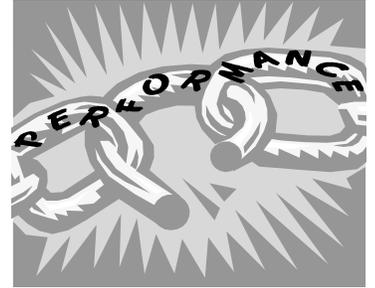


Liberating Grace and The Performance Treadmill

Pastor David T. Holt



The Story of Bill

Bill was raised in a very active, church-going family. He knew that his parents loved him, but the only times he felt their acceptance was when his grades were high and his performance on the basketball court excelled. Bill's father was an ex-basketball star and put much pressure on Bill to succeed in this sport. Bill desperately wanted to please his dad, and thus worked hard to become very good at basketball. Even when he had an excellent game it seemed that his dad could only bring attention to the mistakes he made.

Bill struggled similarly in his Christian faith. He received Christ at an early age and always tried hard to live just as God wanted him to. However, he never felt as if he did enough for God. His church often emphasized the duties a "good Christian" should be involved in. As hard as Bill tried, there were always areas that were falling short of the perfect standard he believed the Bible spoke of. It seemed the harder Bill tried to obey and please God, the more he became anxious and uptight about his every move. He would often agonize over decisions because he wanted to be certain he did the perfect thing. He felt as if he were on a treadmill, never able to do enough for God or others.

Things finally came to a head for Bill one Sunday afternoon. The night before, Bill had missed a crucial shot in his team's championship game. His father had not spoken to him since. At church that day the pastor preached a very hard message on prayer. He said every Christian should spend at least an hour a day in prayer. Bill had not prayed in weeks. When Bill got home he went to his room, buried his head in his pillow, and wept. He felt hopeless. He decided that day that he could no longer be a Christian because of the failure he thought he was to God and to his family. He even considered ending his life.

Can you relate to Bill in some ways? Do you feel you are on a performance treadmill, never able to do enough? If so, there is hope. The only way off of the performance treadmill is through the liberating grace of God!

Definition and Description of the Problem

Bill's story is a tragedy that is not uncommon today. In a society that stresses one's performance so much, it is very easy for Christians to get caught up in the "performance treadmill." This pamphlet will examine the nature, causes, signs, and solution to this problem.

The performance treadmill is where a Christian seeks to gain his¹ security and/or significance from his Christian behavior. The performance person feels, "I must be adequate (i.e., perform up to a certain standard) in order to feel good about myself or for God to accept me." He

has bought into Satan's lie that his personhood equals his performance plus other people's opinion of him.

Some would call this the sin of perfectionism - an allegiance to, and preoccupation with, becoming perfect. The perfectionist is zealous for pleasing God and for working diligently toward that end, but it is not from an abundant heart of joy in the Lord. Rather, it is done in order to feel good about oneself. Bill was seeking to get his personal worth from what he did **for** God (and for his father) rather than from who he was **in** Christ.

Security and Significance

Dr. Larry Crabb, a noted Christian author, teaches that the two deepest needs in all of us is for security and significance. **Security** is the need to be loved just for who we are. This love does not have to be earned, and therefore cannot be lost. The second need is for **significance**. This is the need to feel important, worthwhile, and capable. It is to believe that one's life makes a difference, that one is more than just a social-security number. Some refer to this need as self-esteem, self-worth, or self-respect.

Both security and significance are legitimate, God-given needs. Therefore, the problem is not in the need for security and significance. Rather, the problem comes when we seek to have these needs met apart from God. True security and significance can only be met by God, as we understand and receive His liberating grace.

Causes of the Performance Treadmill

The most common cause of the performance treadmill is a **performance-based family**. God has designed the home to be the primary environment for the formation of our values and self-esteem. Obviously this can work to a child's advantage or disadvantage.

A performance-oriented family is one that communicates love, value, and acceptance in response to the child's success in living up to certain expectations or standards. When the child fails in some way (from spilling his milk to not making straight A's), his worth is not reassured but rather put down. In addition, a lack of affirmation is common in a performance family. The only time the child is affirmed (if he is) is when his behavior has been good. This results in the child feeling either defective or worthwhile based on his behavior. Consequently, he views his identity as synonymous with his behavior. For

xample, when Bill did not perform well at basketball, he felt ashamed of himself and rejected by his father. Bill thus concluded that he was a deficient person.

This same performance orientation easily gets transferred to one's Christian life. People who are raised in a very performance-oriented family often approach their relationship with God from the same performance base. If this person has to earn **security** and **significance** from his parents through his performance, he will often naturally seek his identity as a Christian from his behavior. The only difference now is the nature of the behaviors. Bible study, prayer, witnessing, church attendance, tithing, etc., become his source of value now. He will often perform these things in order to gain approval from God and/or from other people.

A second cause of the performance treadmill is **wrong theology** and **imbalanced instruction**. Most evangelical churches do a good job of teaching a non-Christian that he is a sinner in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23), that his works can never make him right before a holy God (Romans 3-4), and that only by God's grace can he be saved (see Ephesians 2:8-9). However, once this person becomes a Christian, the focus is largely upon what he should now **do** for God. We tell him he must read his Bible, pray, attend church, witness, disciple others, etc. Yet, he often has very little foundation upon which to base these works. Certainly a growing Christian needs to read the Bible, pray, etc., but these works must be balanced with solid teaching concerning who God is and who the Christian is in Christ. Grace is rarely emphasized in many churches after one becomes a Christian. In essence we say to this person: "What was begun by the Spirit must now be perfected by the flesh" (see Galatians 3:3).

A third cause, closely related to the second, is the **"social face"** in many churches and Christian environments. The social face is the positive image so many try to project around others. There is not the freedom to be transparent about one's struggles and failures because many feel they have to always look "spiritual" to others. Being imperfect is tantamount to being unspiritual in this type of atmosphere. Therefore, the performance Christian will hide behind the mask of "everything is going great; praise the Lord," even when he is struggling inside. If he reveals his struggles, he is not sure if other Christians will still accept him.

Signs of the Performance Treadmill

What are some signs that we might be on the performance treadmill? Obviously, not everyone will demonstrate the exact same symptoms, but there are some common threads we can look for.

Performance Christians often live with great **fear**. Fear is an anticipation of impending danger and comparative helplessness. The Bible says that fear involves punishment (1 John 4:18). The performance Christian fears the punishment of God for disobedience and failure. More subtly though, he may fear the removal of God's love, acceptance, or favor. Because his **security** and **significance** depend on his behavior, he is fearful of what might happen when that behavior doesn't quite measure up to the level he believes it should. He may even fear the rejection of other Christians. Fear is why Bill regularly felt he could never do enough for God.

Another symptom is extreme **busyness**. The performance person is often very busy, especially doing good "Christian" things. He tends to crowd his life with activity so that he can feel good about himself. Idle moments cause him to face himself and often bring up his insecurities. Thus, he has to fill these idle moments with the very things (i.e., works for God) that give him a sense of importance. These works make him feel like he really matters to God.

The performance Christian is often busy helping others. When he helps someone he feels important, needed, and valuable. His need for **significance** is temporarily met. Consequently, he finds it very difficult to say "no" to opportunities to serve. Unfortunately, this is the very person the church often calls upon to help, consequently perpetuating the problem for the performance Christian.

Another common symptom is a **lack of transparency**. I introduced this earlier as the "social face." This is where the person feels he must always maintain a victorious Christian image. Even when he is hurting and struggling, he still tells people he is doing fine. He often uses spiritual clichés to cover over his pain. Once again, the issues of **security** and **significance** provide insight here. In this case the security and significance are being sought from people. When a person is getting his fullness in life from other people perceiving him as "Mr. Spiritual," he must maintain that image and never let anyone see him otherwise.

In addition, **legalism** often characterizes the performance Christian. Legalism is strong reliance on an overly-rigid adherence to rules governing behavior. The motivation behind legalism is often approval-seeking. In other words, the person feels safe following clear-cut rules of Christian conduct. The standards of success are neatly laid out for him, which is much easier than intimately seeking the Lord over what to do.

However, legalism tends to have a double bind. The first bind is that **if** the person **does not** adhere to the rules, he has a hard time accepting himself and certainly doesn't feel God's acceptance. He comes under much guilt and is extremely hard on himself for his lack of performance. He may even experience negative self-talk ("You jerk" or "You are so dumb to do that"). The second bind is that **if** he **does** perfectly obey the rules, he has just done what was required of him. He experiences very little fulfillment even in this obedience. He may develop a self-righteous attitude (like the Pharisees) due to his obedience. Furthermore, he often raises the standard, and the cycle continues over and over and over.

This legalism can lead to a **judgmental attitude**. The performance Christian tends to judge others just as harshly as he has judged himself. When he sees other Christians doing things that he feels are not right, he quickly concludes that they are in sin. When he sees other Christians having a good time doing something which he perceives as "non-spiritual," he concludes that these Christians are not taking their Christian lives seriously enough.

Can you relate to some or all of this? I sure can. I know first-hand what it is like to be on the performance treadmill. I lived it for many years. There is not much joy when on the performance treadmill.

But thank God there is joy, hope, and freedom available. Jesus said, *"Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me... you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light"* (Matthew 11:28-30).² Is the yoke you are carrying easy? Is your load light or heavy? Doesn't rest for your soul sound inviting?! **The answer for the performance treadmill is found in the liberating grace of God.** Let's get off the treadmill and onto solid ground.

Liberating Grace

The foundational truth in God's Word that can set you free from the performance treadmill is this: **God loves, accepts, and values you on the basis of Christ's performance at the cross and not on the basis of your performance!** The liberating message of grace is that we cannot cause God to love us more with good works, and God will not love us less when we sin. God says, *"I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness"* (Jeremiah 31:3). Grace means that God loves us despite our imperfections and shortcomings and failures. In addition, for the Christian, our identity in Christ is a settled issue. Does this mean that it doesn't matter how we live? No, it doesn't mean our behavior doesn't matter. But our behavior will not change God's love for us nor does it change our identity in Christ. In addition, it is His love and grace that motivates us to live a life pleasing to God. More on that later.

To understand God's grace we need to begin with what took place at salvation. Neil Anderson says, "Being a Christian is not just a matter of getting something; it's a matter of being someone" (*Victory Over the Darkness*, p. 43). *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). When a person places his faith in Christ, he is justified. Justification means that God gives us the righteousness of Christ (Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21) as a gift. This righteousness means that we are completely accepted by God! The Christian is in right standing with God. Colossians 1:22 says that we are *"holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation."* Therefore, the Christian is already **secure** and **significant** in Christ! And this **security** and **significance** is not based on anything we do. It is all based upon what Christ has done for us. **Christianity is not a religion spelled DO. Rather, it is a relationship spelled DONE! Now, my value is based on Christ's performance and what God says about me!**

Just as works could not earn our salvation, neither can works earn for us **security** and **significance** before God. I John 4:16-18 tells us that *"God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God... There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love."* Only God has this perfect love. His love for us is unconditional and everlasting (Jeremiah 31:3). Therefore, it remains the same regardless of our performance. **We cannot do anything good to cause God to love us more, and we cannot do anything bad to cause God to love us less.** If you are a parent, you can probably relate to this kind of love. God wants us to live in His love, meaning that it is a daily source of reassurance, comfort, and power for us.

Certainly God wants us to obey Him, but He does not want us to obey Him for the purpose of gaining His love (i.e., security). God's unconditional love drives out fear, because He is interested primarily in our relationship with Him and not in giving us a list of rules to obey. Jesus said that the **most** important commandment is to *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"* (Mark 12:30).

What about Sin?

With all of this discussion about God loving us no matter what we do, does it matter what we do? Yes, it does! Sin is a big deal. God hates sin. He hates sin because of what it does to our fellowship with Him. When we sin, He still loves us, but He is sad that we sought to get our needs met apart from Him. Though God may not be pleased with our behavior at times, He still loves us and accepts us. As a parent, when my children disobey, I do address that behavior with appropriate discipline, and I also seek to reaffirm my unconditional love for them. I do not want them to ever think that my love is conditional upon their performance.

It is God's love and desire for closeness with us that should draw us away from our sin. Jesus said, *"If you love Me, you will obey My commands"* (John 14:15). It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance (see Romans 2:4).

When we do fail and sincerely repent of our sin, then He is eager to forgive and pour out His grace upon us (see Luke 15). We do not have to walk on pins and needles because *"where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom"* (2 Corinthians 3:17). We need to learn to see sin as God does. As our intimacy with God increases, we will grow to hate sin and long for holiness. This is because we don't want anything to get in the way of that closeness with God. We obey as an expression of gratitude to God and not to gain something that we do not already have.

What about Matthew 5:48?

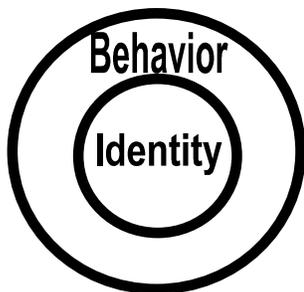
Confusion often results from passages like Matthew 5:48, *"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly father is perfect."* This seems to support the mentality of the performance Christian to strive with all he has in order to be perfect. However, this verse is in the context of a discussion about the kingdom of God. Certainly perfection is required for entrance into God's kingdom. Jesus said this to show us that we are unable on our own to be perfect. The chief question is, "How do we acquire this perfection?" We acquire it through faith in Christ and not through our faltering attempts at being perfect. When we trust in Christ alone for our salvation, we are justified (declared righteous)!

Others might argue that Christians are called to live a holy life, and we should not discourage these performance Christians from trying their hardest to accomplish this. After all, don't we need more Christians who seek to live right before God? Certainly we do need more obedient Christians. The Bible does teach us to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:16) and to seek to increasingly please God in thought, word, and deed. However, the key issue is **motive**. The only proper motive for Christian works is the glory of God. Obeying and serving God needs to come as a result

of love for God and gratitude for what Jesus has done for us at the cross, and not in order to impress God or others. *"For Christ's love compels us"* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

What about Striving?

The Biblical writers do speak at times of striving to move forward and please God. However, it is never to acquire some level of identity that we do not already have. Furthermore, the striving spoken of is always to be done in the power that God supplies. Paul said in Colossians 1:29, *"I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me"* (New American Standard). Paul did not strive to obey God in order to gain fullness. He already knew his fullness in Christ, and that is why he obeyed.



The bottom line is that the Bible separates our identity from our behavior. We should behave based upon who we are in Christ and not in order to change or improve our identity. Christian behavior, whether good or bad, cannot change our position (identity) in Christ, nor can it give us greater security or significance with God. I obey God because of His unconditional love for me and because I am already secure and significant in Him.

The book of Ephesians is a wonderful book for communicating this great truth of who we are in Christ. Paul used the phrase *"in Christ"* 130 times in his 13 epistles. He spent the first three chapters of Ephesians addressing the believers' identity in Christ. He even prayed for them to grasp these amazing truths about their identity (1:15-23). He told them they were *"seated with Christ in the heavenly realms"* (2:6). Then in chapter four he admonished them to *"walk in a manner worthy of the Lord"* (4:1; New American Standard). Finally, only after being seated with Christ (chapters 1-3) and walking worthy of the Lord (chapter 4) were they ready to *"stand firm against the schemes of the devil"* (chapter 6). Romans 5:1-2 tells us that part of what we stand in is grace: *"Since we have been justified by faith... gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand."* This same progression (sit, walk, stand) needs to be our experience. Many Christians try to walk and stand before they learn to be seated. Being seated with Christ means you relax in what God has done for you in Christ. You soak it in. You receive it. You believe it. You rest in what God has done for you. And you stop trying to add to it by your works. Then from that solid base of security and significance, you can walk and stand.

Abusing Grace?

Some will argue that an emphasis on grace is dangerous because it may result in Christians getting lazy and abusing grace. In other words, if we teach about God's

unconditional love and His grace, then some will take that as license to sin or be lazy about the things of God. This is a possibility. However, if it occurs, it simply shows that the person really did not understand true grace. The Apostle Paul understood this danger when he posed the question, *"Shall we sin that grace may increase?"* (Romans 6:1). *"May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it"* (Romans 6:2). **When God's unconditional love and liberating grace are properly understood, this very teaching will lead to a greater desire to live a life holy and pleasing to God.** *"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good"* (Titus 2:11-14). Notice here that grace teaches us to live holy and even be zealous for good works. Therefore, how do we make sure we properly understand and experience this liberating grace?

Practical Suggestions

I want to conclude by giving you some practical suggestions in walking out this truth about liberating grace.

1. **Grow in grace.** *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 3:18). Growing in grace means that we are increasingly understanding and applying the grace of God to our lives. 2 Timothy 2:1 even says to *"be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* Growth takes time. Therefore, we must realize that healing from the past will be a slow process. If you have lived a long time under a performance trap, it may take time to get free from it. Sometimes God does a miraculous work of healing to set people free, while other times He heals through a longer process. In addition to growth being a process, growing in grace means that we need to read our Bibles in order to get to know God better and not just to learn the "do's" and "don'ts" of the Christian life. When you read God's Word, ask yourself: What does this passage teach me about who God is? What does this teach me about who I am in Christ? Finally, in order to grow in grace, I suggest reading some excellent books such as: Tired of Trying to Measure Up by Jeff VanVonderen; Victory Over The Darkness & Bondage Breaker by Neil Anderson; Grace Awakening by Chuck Swindoll; Transforming Grace by Jerry Bridges; Released From Shame by Sandra Wilson; Healing for Damaged Emotions & Freedom From the Performance Trap by David Seamands; and The Search for Significance by Robert McGee.
2. **Renew your mind.** *"Be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:2). Neil Anderson says, "No person can consistently behave in a way that's inconsistent with the way he perceives himself" (Victory Over The Darkness, p.43) mind is to affirm to yourself your identity in Christ. This is not merely the power of positive thinking. Instead, it is the power of truth believing. Take a book like Victory Over The Darkness

and daily repeat to yourself the Scriptures in that book about your identity in Christ. I am assuming here that you are in Christ. If you are not, then you need to receive Christ. Another way to renew your mind is to replace old messages with new ones. For example, there will be times when you are thinking about God in a way that is due to how your earthly father treated you. In such cases, renewing the mind involves saying, "God is not like my dad, and I refuse to believe that He is harsh and doesn't love me." When you realize you are having thoughts about God ("He is not a loving God.") or yourself ("I will never amount to anything.") that are not consistent with the truth of God's Word, then you must choose to believe what God says. Replace those lies with truth. Paul said, "*we take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). We overcome him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11). The word of our testimony can certainly include the speaking of truths about God and about who we are in Christ.

3. **Receive God's love and grace, even when you sin.** Since you cannot earn God's love, quit trying to. Just receive it! Take time right now to pray. Open up your hands as a symbol of receiving. Say to God: "Thank You that You love me and accept me in Christ, just the way I am. I receive by faith Your love and grace. I choose to believe what You say about me." When we do sin and fall short of God's holiness (which we all do), rather than punish ourselves we need to admit to God our sin and turn from it. When we do this, we can know on the basis of 1 John 1:9 ("*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*") that God has forgiven us. If we do not accept this forgiveness and move on, then we are saying to God that the cross is not sufficient. When we sin or fall short of what we believe God wants us to do, the answer is not to be hard on ourselves, but rather to come to the cross for mercy, grace, and power. Why punish ourselves when Jesus was already punished for us? If certain discipline is necessary, let God bring that, for "*He disciplines those whom He loves*" (Hebrews 12:6).
4. **Evaluate your motives** for doing what you do. Ask yourself, "*Why am I doing these things? Am I doing what I am doing to get something or because of what I already have?*" Seek to obey based on the love and grace of God. When you realize your motives are not holy, then confess that to God and ask Him to change you. Motives are something that only God can ultimately change in our lives. "*Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Philippians 2:13).
5. **Be wise in your relationships.** Spend time with those who love God and understand the message of liberating grace. Hang around people who will affirm your identity in Christ. You may need to limit the time you spend with those who shame you or seek to keep

you in a performance-based system. Some may even need to change churches after reading this pamphlet.

6. **Understand the difference between relationship and fellowship.** If you are in Christ, you have a never-ending relationship with God. This relationship (i.e., identity as a child of God) cannot be changed. You are His child forever. "*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*" (1 John 3:1). However, your behavior can change your fellowship with God. I am David Holt, the son of Joe and Melba Holt. This identity (i.e., **relationship**) as a Holt will never change. I am forever a Holt. But my **fellowship** with my parents can change based on how we interact with one another. Once again, our behavior cannot change our identity.
7. **Learn to differentiate between God's conviction and Satan's condemnation.** When we sin, God does convict us (John 16:9). His conviction is specific. It leads to hope and restoration. His conviction deals with our behavior, while always affirming our identity as His child. However, Satan is the accuser (Revelation 12:10). His accusations are general. They lead to despair and discouragement. He attacks our identity and will tell us we are worthless because of what we have done. As we grow in discerning the source of those messages in our head (conviction vs. condemnation), we will increasingly be able to gain victory over the enemy through God's grace. "*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1).
8. **Be honest** with God, yourself, and others. Take off the mask and be yourself. "*The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth*" (Psalm 145:18). We need to be honest with God in prayer and not pretend to be something we aren't. When we are not completely honest, then we are really only hiding things from ourselves. God already knows all. As for being honest with others, this is another reason why we need some grace-based relationships where we can be completely truthful and still be completely accepted.
9. **Ask Jesus what He thinks of you.** After you have been honest with God in prayer, take time to ask Jesus this question: "Lord, what do You think of me? What are Your feelings toward me? Will You come and speak peace to my hurt?" Be silent and allow the Spirit of God to give you an impression, a mental picture (i.e., vision), or bring a Scripture to your mind. Jesus said, "*My sheep listen to My voice*" (John 10:27).
10. **Forgive those who have hurt or mistreated you.** Perhaps there are some people in your life that have hurt you. Perhaps in reading this pamphlet someone has come to mind that has caused you much pain, especially if you are from a performance-based family. Forgiveness is not easy, but it is absolutely necessary in the maturing process of becoming like Jesus. You can only forgive through God's grace. You can only forgive as you realize how much God has forgiven you. "*Forgive one another, just as God in Christ has*

forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32b). He who has been forgiven much loves much (see Luke 7:47). Forgiveness is ultimately an act of the will. We choose in obedience to God and through His power to forgive those who have hurt us. If we are not willing to forgive, then we hinder the actual experience of God's forgiveness toward us (see Matthew 6:14-15). He still forgives us, but we miss out on **experiencing** the benefits of this forgiveness. You may need help from a loving counselor in order to work through forgiving some people. Forgiveness is one of the most powerful pathways to healing and freedom in Christ.

11. Get professional help if your issues are such that you need it. Going to a biblical counselor or pastor can accelerate the maturing process, especially if you are dealing with some issues that are rather deep. *"Wisdom is with those who receive counsel"* (Proverbs 13:10). However, be sure the person you seek counsel from has an accurate and biblical understanding of God's grace.

I pray these truths are helpful for you. They have been (and still are!) to me. Consider passing this on to someone you care about. Let me know if you have found this pamphlet helpful. Feel free to write (1950 Hwy. 35, Onalaska, WI 54650) or email me (davidholt@firstfree.org).

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

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

Luke 18:9 - 14

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