

“The View from Self-Righteous Mountain”

(Luke 5:27-32)

Introduction

➤ There are truly only two religions in the world: “the religion of divine accomplishment” (i.e., Christianity) and “the religion of human achievement” (i.e., every other religion). Christianity is the only religion that teaches, in accordance with God’s Word, a salvation by God’s grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

✓ Illust: “[all] self-righteous efforts to achieve salvation are utterly futile and serve only to damn the eternal souls of those who vainly trust in them. There is only one way to receive right standing before God, the religion of divine accomplishment – belief in the saving gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Luke 5:27-32*).

➤ Throughout human history, mankind has tried to create a (religious) means of being saved apart from a true saving faith in Jesus Christ. Today, the world is replete with such vain religious attempts to find God or find God’s forgiveness.

The Bible clearly and repeatedly (and unapologetically) declares that Jesus Christ is the only way to God – the only way to heaven, the only means of forgiveness. The Gospel declares that salvation comes only by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

John 3:18 ~ “Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.”

John 3:36 ~ “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

John 14:6 ~ “Jesus said ... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

Matt 12:30 ~ Jesus said: “Whoever is not with me is against me ...”

Acts 4:12 ~ The apostle Peter said: “... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

1 John 5:11-12 ~ The apostle John declared: “And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

➤ Every attempt to be saved (i.e., to be forgiven by God, or to go to heaven) apart from a saving faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is the futile and damning exercise of self-righteousness – one’s attempt to earn God’s saving grace through good works, or one’s thought of deserving God’s saving grace by inherent goodness.

Self-righteous people wrongly view themselves morally pure in and of themselves. They grossly (blasphemously) minimize their sin by thinking they have attained righteousness – in part or in whole – on their own, and not exclusively through the substitutionary death of Christ. They have a misplaced confidence in their own goodness, and often a false assurance of salvation. They smugly measure themselves against the unrighteousness of others, rather than the righteousness of Christ. Rather than wholeheartedly wanting to be pleasing to God, self-righteous people long for the praise and envy of other people. They arrogantly look upon others with contempt, thinking themselves to be morally (religiously, spiritually) superior. They boast of their accomplishments, their good works, their moral goodness, and their spiritual piety, but it is all a religious façade.

Matt 23:27-28 ~ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. “

- From the mirage of their lofty position they are hypocrites, judgmental, and condemned. While they may be very religious, they are utterly unsaved. To be sure, the view from Self-righteous Mountain is spectacular – with their feelings of superiority and their contempt for others – but the fall is deadly.
- In his Christian masterpiece, *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), John Bunyan (1628-1688) wrote an allegorical story of a man's Christian life from start to finish. The Pilgrim is appropriately named "Christian", and throughout the story we find him encountering various obstacles along his Christian journey.

On one occasion, before Christian came to be saved by the cross of Christ, we find him struggling with the "great burden" of his sin. Christian unfortunately takes the foolish advice of "Mr. Worldly Wisemen" to obtain salvation apart from entering through "*the narrow gate*" (Matt.7:13-14) of Christ. Worldly encouraged Christian to climb the steep hill of self-righteousness, to the house of a man named "Legality" (who lived in the village of "Morality").

✓ **Illust:** Christian asked, "Sir, which is the way to [Legality's] house?" Worldly responded, 'Do you see that high hill over there?' 'Yes,' said Christian, 'very well.' 'You must go by that hill, and the first house you come to is his,' advised Worldly. So, turning out of the way he was going, Christian went toward Mr. Legality's house for help. But when he reached the hill, it seemed so high, and the side of the hill that was next to the pathway had such a great overhang, that Christian was afraid to venture farther lest the hill should fall on his head. So, he stood still there not knowing what to do. Furthermore, his burden now seemed heavier to him than while he was in his original course of travel. Flashes of fire came out of the hill, making Christian afraid he would be burned. Here, therefore, he sweat and shook with fear; and now he began to be sorry that he had taken Mr. Worldly Wiseman's advice" (John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress*; ch.3 [Hazelbaker, L. Edward. "The Modern English Edition of Pilgrim's Progress"]).

- As we will see in today's sermon, no one is good enough or can do enough good to be saved. No one is righteous apart from saving faith in Christ (Rom.3:10-12, 23), and no one can be religious enough to be saved apart from a saving faith in Christ. Salvation is by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- As we turn to Luke 5:27-32, we find Jesus – about a year into His three-year public ministry – call Matthew to be a disciple (and eventually, one of His apostles; see Lk.6:13-16).

Luke 5:27-32 ~ "After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, 'Follow me.' ²⁸And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. ²⁹And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. ³⁰And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' ³¹And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

- This rather short story can be divided into five different headings.

1. The Call (vs.27)

- After the dramatic account of Jesus forgiving and healing the paralytic (Lk.5:17-26), "*He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth*" (vs.27). According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus "*beside the sea*" (Mk.2:13) of Galilee, still in or around the town of Capernaum. Once again, we see that "*all the crowd was coming to him, and He was teaching them*" (Mk.2:13).

With an intentional gaze, Jesus looked right at "*Levi*" (otherwise known as Matthew, which may be the name Christ gave him after his conversion). This was no casual or passing glance. Jesus looked at Matthew in order to get his attention – and drastically change his life forever.

- To read that Matthew was "*a tax collector*" (vs.27) and that he was "*sitting at the tax booth*" (vs.27) would undoubtedly invoke negative thoughts and feelings from a Jewish audience. The tax collectors in Jesus' day were notoriously viewed as thieves and extortionists (perhaps not too unlike how many people view them today). In fact, the Talmud classified them as robbers (Sanhedrin 25b). This was

especially true of the kind of tax collecting that Matthew (Levi) did. For Matthew “*sitting at the tax booth*” (vs.27) could essentially demand a tax from anyone who walked along the road, make him unpack his belongings and charge him whatever tax amount he wanted.

Luke 3:12-13 ~ “Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’
13 And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than you are authorized to do.’”

➤ If the traveler could not afford the tax, the tax collector would offer him a loan at as high of a rate as he wanted. Because he was only required to collect a certain amount of tax for Rome, the tax collector could collect any figure above-and-beyond that amount that he wanted. This system of collecting tax was a breeding ground for exploitation, extortion, oppression, and robbery. Think about it, you give an unsaved, unscrupulous man the power and authority to collect as much money as he wanted what is going to be the natural result? Most likely, our worse imaginations would be all-too-accurate.

✓ **Illust:** “To Jews of his day, that single phrase established Matthew as the most despised, vile, and corrupt man in Capernaum. Matthew was a *publicani* (whence the title *publican* in some translations), a man who served occupying Rome against his own people as a collector of taxes. By the nature of his position, his first loyalty had to be to Rome. Nationals of a country or province occupied by Rome could buy franchises that entitled them to levy certain taxes on the populace and on travelers. A franchise required collecting a specified amount of taxes for Rome and allowed anything collected beyond that figure to be kept as personal profit. Because his power of taxation was virtually unlimited and was enforced by the Roman military, the owner of a tax franchise in effect had a license for extortion. For those reasons the *publicani* were understandably considered traitors by their own people and were usually even more despised than Roman officials or soldiers.

Many tax collectors would accept bribes from the wealthy to reduce and falsify their taxes and would then exact proportionately more from the middle and lower classes, making themselves hated still more. They amassed great fortunes under the authority of the oppressor and at the expense of their own countrymen” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew*, 9:9).

➤ Notice however that Jesus, who was indeed repulsed by Matthew’s sin, was not repulsed by Matthew himself. Jesus “*said to him, ‘Follow me’*” (vs.27). This was neither a question nor a suggestion. Jesus commanded Matthew to “*follow*” (*akoloutheō*; pres., act., imp.) Him. Jesus’ calling of Matthew was scandalous among the Jews. How could the Messiah call a sinner like Matthew to follow Him? Matthew was despised among the people, especially among the Jewish leaders. He was viewed as a despicable sinner, unworthy of God’s saving grace.

✓ **Illust:** “This is a truth of deep importance. Without a divine call no one can be saved. We are all so sunk in sin, and so wedded to the world, that we would never turn to God and seek salvation, unless He first called us by His grace. God must speak to our hearts by His Spirit, before we shall ever speak to Him” (J.C. Ryle, *Expository thought on Mark*, 2:13-22).

➤ We must ask and answer a simple, yet profound question: Why does Jesus call sinners? The blunt answer is that He has no choice. No one is too bad (sinful) for Jesus to save, and no one is too good (righteous) not to need to be saved. The Bible does not tell you to get your life straightened out and then Jesus will receive you. The Bible tells you to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior and then He will straighten your life out! (cf. Rom.5:6-10).

If we are not careful, we can become so religious – so self-righteous – that we fail to actively recognize that Jesus saves sinners. There is a great tendency, the longer we live the Christian life, to practically forget that we too were despicable, depraved, and damned sinners (Jer.17:9; Rom.3:10-12, 23; Tit.3:3). If we are not vigilant against such self-righteousness, we can view the church as museum of saints or an exclusive club for the religious – a place where sinners are welcomed and the Gospel is not proclaimed.

As believers, we must never forget that our salvation is solely and sufficiently a work of Jesus Christ – our Lord and Savior! We must, as Jerry Bridges said, “Preach the Gospel to [ourselves] every day” (Jerry Bridges, *Respectable Sins*, p.36).

2. The Commitment (vs.28)

- Mathew's response was immediate and absolute: *"And leaving everything, he rose and followed him"* (vs.28). He not only abandoned his lucrative occupation (which probably did not stay vacant for long!), more importantly, he left his sinful life. Jesus called Matthew to be His disciple. This was no invitation simply to temporarily follow Jesus around. Jesus commanded Matthew to leave his life of sin, and to follow Jesus as his Lord and Savior – which Matthew did.
- This serves as an illustration for every true believer. While not every person has to quit their jobs, Christ calls everyone to leave their life of sin and to follow Him as their Lord and Savior.

Luke 9:23-26 ~ "And [Jesus] said to all, 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. ²⁵For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.'"

Luke 14:25-33 ~ "Now great crowds accompanied [Jesus], and he turned and said to them, ²⁶'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.'"

- The true Christian is not one who willfully and unrepentantly continues to live a life of sin, believing that Jesus is their Savior (see Jn.5:15; 8:11; Rom.6:1-2; 1Jn.3:4-10). The true Christian worships God only, loves God supremely, and obeys God unconditionally.

Phil 3:7-9 ~ "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith"

- The true believer not only recognizes the cost of following Christ, but also delights in the privilege, joy, and blessing of being a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! Like Matthew, every Christian will leave *"everything"* (vs.28; *pas*) in order to follow Jesus.

Luke 5:11 ~ "And when they had brought their boats to land, they [i.e., Peter, Andrew, James, and John] left everything and followed him."

3. The Celebration (vs.29)

- Likely a wealthy man, Matthew (*"Levi"*) spared no expense to hosted *"a great feast in his house"* (vs.29) for Jesus. This was no doubt to announce and celebrate Matthew's conversion and calling. It seems as though Matthew invited all his friends to join in the festivities: *"there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them"* (vs.29). Matthew did not try to hide his newfound Christianity. He immediately wanted everyone to know.

Luke 15:6-7 ~ “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

Luke 15:9-10 ~ “And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:22-24 ~ “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. ²³And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. ²⁴For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.”

- Matthew was neither embarrassed by his faith in Christ, nor ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom.1:16). While deeply personal, one’s Christian faith is not intended to be private. He wanted all his friends to meet Jesus, presumably so that they too would believe and be saved. Upon Matthew’s conversion, his friends and co-workers (and possible family) become his immediate mission-field.

Notably, being a social and religious outcast, all Matthew’s friends were reprobates and deplorables. We read that “*there was a large company of tax collectors and others*” (vs.29). The “*and others*” are later described as “*sinners*” (vs.30; see Mk.2:15). These people were notorious sinners, but they were no less deserving of salvation than the most moral or religious sinner. Matthew is the portrait of every sinner.

4. The Criticism (vs.30)

- This large gathering of notable sinners was appalling to the self-righteous religious leaders. They took special exception to the fact that Jesus was sitting with and socializing with them: “*And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, ‘Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?’*” (vs.30).

- It is imperative to note that Jesus sat with sinners; He did not sin with sinners. This narrative is widely abused by carnal Christians, and non-Christians, as an attempt to justify sinful behaviors.

Ps 1:1-2 ~ “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; ²but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.”

- The religious leaders were not rejoicing that a sinner has been saved, or that many more could be saved. Rather, they are grumbling in protest. For they do not believe that Jesus is the Savior, and they do not believe that someone like a “tax collector” deserves to be saved.

The Greek word translated “*grumbled*” (vs.30; *gongyzō*) is an onomatopoeic word that sounds like it is pronounced (to murmur, mumble, or mutter; see Jn.6:41, 43, 61). The very sight of sinners in the presence of the Savior was repulsive and infuriating to them – nauseating to their delicate self-righteous palates. For they believed they were deserving of God’s saving grace, and they believed other sinners were undeserving of God’s saving grace.

Matt 20:1-16 ~ “For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. ²After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard. ³And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, ⁴and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and whatever is right I will give you.’ ⁵So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same. ⁶And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ ⁷They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’

⁸And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ ⁹And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, each of them received a denarius. ¹⁰Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius. ¹¹And on receiving it they grumbled [*gongyzō*] at the master of the house, ¹²saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal [*isos*] to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ ¹³But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? ¹⁴Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. ¹⁵Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?’ ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first last.”

Luke 7:36-50 ~ “One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. ³⁷And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, ³⁸and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. ³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.’ ⁴⁰And Jesus answering said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he answered, ‘Say it, Teacher.’

⁴¹‘A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?’ ⁴³Simon answered, ‘The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.’ And he said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ ⁴⁴Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.’ ⁴⁸And he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ ⁴⁹Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this, who even forgives sins?’ ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”

Luke 18:9-14 ~ “[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.’”

➤ It has been rightly said that “The ground is level at the foot of the cross.” This means no one is more or less deserving of salvation. But more than that, it teaches that no one is more or less saved than anyone else. No one can rightly boast in, or brag about, their salvation.

Eph 2:8-9 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (see 1Cor.1:29, 31; Gal.6:14).

5. The Correction (vs.31-32)

➤ Jesus immediately set the record straight: *“And Jesus answered them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick’”* (vs.31). Those who reject Him as the (one and only) Son of

God, reject Him as the (one and only) Savior from God. In their self-righteous pride, the Pharisees and scribes rejected Jesus as their Savior and any notion that they needed to be saved. They wrongly believed that they had atoned for their own sins, through their Jewish ethnicity and the Jewish religion. They wrongly believed that they were deserving of God's grace, but they did not need it (because of their works); and they believed that others needed God's grace, but did not deserve it. They wrongly thought they were righteous – *“well [having] no need of a physician”* – by observing the law apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

Gal 2:16 ~ “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Phil 3:3-9 ~ “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh – ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss [zēmia] for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss [zēmia] because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss [zēmioō] of all things and count them as rubbish [skybalon], in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith”

The word “loss” (zemia; vs.7, 8^{2x}) carries with it the imagery of cargo of a ship that is lost or damaged at sea, or thrown overboard in an attempt to save a sinking ship, and the word “rubbish” (skubalon; vs.8; used only here) literally can be translated as what is thrown to dogs, or the excrement of animals (that which is given to dogs, or that which comes out of dogs). “Loss” is that which is dispensable, and “rubbish” is that which is (to put it mildly) disgusting.

➤ Jesus came to earth to save sinners. He said, *“I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance”* (vs.32). The self-righteous person thinks himself righteous (and not a sinner) apart from Christ, and therefore does not truly repent. Just as no one (typically) goes to the doctor when they are well, the self-righteous do not (truly) repent because they do not see themselves as sinners.

1 Tim 1:15 ~ “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.” (see Matt.1:21; Lk.19:10; Jn.1:29; 1Jn.3:5)

➤ Those who reject Jesus as the (one and only) Son of God, reject Him as the (one and only) Savior from God. The self-righteous reject Jesus because they arrogantly (and wrongly) believe that they are saved by their own goodness or good works.

Matt 9:12-13 ~ “But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice’ [Hos.6:6]. For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

Hos 6:4-6 ~ “What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes early away. ⁵Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and my judgment goes forth as the light. ⁶For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.” [note: “steadfast love” (hesed); can also be translated “mercy”, “faithfulness/loyalty”, “lovingkindness”]

Matt 21:31-32 ~ “... Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.’”

- The self-righteous (or legalists) live as if they have no need for a Savior, and consequently (if they do not repent) they will not be saved! They think themselves righteous apart from Christ; they act as if they are not sinners in desperate need of God's saving grace; they view themselves as spiritually / morally superior but are in fact condemned by God because they have rejected Jesus as the Christ.

Conclusion

- The true Gospel of Jesus Christ teaches that a person is not saved by good works, but unto good works. Obedience is not the root of one's salvation, but the fruit of it. Christ's righteousness (not self-righteousness) is the means of our salvation. Righteous works are the results that come from truly being in Christ.

Eph 2:8-10 ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (see Romans 6:1-2; Titus 3:4-8; 1 John 2:3-6).

- The Gospel is the narrow way that leads to Christ. On either side of that way are deadly consequences: legalism (the belief that a person can be saved by good works) and liberalism (the belief that a person does not need to repent of sin). Both legalism and liberalism are dangerous (even deadly) distortions of the Gospel, and therefore promote a false gospel (Gal.1:6-9; 5:4). Legalism is no cure for liberalism, and liberalism is no cure for legalism. They are both man's attempt to distort – whether adding to or taking away from – God's saving grace.

✓ Illust: “Someone has pictured legalism and [liberalism] as two parallel streams that run between earth and heaven. The stream of legalism is clear, sparkling, and pure; but its waters run so deep and furiously that no one can enter it without being drowned or smashed on the rocks of its harsh demands.

The stream of [liberalism], by contrast, is relatively quiet and still, and crossing it seems easy and attractive. But its waters are so contaminated with poisons and pollutants that to try to cross it is also certain death. Both streams are uncrossable and deadly, one because of impossible moral and spiritual demands, the other because of moral and spiritual filth.

But spanning those two deadly streams is the bridge of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the only passage from earth to heaven. The two streams lead to death because they are man's ways. The gospel leads to life because it is God's way” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians*; 5:13-15).