

# A Lesson in Humility

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February 24, 1957

In the book of Luke, the 14th chapter, beginning with verse 7 and going to 14, Luke 14:7 and following. And he, Jesus, put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms, saying unto them, when thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a man more honorable than thou be bidden of him. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, give this man place, and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher. Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meet with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Then said he also to them that were bade, or to him that bade him. This was to the host, the other was to the guests. When thou makest a dinner or a supper, he said to his host, Call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the lame, the lame, the blind. And thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

Now, there are two parts to this text, and one I want to use this morning, and the latter part next Sunday morning.

Now here, let me say that there is a Christian. A Christian is one who is not only saved by the Lord but taught by the Lord as well. I wish that we might take this carefully and know that words are not being used lightly, that a real Christian is one who has not only been saved by the Lord, forgiven of his past sins, but who is taught by Him as well, and who is identified with our Lord Jesus, now and forever, in everything, at any temporal cost, unto death.

Now this sounds terrifying, but this is Christianity, brethren, and anything short of it is not Christianity. That a Christian is one who is identified with our Lord now, to remain identified forever, in everything, and at any temporal cost, whatever it might prove to be, now and unto death.

So that, this being true, Christ's teaching is first in importance and absolutely vital to the Christian. That Christ's teaching is not vital to most professing Christians, only proves them to be professing Christians. But Christ's teaching is important and vital to all Christians because the Christian, I repeat now, is identified with Christ in everything, unto death, to be taught by Him and led by Him.

And so, the Christian hears what the Lord has to say without question, and he obeys without question. As soon as he knows what the Lord has said, he obeys. If it raises any question, it is only on what did the Lord say. But he never raises any question about whether he should obey or not. That's settled. That was settled when he became a

Christian, if he did become a Christian. So now this morning, we'll listen to the Lord and let him speak to us and tell us about something very important to us.

Now, in this story which I read to you, with the teachings of our Lord embodied in it, we find that truth confronts a real situation. You see, my friends, when truth confronts a real social situation, then our consciences get in trouble and the power of God comes, and we soon find whether we are Christians or not, or whether we plan at all to be Christians or not. Truth disassociated from practical life never raises any problems, and it never makes anybody angry, except a few theologians who will fight over theories. But the practical people aren't much interested.

But as soon as truth confronts a real situation, as it did here at this gathering of a number of people at the home of a man who had called them for a dinner, and Jesus our Lord was there as a guest, and this one who was Truth, present there, saw the iniquity both in the host and in the guests. Iniquity that they never dreamed was present. They completely overlooked the presence of gross sin here at their banquet, and it never occurred to them so much as to dream that there was anything wrong here.

And the reason was that it was customary. Whatever is customary is taken to be all right. And when truth confronts the customary, and truth insists the customary conform to truth, then you will find the cross the same as you found the cross back there. And all down the centuries, the cross asserts itself; when truth confronts the customary and insists that the customary is wrong. And so it was here. Our Lord was present as a guest, and yet it didn't prevent Him from giving His testimony both to the host and to the guests gathered there.

Now, we are in grave danger, my friends. Don't think that we are not. The danger that hangs over our country is a grave danger, but the danger that hangs over us Christians is still greater, because the danger that confronts our country as a nation has to do with time, but the danger that hangs over us as Christians has to do with eternity. And the danger is that we shall accept the customary as being right, and never think to check with the Word of God to see whether we're doing the right thing or not. The customary is supposed to be right when in God's sight it may be flagrant sin.

There may be present there unsuspected by the people because they're used to it. And I say that this would be a calamity beyond all description, to spend a lifetime in a church, a lifetime in an Alliance church, a lifetime displeasing God by simply doing what everybody thought was all right, and what was not condemned by the sociologists or the doctors or the police or the psychologists, not condemned at all and taken as a matter of course, and yet at the root of that conduct may lie a serpent, a deadly serpent, because in God's sight sin may be there.

And the Christian may get converted, give himself to the Lord as he says, and yet conform to this, which because it is socially acceptable is therefore received as all right. And in our pure blindness we never see that it's displeasing to God. Better please God if you have to displease a thousand thousand people, friends. Better please God if pleasing God means going contrary to the customary and breaking with the social customs.

Now, what was it here that Jesus noticed? He sat there among them, quietly looking them over, and here's what He saw. And now in the first place there was a little protocol, which is perfectly natural. You can't have anything, you can't ride a streetcar, nor drive on the street, nor meet a half a dozen people anywhere, but what that you have to observe protocol.

And the protocol was simply something like this, that when the guests were gathering at the feast, the bridegroom sat at a certain place, or perhaps the man who had called the banquet, the host, whether it was the bridegroom or not, he was the host. And there were certain people who for that occasion were to be honored, just as we have our speaker's table, you know, at our little banquets. And the guest speaker is given the finest place, and maybe the man who's in charge of the little program has him next to him.

And so, it's a simple thing, and it's small, but it's protocol. And Jesus noticed this, that as they gathered before they were officially seated, he noticed that some of the self-important fellows quietly and slyly walked over, and while talking and being casual, managed to seat themselves near to, if not indeed next to the host. They hadn't seated them officially yet, they were just gathering and greeting each other and hanging up their coats.

But some of these fellows managed to slip in and sit down where it would be hard to move them, because they felt, no doubt they'd been told they were great, and no doubt that they felt that they were only doing the right thing.

And so, they sat down next to the host, and Jesus noticed that. Well, then this often happened, or it happened often enough that our Lord called attention to it, that when the official seating took place, when the host got up and said, well, now we're about to begin, and I will ask so-and-so to sit here, and he noticed it was already occupied. He said, excuse me, but this was reserved for the guest of honor, would you mind moving down?

So, this fellow gets up, red face, and moves down. Now Jesus saw that, and it had just a sly, it seems to me, bit of humor in it, although certainly I think that our Lord had no such thought. It was very, very real to Him, and must have been very real to those to whom He addressed these words.

But always everywhere there are the vain and ambitious climbers, those who have been told by so many people that they are good, that they have accepted it as a matter of course, and they have built up in their own minds a little saga about themselves, a little idea of greatness which they have, and they have accepted it so completely that if they're praised, they don't even think there's anything wrong with it. They think, well, that's not so. That's true. He said the truth about that.

And so they're seeking. These are the ambitious climbers. And you say those are out in the world. They weren't in the world when our Lord talked to them here. They were Jews. They were religious people, the most religious people then in the world.

Now this applies to us, my friends. This applies to you this morning and to me this morning. This itch to be honored, this itch to be known as somebody. Jesus gave us what I call a golden dictum here in the 11th verse, simply these words, whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased. And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. These are the words of our Lord.

Now, the question is, is this important? It wouldn't have been put here if it had not been important. And if this had not been contrary to the will of God and the ways of heaven, contrary to the ethics and the moral spirit of good men, our Lord would never have mentioned it.

But we take it so lightly that one almost has to beat the desk with his fists and shout to get attention these days to anything like this. This comes in our Sunday school class and we pass it over and go right back and sit down beside the host as we had been doing since we can remember.

Now I'd like to just drop this little word in your ear. There is no trick of justification that will guarantee a man's being right in heaven who will not be right on earth. Now we have suffered from this over the past decades, that there is a justification that makes me right in heaven, even if I will not be right on earth. And if I refuse to be right on earth, this is not the teaching of the fathers. This is not the teaching of the apostles. This is not the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. A legal justification that makes me right in before heaven cannot be mine unless there is also a willingness on my part to be right on earth.

Now, I do not say that I am accepted in the presence of God and saved by my rightness on earth because we all have a long way to go and I maybe have the farthest. But I do say where there is a carelessness about the teachings of Jesus or where there is a stubborn unwillingness to obey him, there cannot be a justification before God. That is antinomianism which the fathers fought with such desperation down the years, this kind of thing that says Jesus Christ died not only for my past sins but for all my future sins.

I heard an Alliance preacher say that. He died for my past sins and he died for my future sins and therefore said this man is no longer with us. I don't even have to confess nor repent if I do anything. It's already done for. Christ kept the law for me to the end of my life and therefore I stand with the law perfectly kept and I stand before God as one who never broke the law because He kept the law for me and died for me and therefore, I don't even need to repent or confess because it's all been done for me.

Now, there is a heresy, my brethren. It is as much of a heresy as Jehovah's Witnesses or the Voice of Prophecy from the West Coast which is Seventh-day Adventism or Christian Science or any of the other heresies who are basically wrong in their beliefs about vital matters.

I read a track lately on immersion in which a very good man pleaded that we immerse the candidates three times, put them in three times for the Trinity and I said to myself, well there's no harm in that and the dear Lord certainly wouldn't mind and if he thought that a man actually believed that, he could dip him in three times into the water instead of once, no harm would be done. I don't think even a Baptist would care because if he's

baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost it doesn't make much difference.

I've had to on a few occasions put them down the second time because they got panicking, didn't get all wet the first time. So, I wouldn't quarrel over that, and I wouldn't divide over that and let people have what views they want about such matters that don't matter but I will say to you that when it comes to the vital, critical matters, you cannot afford to have fellowship with those who deny our Lord Jesus Christ.

John said if we receive them and bid them God's speed, we're partakers of their evil deeds. We are a collaborator after the fact. So with this heresy, that because Christ kept the law for me and died to give me a perfect covering, therefore nothing matters now on earth for me except that I believe that. I say that that is a heresy that's as deadly as Jehovah's Witnesses heresy. It's a heresy that is as deadly as any false doctrine that you could imagine.

Now, there's a necessity that we obey, my brethren, our Lord said this, not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?

I suppose there are two prayers that I have made more than any other during the last year, maybe 20 years. One is that I might have the spirit of the prophet and the other that I might be holy and Christ-like and support my prophesying, my teaching with a holy life. But here is a man who evidently had some kind of a prophetic power. Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils and, in thy name, done many wonderful works.

We'd have given a man an LLD on this in any Christian college. He had prophesied in the name of the Lord, cast out devils in the name of the Lord, and done many wonderful works in the name of the Lord. I can just hear the citation. In fact, I could write one which would be read at the time of his coronation.

But Jesus never denied it at all. He didn't say, Oh, you're lying. You haven't prophesied in my name or cast out devils. You're talking like that to get in. He says, then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me ye that work iniquity. Do you notice that it was not the good works that he tried to do, but it was the iniquity which he did?

Those works of prophesying in the name of the Lord and casting out devils and doing wonderful works in the name of the Lord might well have been accepted if he had obeyed the Lord, but he did not. He knew Him not because he was not an obedient follower of His. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house. And it fell not for it was founded upon a rock.

Now, what is the rock? The deity of Christ? No. What is the rock? The New Testament? No. What is the rock that he built his house upon? The commandments of Christ? No. What is the rock? It is obedience to the words of the Lord. The words of the Lord can lie

there dormant and dead. And they're not the rock, but obedience. He said, whoso hears these sayings and doeth them, I will liken unto a man which built his house upon a rock. The doing of them is the building.

Perhaps the rock would be the commandments if I might edit that last sentence a little. The commandments might be the rock, but the building was the doing of those commandments upon that rock. Then he said, and everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell. And great was the fall of it. It came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine.

Now, somebody says, Mr. Tozer, these words are not for us. These have been interpreted away and it's not required that we keep these. Now, I want to ask you, I know this is said by some. I want to ask you; can you afford to trust an explanation based upon a theory and an explanation which was not held and a theory which was not accepted by the fathers down to Paul?

Can you afford to accept and let your eternal future rest upon an explanation and a theory and a so-called rightly dividing which takes this away from us? Can we afford to do it? And if we obey His words, what have we lost? Is it heresy to do what Jesus tells us to do almost in some quarters? Heresy to do what we're told to do by our own Lord. He becomes our Lord and tells us that when we're invited to a feast, take the low place, and then uses that as an illustration and lays down the golden dictum, whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased and whosoever abaseth himself shall be exalted.

Now, there's the dictum that our Lord laid down. The other is only illustration. There's the essence of it. Now, that's in the Sermon on the Mount. Is that for us? Some say not and they've explained it away. My brethren, if you think it is and you observe this teaching, is it heresy to observe the teaching of our Savior? Has it become heresy to do what the Lord told us? Shall we be condemned if we, in our ignorance, keep the commandments and He didn't expect us to?

If the Lord says, be humble and we're humble, and it happens to occur in the Sermon on the Mount, and we humble ourselves, shall we in the great day of the Lord be sent down to hell or out into outer darkness or have all our rewards taken away because we, in our ignorance, obeyed the Lord? And if we do obey His words, what have we lost, I say? What have we lost? And if we do not obey them, what have we gained? And if we do not believe this dictum nor follow it, then we may lose everything.

For our Lord Jesus told us of the man who heard it and didn't do it, and I don't know why he didn't do it. Maybe he was too stubborn to do it, or too worldly to do it, or too covetous to do it. Maybe he was too pleasure-mad to do it. Maybe he was too proud to do it, or maybe he'd been taught he didn't have to do it. Maybe he'd had it dispensationalized out of his system.

But at any rate, he heard it and didn't do it. Jesus said he built his house on sand, and everybody knows what building on sand is. The first storm that comes, the sand begins to melt away and shift, and pretty soon down goes the house. Now, some say we cannot

obey, and I think this is the cutest trick of the devil of all, that we cannot obey. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Now, I want to ask you, brother, do you dare go to the judgment seat of Christ with the excuse, Lord, I heard it, but I couldn't do it? Do you dare go to the judgment seat of Christ and say, Lord, I heard thee say, take the low place, and he that takes the low place shall be exalted. I heard it, but I just couldn't take the low place. Why can't you? Who's hindering you? This is the devil's word, and Jesus is supposed to have told us things which we're unable to do.

I tell my three-year-old grandson, Paul, Paul, go get me that picture. And he says, I can't. Or I say to him, Paul, go lift that piano. He's big for his age, but he couldn't do that. What kind of a man would I be to command with sanctions and threats and warnings for non-obedience, a three-year-old child to lift a piano? And yet they tell me that that's what our Lord did all down the years, that He commanded us to do things we're not able to do. He said, humble yourself, and we say, Lord, I just can't do it.

Why can't you do it? If you've got a spirit that can't humble itself, that spirit belongs in hell and not in heaven, and it'll go there. If you've got a spirit that's so hard and harsh and proud and bitter that you cannot humble yourself, that spirit will never go to heaven. Now certain Protestants have invented a purgatory to take care of that.

They admit that the Lord couldn't allow a man to go to heaven on those terms, but they say that there's an outer darkness, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, and that's where the Lord purifies justified persons who are justified in heaven and sinful on earth. That's purgatory, brother. Do you believe in it? I don't.

As the tree falls, so it lies. After death, a judgment. And I do not believe in any purgatories, except as the Nazarene preacher once said in my hearing, he believed in a purgatory right now here on this earth by the blood of Jesus, and that's the one I believe in. So don't let's say we can't. Don't let's say it's impossible, Lord. I wanted to, but I couldn't.

Too proud to? Love sin too much. Then you're so badly bound in sin, you'll never get untangled. If you're so loving pleasure that you can't humble yourself and can't obey the teachings of Jesus, then don't call yourself a Christian. A thousand times better that you be honest in your sin than deceitful in your religion.

That's why Christ said, you're neither hot nor cold, and I'll spew you out of my mouth. I would thou art cold or hot. No, no, my brethren, the teachings of Jesus are His easy yoke and His light burden. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light, and I've found it so, and I've found it so. And all Jesus taught in this lesson this morning is go down, go down, go down, and anybody can go down if you just let go. Let go and you'll go down.

As the farmer shouted up on the haystack to his son who had piled hay on the stack all day, he said, Dad, how will I get down? He said, just shut your eyes and walk around. He'd get down all right. Gravity takes care of it, and so we'll all come down. But if we're unwilling to come down, that's another matter. And a man who's unwilling to come

down is unwilling to follow Jesus. And if he's unwilling to follow Jesus, there is no trick of justification that will make him all right in heaven.

Now I'm going to prophesy and tell you this, somebody is going to have to start saying this in Bible circles or another generation, if the Lord tarries, that which is now evangelicalism will be liberalism, for we're moving that direction as a reaction from the kind of antinomianism that believes on Christ but accepts no moral responsibility nor obligation to obey.

I am trusting and believing that there may come back a reformation into circles or a reformation that'll be like a lightning stroke that'll divide sheep from goats right here in this world, and even in so-called gospel circles. And we'll begin to obey our Savior again, for a Christian is one who's not only saved by faith but who's taught by our Lord Jesus, identified with Him in everything, forever, at any cost, clear down to the end.

And Christ is his teacher and his Lord and his instructor and his commanding officer and his princely leader. And if he in any weakness fails the Lord, he was only to tell the Lord in grief that he failed Him and the Lord will forgive like that, for He's faithful and just to forgive us if we've sinned.

The idea that we're supposed to accept sin as the customary and not expect to live a holy and separated life is the teaching of the devil. And in the name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke him who dares to teach it.

So, my brethren, the little dictum, remember it, whosoever exalted himself shall be abased, and he that humbled himself shall be exalted.

There's a dear old brother, a Canadian man by the name of A.W. Rolfe. He and I were alike only in one thing, we had the same initials. He's gone now, he gave to the world some excellent, Mrs. Bell, I think the missionary was his daughter, and Paul Rolfe was his son, and E.W. Rolfe was another son of missionaries, a dear old man of God. And he wrote a little booklet, I think it's out of print, but the little booklet had this name, The Way Up Is Down. The Way Up Is Down. That was saying it differently.

Now may God help us today. Amen.