them. It’s good for other people so [the leaders] can benefit off of other people’s sharing.

We all know of the rich and famous who squawk the loudest about saving the earth, and conserving energy, and not cutting down trees as they fly around in their private jets consuming the bulk of the resources, [and] living in multiple houses. Politicians are notorious for not saying what they believe. It would be so great if there [were] somebody who ran for office [who] had on his little signs in his front yard and on his billboard, “I am for this, and I am against this,” and just put it out there. I’d vote for him even if I disagreed [with his political stance]. At least the guy’s got some spine. No, instead, when [politicians] are around Christians, they’re Christians. When they’re around liberals, they’re liberals. When they’re around conservatives, they’re conservatives. They just do whatever. Their hearts are shifting sand. They don’t even have a soul.

There is a word for this kind of behavior, isn’t there? It’s hypocrisy, from the Greek word “hupokrites,” [meaning] “the two-faced person.” We could talk about a lot of examples of this in the world because it’s everywhere, but “judgment needs to begin with the household of God” [see 1 Peter 4:17]. All of us are hypocrites at times, betraying with our lives what we say we believe with our lips. Isn’t this what Paul was lamenting in Ro-

mans 7:15 [and 24], when he said: “I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. . . . Wretched man that I am!”? “I’m such a hypocrite,” is what he was saying. “Here I am, an apostle promoting the truth, and I’m living this way and speaking this [other] way.” It just [irked] him to no end. Every believer knows that he is a hypocrite, to a degree—in some areas more than others. Every believer just loves what Paul said there, because [the believer] is thinking, “Yeah, that’s me, too.”

We want our lives to match up with the truth. We want to be like Jesus, if we’re truly saved. Yet, we see this sin in our lives, and sin in our souls, so we keep confessing, and confessing, and striving, and striving, knowing that in this life we’re never going to match up perfectly with the Word of God. Yet there is another kind of religious hypocrite [who] is quite different. That person might be described as the “religious pretender,” the person who really isn’t saved at all, but [who] thinks he is. He says he’s saved, he claims all the right doctrines, he goes to church, he has a pretty good grasp of the Bible, but he doesn’t know God.

It’s this kind of individual that we encounter in our text this morning. Our text this morning is really an introduction to the parable of the Good Samaritan. [There is] this situation that leads to Jesus giving the parable, and usually when I teach in a parable, I just give the situation and jump into the parable, but as I was looking at this particular person [who] gave rise to the parable of the Good Samaritan, I thought, “There are some things here that are so good, we just [have] to look at them first.” So, that’s what we’re going to do this morning.

If you’ve been here [at Calvary Bible Church during the series on the Gospel of Luke], you know that in the beginning of Luke, Jesus prepares the seventy disciples, [and He] sends them out with power to preach the gospel. They go out, they return, [and] they tell Him how excited they are. Jesus then gives them some more instructions based [on] their comments [upon] coming back. Then comes [today’s] text in verse 25. We aren’t quite sure if Luke includes it here because it followed right after or whether it’s a totally different situation. There’s not really anything in this situation leading up to

the parable of the Good Samaritan that is in any of the other gospels, so we don't know if it's closely related, chronologically connected, or whether it's just a whole different incident at a different place and time, and Luke just puts it here as the next thing he wants to include. We don't know. But what we do know and what is clear, is that verses 25–29 contain the situation that leads to [Jesus giving] the parable of the Good Samaritan, so we have to know this and understand it clearly. I think it will benefit you next week by looking at this in a little deeper way. Follow along in your Bibles as we look at [Luke 10:]25–29: “And a lawyer stood up and put Him” that is, Jesus,

to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.” But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

From this portion of Luke, I want to point out three features in this dialogue [that] teach us about the importance of good questions and [the] good motives behind those questions. By looking at the questions and motives of the man in the text, we are going to learn not only good questions to ask, but his bad example of evil motives contained in good questions and how to avoid that, [and] how not to have religion as merely a cloak for evil intentions.

The first point is a question everyone should ask. Let's look at [Luke 10:]25: “And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’” The term “lawyer,” as the New American Standard Bible and the English Standard version and the New

King James version [have] it, is good, but it's not as clear as the NIV, which translates it "expert in the law." That is a more detailed translation, and more accurate in that it explains that this man [was] not just your typical lawyer dealing with the laws of Rome, this man [was] a lawyer in the sense that he [was] an expert in the Law of Moses. He spent his days reading, studying, interpreting, defending, [and] discussing interpretations and applications of the Law of Moses because the Jews at that time were under two law systems: they were under the law of Rome, which they had to obey, and the Law of Moses, which governed their Judaism and their Jewish society. They're like Christians today. We are under the law of Christ, and we are also under the governing authorities. We have to obey God within obeying the governing authorities. It's a very similar situation that we are [in] today.

The text says that this lawyer, this expert in the Law of Moses, stood up and put Jesus "to the test." This word "test" here is very significant because it's an intensive form of the word [meaning] "to test, to assess, to try, or to tempt." Luke specifically chooses this word to let us know [that] the guy is after Jesus. He's trying to get Him. It's the same word that Luke uses in Luke 4:12 to describe Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness. That's how intense it is. It's a very intense word. [The lawyer] wants to stump Jesus. He wants to humiliate Jesus. He wants to make Jesus look bad in the eyes of the crowd, and he cloaks his intentions with a very noble question. I mean, what better question could a person ask? "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is so good!

Picture it in your mind. In typical Jewish fashion, [Jesus] is sitting down [and] teaching this huge multitude that's sitting down. He's instructing them, talking to them, maybe giving them parables, and everybody is listening intently. All of a sudden, out of this crowd of seated people, up pops the lawyer, like a jack-in-the-box. He just pops up, and everybody's [wondering], "What's that guy want?" Then he asks what apparently is a noble question, with very kind motives, it appears, when he says, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

You're thinking, "Aww!"

He says it kindly, and softly, with a smile on his face. But Luke says he's trying to get Jesus, he's trying to catch Him, he's testing Him, in a very severe way. The crowd doesn't know it, and they're looking at the man, but Jesus knows it because He knows the man and the motives of his heart. The man is an expert in the Law of Moses—of course he knows the answer to that question. If the guy doesn't know how to get to heaven, and it's his profession to know what the law says, then he better get another profession. That's like the number one question of existence, right? How do I get to heaven?

There are times when you question people in an attempt to stump them. I've been to a lot of ordination councils and it's pretty fun because the guy [who is up for ordination] gets all boned up—he goes to seminary, he studies up—and then he goes, “OK, test me.”

He's sitting amongst a group of his peers, and [someone] says, “OK, tell us about the JEPD redactor theory,” and everybody in the crowd goes, “What?”

Then he starts telling you: “Well, it began with Julius Wellhausen,” and off he goes.

“Tell us about the Markan priority of the gospel and the Q-source theory. Tell [us] about the aseity of God.”

These are questions [people] throw out because [they're] thinking, “This guy's supposed to be an expert. This guy should know these things. He's been to graduate school, he's been trained significantly. He should know these things and therefore we [want] to see what kind of mettle he's made of, see if he has a good understanding of theology, the Bible, and practical ministry wisdom.” That's fine in that context, but it's not the case here [in our text]. Here, Jesus is teaching the crowd, everything is fine, [and] you've got this little apparently innocuous question, but lurking behind the question is evil. [This lawyer] is a prime example of the religious hypocrite—someone you don't want to be.

You who are in junior high or high school, let me just ask you this: Why do you come to church? Do you come because you want to come,

or because your parents make you come? If you do want to come, why do you want to come? Is it because you love God, because you love God's people, because you love learning about the Bible, and worshipping God corporately with the saints? Or do you come to church to look religious, [or] maybe because you have a crush on somebody and he attends here? Or maybe because your mom won't buy doughnuts and you can get them here for free? If you could sleep in on Sunday as long as you wanted, get up whenever you wanted, do whatever you wanted and there was no pressure from your mom, or [your] dad, or your friends, [or] from your church, would you be here?

The religious hypocrite pretends to be one thing, but in his heart he is another. You who are in college, you young adults, you YAMs [which stands for "young adult ministry"] (I think we should change it to "candied YAMs" maybe), why do you come to church? Are you involved in the ministry? Are you serving? You know what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7[:8]: it is better to be single because the person who is single is able to have undistracted devotion to the Lord. You are to be the major muscle group of the church because you don't have a wife, you don't have a husband, you don't have children. You are grown up, young, energetic, [and] you have time. Is that you? Or do you come because you're looking for a husband or a wife, because you want to be next to the person you hope will notice you and marry you? Or maybe because you've just grown up in the church, and it's been a habit for so long, and so many people have seen you go to church that if you quit going to church it would just be a grief [in] your life? Your parents would find out. Your friends would find out, and they'd ask you why, and then you'd have to say, "Hey, I'm just a hypocrite!"

Why are you here? What is in your heart? What's going on in there between you and the Lord? Maybe you're married with children, and maybe you're here because you want obedient children. "Yeah, honey, let's take the children to church and get them some morals." Maybe the real reason you're here is so that the church can fill in for your lack of parenting. Maybe you like the free babysitting for a couple of hours and just some peace of

mind. “I don’t care where I am, I’ll even listen to Jack preach at me if I just don’t have to deal with my kids for an hour.” This is your one time [during the week when] you can sit in the pew and just [relax].

Why are you here? Are you here because you want to fix your husband, or fix your wife, or you want to be noticed, you want other people to admire you? Is your love [for the Lord] confined to a little two-hour period on Sunday and the rest of the week you become what you really are? You whose children have moved out, you empty-nesters, you seniors who have life experience, wisdom, knowledge, resources, who are almost up at the same level as singles as far as undistracted devotion to the Lord, what are you doing? Why are you here? Are you here because you love the Lord, His people, His ministry? Does your life prove that or do you just say that and then do something else? Is church for you merely a place where you can hear your values promoted? You like it because, “Man, I’m all for God, country, and family!” and so you come because, “I like a place where there are moral people, upstanding citizens who don’t smoke, drink, cuss, [or] chew.” You come for that because you feel good in this environment, instead of coming here because you love the Lord, because this is the base of operations where you get your artillery to go into war the rest of the week.

Regardless of your age [or] your position in life, how would you finish this [sentence]: “I come to church. . .” faithfully? fairly regularly? sporadically? not very often? “because I . . .” [Why]? That is the question. That is the question you must answer before the Lord. If your answer is not right, you are [a] hypocrite like the man here in the text. By your mere presence [in church], you are saying, “I align myself with Christ, His people, His Word,” but if your heart isn’t right, it doesn’t bring glory to God.

Would it be OK with you if they installed a little camera in my office and played a little video here as you’re preparing [for the service], and there I was, [saying], “You know, I hate preaching. I hate the Bible, but it’s a job. After all, if I didn’t preach something they’d fire me, and what else would I do? It’s great only having to work a couple hours a week. I could just come in here and say something religious and pump people up and make

them feel good, and send them home. After all, it's no big deal. I just can't believe that these people go for it, this Christianity thing. Ha!" Would that be OK with you? Would it be OK with God? I would be the hypocrite. I would be un-saying with my heart what I professed with my mouth.

That's what's going on in this text [in Luke 10:25–29]. The lesson to learn from the lawyer is: Beware of self-serving, evil motives and hypocrisy, which drive your religious activities. Beware of being the white-washed tomb [see Matthew 23:27], the goat among the sheep [see Matthew 25:32–33], the tares among the wheat [see Matthew 13:24–43].

Jesus said, in Matthew 6:2, "Do not be like the hypocrite when you give." The plate is coming by, [and you yell], "Hello!" pull out a quarter, [and say], "wooo, pewww! Everybody look! Quarter in!"

It's like, "Whoa! That guy just gave a quarter! Cool!" Is that what you do?

[Or you think], "Oh, [a] person's sitting next to me, I'll just throw a check in and make sure it's open so he can see it." [It's for] \$8. Jesus says, "Don't do that."

In Matthew 6:5, Jesus says, "Do not be like the hypocrite when you pray."

[Somebody says], "Oh, let's pray, let's pray," [and some] guy lapses into Elizabethan English. "Oh, Lord, high and exalted, who sitteth enthroned among the glorious multitudes of Thy heavenly host! Beeth Thou. . ."

"Hello? What are you doing? I thought you were supposed to be talking to God. Are you talking to me or [to] God? Is this Shakespeare or is this you praying to God?" It's very easy to try to preach to others when you're praying. It's very easy to try to gain sympathy from others while you're praying, to have evil intentions when you're praying, to have any other motive than, "I need to talk with God." That is why Jesus says, "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you" [Matthew 6:6]. That's where the bulk of your prayer is to be done. If you come here and you pray in small groups [or wherever] and

you aren't doing the secret thing, then "the hypocrite" is the title that you wear before God because you're not doing the mandated thing.

In Matthew 6:16, Jesus says, "Do not be like the hypocrite when you fast." [Don't] walk around [with] a bunch of white powder on your face, and [a] long face, moaning [and holding your] stomach, "Ohhh!"

"What's wrong?"

"I'm fasting. I'm being religious."

It's like, "Oh, you are so godly! I can't believe you gave up your Cheerios today."

Don't do that, He says. "Don't be like the hypocrites," [Jesus says in] Matthew 7:5, "when you judge." [Don't say], "Oh, yeah, look at those people. Oh, so-and-so, they dressed like this, and they're like that," but you're not serving in the church; [and] oh, yeah, you're not sharing your faith; [and] oh, yeah, you're not reading your Bible; [and], oh, yeah, you're not giving; but everybody else is doing it wrong. You've got these big logs, these beams, sticking out of your own eye, and you're [saying], "Hey, let me help you with that speck" [see Matthew 7:3-5]. Jesus says, "Don't do that."

In Matthew 15:1-9, Jesus warns against being a hypocrite by neglecting to do good to others for the sake of your religion. That seems weird, doesn't it? But that's what was going on then. One of the things they did then is [they reasoned], "Well, I can't help this person out [because] everything I have has been devoted to God. I can't be giving. I can't be helping the poor. I can't be helping so-and-so because my time, my resources, my money, my things, have all been devoted to God, and of course, I can't be giving away what's God's. I'm a steward of it." It's a pretense for selfishness.

We're all guilty of these things, at times. No doubt. The person who says, "Oh, yeah, those Christians, they're all hypocrites," [is right]. We're all hypocrites. The question is: What happens when you discover your hypocrisy? The true Christian will see it, confess it, and ask God to help him turn from it. But the religious pretender will defend his righteousness. Don't do good with evil motives, like the lawyer in the text.

[The] second [point] is an answer you might not expect. Look at [Luke 10:]26: “And He said to him,” that is, Jesus said to the lawyer, ““What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”” What’s interesting here is [that] Jesus often did this. Whenever somebody tried to catch Jesus, snag Him, humiliate Him, make Him look bad, what He often did was turn the tables on [that person], and He answered [the person’s] question with another question. That’s what He does. The guy’s standing up, the whole crowd is looking at Jesus, and Jesus says, “Oh, expert in the law, you tell us.” Now everybody’s looking [at the lawyer]. The tables have turned. Jesus has now [taken] control. The hunted has become the hunter. The guy has to commit in front of the whole crowd. He has to tell the whole crowd, as the expert in the law, how to inherit eternal life.

Look at [Luke 10:]27: “And he answered, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” Here, the lawyer gives an *incredible* answer, a *perfect* answer. He summarizes here the two great commandments. “Whoa!” you think, “He got it right!” He quotes from Deuteronomy 6:4–5. [Do] you remember that spot in Deuteronomy? The first four chapters [of the book] summarize the history of Israel up to that point. Chapter 5 is a restatement of the Ten Commandments. [In] Chapter 6, [Moses] begins to describe the motives for why we are to obey all the commands in the rest of the book. He starts off in verse 4: “Hear, O Israel!” That word “hear” in the Hebrew is “*shama*.” “*Shama*, O Israel!—hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” That is the great motive for everything we are to do, isn’t it?

When you obey God, why do you obey God? [Is it] because you have to? [Is it] because it’s your duty? Or [is it] because you love God? Why does Jesus say, over and over again, “If you love Me, you will” what? “keep My commandments” [see John 14:15, 15:10]. Why? [It is] because love is always to be the motivation for obedience. Why do you think it just so

happens to be that in the book of Deuteronomy, which explains the law applied to life situations in such great detail, that the first thing said after the historical summary [and] the restatement of the Ten Commandments is: here is the motive for everything you do in the rest of the book, [which is to] love the Lord your God with everything in you and everything outside of you—with everything physical and everything spiritual. All obedience is to be done out of love [for] God and only out of love [for] God.

Why is that? Well, when you look at the Scriptures, you discover that “the person who loves God” is a synonym for a what? A believer. A Christian is a lover of God. A believer is one who loves God. If you are a lover of God, then you’re already saved, and you [obey] the law because you love the God who saved you. Love the Lord your God, and this is how: express that love. Moses does not say, “You shall earn your salvation by obeying the law with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” He says, “Love God inside and out, and then obey because of it.” It’s not, “Do the law so you can earn your salvation so God will love you,” it’s “love God because you are saved and then obey the law because you love Him.”

The Jews knew this. They knew the *shama*. They knew the *shama* inside and out, they recited it all the time, they knew it was the motive, and yet something happened in their minds. Something happened just like it does in the minds of many Christians, even in Bible-teaching churches today. They hear about salvation by grace, they know that they can’t work their way to heaven, but when something happens, the first thing they trust in to save them is what they do, not what Jesus does.

The lawyer [in our text] adds to the first great commandment the second great commandment: “And your neighbor as yourself” [Luke 10:27]. This comes from Leviticus 19:[17–18], [which] I’m going to read to you. I want you to notice a contrast that’s being made between hating and loving. Just take note of this because [it] comes into play later. Leviticus 19:17–18:

You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin be-

cause of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

In Matthew 22:39[-40], Jesus says that what the lawyer recited here are the two great commandments on which all the prophets and the law hang. All the commandments in the Old Testament, all the commandments in the New Testament can be summed up under two laws: Love God and love your neighbor. It's really love God directly, or love God indirectly by loving your neighbor. That's it. That's the great motive. The lawyer, though a hypocrite with evil motives, amazingly gives the most profound and correct answer. He was right. May this be a lesson to all of us: Right doctrine is necessary for, *but does not guarantee*, right heart motive. You can have right doctrine, and if it moves your heart, you will have right actions, but you can have right actions but not have right motive, and it nullifies the doctrine.

[Imagine] you go to the doctor because you're sick. The doctor says, "Here, take this medicine four times a day." So you take it [from him] and you put it in your medicine cabinet and you're still sick. You have what's right, you have the right medicine, it's right in your cabinet there.

You call up, [and say], "Doctor, I'm still sick."

"Yeah? Did you get that medicine?"

"Yes, I've got it."

"Hmm. You might have to come in again."

You don't tell him, "I'm not taking it."

Doctrine has to be taken to the heart [because] otherwise it means nothing.

Look at [Luke 10:]29. Jesus responds to the lawyer's correct answer: "And He said to him, 'You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.'" This is brilliant. Jesus says, "You got the answer right. OK, live up to that standard perfectly, and man, you're in. You've got [eternal] life." What's going on here? Has Jesus bought into the popular notion of the day that salvation could be earned by works? Has Jesus contradicted the

Apostle Paul, who said, “By the works of the law no one will be justified” [see Romans 3:20]? He tells the guy, “All you have to do is obey it, and you get into heaven.” But what are the chances of the lawyer actually doing that? Zero.

The lawyer could have been like the Apostle Paul, who, [in] Philippians 3:6, says, speaking of his Phariseeism, “Yeah, when I was a Pharisee, according to the law, I was found blameless. You want to talk about external obedience, man, I had it and I had it down pat. Blameless. I did everything I was supposed to do.” But there is one area in our lives, one unconquerable country, and what is that? [It is] the heart. If Moses had only said, “Love the Lord your God with your might,” we’d be in—some of us—because then we could do all the right things, like Paul did, and we could get to heaven. But then there’s that heart thing, that incurably wicked, desperate heart thing [see Jeremiah 17:9], and the mind thing, and the soul thing. No one can pass that test. Nobody.

What do you suppose would be the proper response [when] Jesus says, “OK, do this and you live”?

The lawyer should have said, “Well, Teacher, we all know we’re sinners, and no one is perfect, and no one can love God with all of his heart, mind, soul, and strength, and his neighbor as himself *all* the time, and therefore, that is not the way to eternal life because nobody can do that.”

Then Jesus would have said, “Well, then, believe in God and it will be reckoned to you as righteousness.” Period. Amazing, isn’t it? That would have been the right answer. Instead, the guy wants to justify himself; he wants to make himself look good. He’s trying to trick Jesus, and now Jesus is turning the tables on him.

[If] you’re sharing the gospel with somebody, an unbeliever, and you [ask] him: “Do you think you’re going to heaven?” What does he say? [Unbelievers] usually say something like, “I’ve never murdered anybody.” They always pull that one out, as if not murdering is the way to heaven. “I’ve never murdered anybody, I’ve certainly never robbed a bank, and I’m not a rapist. I’m a pretty good person.”

We look at that, and we [think], “Oh! That person is deceived into thinking that salvation is by works,” but a lot of times [if] you ask a religious person, or a regular churchgoer, “Are you a Christian? Are you really saved?” they [say], “What? Listen, I come to church faithfully. I read my Bible. I go to Bible study. I’m serving in the children’s ministry.” You know what? The answer is identical. Why? [It is] because if someone ever questions your salvation and the first place your mind runs to is what you do, you’re not a Christian. If your mind runs to your religious deeds, your church attendance, your parents, your heritage, or anything else other than the one thing that makes you a Christian, you’re lost. You’re lost.

[If you are asked], “Are you a Christian?” Your mind [should] immediately run to Jesus, and [should] say [something like], “I know I’m a Christian because Jesus died on the cross for me. I am a sinner and I have placed my faith in Him. I believe that He rose from the dead.” If you don’t have some sort of summary of that gospel message, you’re lost. Your life is hypocrisy before God because you’re saying you’re a Christian when in your mind you’re not because what you’re really trusting in—though you may have doctrine, though you may be able to utter the gospel—[is] *you* as assurance of your salvation rather than Jesus. You need to believe, trust, rely on the Lord Jesus Christ, His death, His burial, His resurrection to save you. Period. If your mind runs to you and your good works, and what you’ve done, or what you’ve not done, or what you’ve sacrificed, or anything else “you,” you’ve missed it. You’ve missed it. You add your good works to the good gospel and you fall from grace. You’re out of reach.

[The] third [point is] a motive you should not possess. Look at [Luke 10]:29. The [verse] says, “But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” Here, Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gives us a little glimpse into the man’s heart because Luke tells us [something] the crowd could not see but [something] Jesus could since He is God: [the lawyer was] “wishing to justify himself.” Why would anybody want to justify himself if he just gave the correct answer? [It is] because his conscience was bothering him. Well, why would his conscience be bothering him? He

just quoted the two great commands, and Jesus just said, “Do this and you will live.” [But] then, [the lawyer’s] mind remembers the widow’s houses that he’s devoured, the people he has passed by, the people he hasn’t loved like he should have, like he loves himself, which is a lot. We know that because of the parable that follows.

The Greek word translated “justify” means “to pronounce oneself to be righteous, to declare to be innocent, to acquit someone of a crime.” He wants to declare himself, show himself, prove himself to be righteous before Jesus. Why? [It is] because he knows in his heart that he has not loved his neighbor as himself. He knows it, and Jesus knows it, and we’re going to see by the medicine Jesus gives [in] next week[’s text that] it is very likely [that] the lawyer remembered a time when he didn’t show mercy to someone, or maybe he was right [at that time] not showing mercy to somebody.

How could he justify that? This is how he justifies that. Do you remember when we looked at Leviticus 19:17–18? We looked at those verses, and I said, “Take note of the hate/love contrast.” What the [Jews] did is justify their hatred toward non-Jews by saying, “Well, Moses says in the law that we are to not hate our fellow countrymen. Therefore, we are to only hate our non-countrymen.” The word “countrymen” there means “somebody who is your relative, a blood relative, somebody of your nationality.” If you are a Jew, you can’t hate other Jews, but you can hate non-Jews. You can cheat them, you can swindle them, you can do whatever you want to them because, after all, they’re just Gentile dogs.

This was the prevailing attitude of a lot of the Jewish leaders at the time. Jesus actually addresses [this attitude] in multiple instances in the gospel (which we don’t have time to go into). The Jewish leaders, many of them, took this [mandate in Leviticus] as an inference to act in an evil way toward those who were non-Jews. Of course, they ignored the context of the law, which was to instruct Jews how to function with other Jews in a Jewish society. [Moses] says “[don’t hate] your fellow countrymen,” but [he] never says, “hate Gentiles.” As a matter of fact, the law contained a

whole bunch of laws about the foreigner and how to treat him in a *loving* way.

Jesus actually addresses this faulty interpretation in Matthew 5:43–48 in the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to what He says: "You have heard that it was said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" That was the prevailing mindset among the Jewish leaders—hate your enemy, [meaning] all non-Jews. Verse[s] 44[-48 go on to say]:

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus says you are to love everyone, and the reason you are to love everyone is because your Father loves everyone, and you are to be examples [of], or be like, your Father.

The lawyer [in Luke 10:25–29], having bought in to the "love Jews, hate non-Jews" mentality, [has] his conscience going off because there was debate [about this prevailing attitude]. There were some Jews who said, "No, we need to love everybody." Why? Well, because if you go back, way back, to Genesis 12 and the Abrahamic covenant, [it] says, "In Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed" [see Genesis 18:18]. [Also] the bulk of the Messiah texts, like in Isaiah 9:2, [which says] there will come one who is a light to the Gentiles, [and] Isaiah 46, 49, they all talk about the suffering servant who comes as a light to the nations, a light to the Gentiles, to offer salvation to everyone. So how could you say I have to hate those people when God is reaching out to them and saving them? You can go to

the Old Testament and read stories of Jonah [and] all the Ninevites, who were all Gentiles, [and] God loved them.

So how could you justify that interpretation? Well, some did, and you know what? It was the prevailing interpretation. This lawyer was thinking to himself like this, “OK, what I’m going to do is I am going to ask Jesus one final question here, and that question is: Who is my neighbor? If Jesus says, ‘everyone,’ He will have just turned Himself against the bulk of Jewish leaders. Mwaa haa haa haa haa. If He says, ‘Just Jews,’ then my conscience will be clear.”

The Jews were privileged, weren’t they? Paul says it, “What is the advantage of being a Jew?” in Romans 3, “Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God” [see Romans 3:1–3]. What does Jesus tell the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4? You remember that discussion. She comes to him, and says, “Teacher, let me ask you this: Our people, Samaritans, say that Mount Gerizim is the place where people ought to worship, but you people, you Jews, say that Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship.”

Do you remember what Jesus said? “Listen, salvation is from the Jews. Let’s just get that straight” [see John 4:22]. Abraham was a Jew, the Jews had the law, the Jews had the prophets, the Jewish Messiah is a Jew. Salvation is from the Jews. But, does that mean they’re better than everyone else? No. Does that mean that they’re smarter, or they’re better looking? No. Did God choose them because they were this incredible group of godly people? No. Deuteronomy 7:7–8 tells us why God chose Israel: “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you.” That’s why. It’s why everybody gets saved: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” [see John 3:16]. We all know it.

This [lawyer] didn’t know it, [even though he was] an expert in the law. He knew all those texts. He knew Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6, and 52:10, [which says]: “The Lord has bared His holy arm In the sight of *all the nations*,

That *all the ends of the earth* may see The salvation of our God” [emphasis added]. He knew that, but he was trying to justify hating them.

You know what? It is this very kind of mindset that has led to thousands being slaughtered. [It is a] mindset that [says] I am better than you, I’m the chosen person, or I’m the superior race. [It is] more commonly [known] today [as] the evolutionary mindset, that [says that] the reason we have different skin color, and the reason we have [different] color hair and facial features or whatever is because we have all evolved out of different puddles of primordial slime at different times, [and concludes that] therefore I am better than you, I’m smarter than you, you’re just an animal in evolution, and I am the superior race. This is what Hitler believed, right? This is why he killed the Jews—because his race was “better.”

The lawyer, having adopted this [mindset], can go, “I have to go out in the world, [but] how often [will I] run into somebody in the world [who] is actually a blood relative in need?” Well, everyone [is]. [It’s a] trick question. Unless you evolved from primordial slime, we’re all descendants of Adam and Eve. If you’re Asian, black, white, Indian, Armenian, whatever—a mutt—you are a blood relative of every other human being in the world, for God only created one race—the human race. Yes, He dispersed them at the Tower of Babel [see Genesis 11:9], but we’re all blood relatives. That is the Christian view. That is the biblical view. We are all created in the image of God, therefore we all have inherent value. And so, this [lawyer], trying to justify himself, says, “Oh, but who is my neighbor?” [see Luke 10:29]. [Do] you know what Jesus says? Well, you’ll have to come back next week [to find out].

I want to leave you today with [three] thoughts. [First, when] you leave here today, ask yourself this: “Do I know how to inherit eternal life?” That is the question of the ages. Now, if you know the answer to the question, then the [second] question that relates to it is: Do you *have* eternal life? Have you repented of your sins because you know you’re a helpless, hopeless sinner, that you deserve to be judged by a holy God, that you cannot save yourself, you cannot be good enough, and so you have placed your faith in

Jesus Christ and Him crucified [see 1 Corinthians 2:2], and that alone to save you? Have you done that?

[Third], and related to that is: Does your life prove it? Do you, professing that you are a believer, live a life whose motives match up with your profession? Or, are you just a Christian in name only, and [on] Sunday morning only? What is in your heart? See, as believers, we need to strive to have our thoughts, motives, hearts, minds, and actions all line up with the Word of God. When we see in our lives [that] there is hypocrisy there, then we need to keep confessing that, and again we're never going to be perfect, but we keep confessing it, we keep asking God for help, and we keep pressing on toward the mark [see Philippians 3:14]. We don't defend our righteousness because we're not [righteous]. We're only righteous because we're in Christ, not because we are righteous. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for this text. Father, what a great introduction to a grand-slam parable, which, Lord willing, we will be able to look at next week. Father, I pray for those here who don't know You, people who maybe are religious, and maybe have thought themselves to be Christians but realize they have been trusting in their good works, and in their minds they flee to their good deeds when their salvation is in question. Father, if that is the case, I pray right now [that] they turn their eyes upon Jesus, and look full into His marvelous face, and to trust Him, and His death on the cross alone to save them. For the rest of us, may we regularly examine our heart motives so that we don't become like this poor expert in the law in the text, who had all the answers, even the right answers, but was so far from You. Father, help us not to have a deceived religion, Father, [of] good deeds and sound doctrine with a bad heart. Help us to have a heart that both believes and moves us to do what You would have us to do out of love so that You might be glorified and that we might have the joy [that] You promised us. Father, we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

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