

# THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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## The One You Truly Need

Joshua Riggins

Luke shares a parable in **18:9-14** where two men went to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. Jesus picks the occupations with purpose, playing on preconceived notions. The Pharisee thanked God he was not like other men. He kept the law to his own satisfaction. He pointed to the tax collector as his opposite. The tax collector would not even look up; his whole person was affected by his current state. He asked God for mercy. Jesus concluded, *“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

This parable points to the theme of **Luke 18**: humbly receive God, the only one you truly need.

In **Luke 18:1-8** a widow of no distinction, having no ability to persuade with her own merit, came to the local judge seeking justice. The judge finally decided to grant her justice, not wanting to be completely worn out by her persistence. Jesus compares this parable to God’s willingness to hear and respond to us if we would always pray and not lose heart.

**Luke 18:15-17** details an incident involving little children. Although the disciples wanted to rebuke their parents for bringing them to Jesus, Jesus welcomed the babies. He told the disciples that these were the ones who make up the kingdom of heaven. If we want to receive the kingdom, we must receive it like a little child.

**Luke 18:18-30** presents a young (see **Matthew 19:20**) man with authority and great wealth. He came to Jesus wanting to know what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus instructed him in the law, but the young man explained that all of these he had kept since childhood. The young man was not bragging. Instead, he wanted more. He understood there was more than checking boxes. Salvation is not a step process. Jesus saw his sincerity, and so he shared the hard truth (**Proverbs 3:12**): you are letting wealth ensnare you. You cannot receive me fully because you do not trust me fully.

Would it not be great to know that this young ruler later reflected on Jesus’ words and received the kingdom? We do not know his ending. Jesus invites, “Will we hear the truth?”

This is not an easy truth, especially when snares in this world hold back our growth. The disciples wondered, *“Who then can be saved?”* The ruler kept the law, but he could not receive the kingdom. Jesus explained, *“What is impossible with men is*

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*If you find yourself free from challenges, like a little child enjoying the goodness of God, you need God. Keep receiving the kingdom with all the trust and confidence of a little child. Keep appreciating God’s goodness and leaning on Him to help you through whatever challenges come your way.*

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*possible with God” (18:27).* God makes choosing him easier because He works in us, helping us carry the burden. *“It is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).* Your submission succeeds because He works through you. We can receive and accept the cross of Christ, whatever the cost because God will be our help.

If you find yourself as the Pharisee did, checking the boxes and feeling good about all you have done, you need God. And

*continued on the next page...*

if you receive his correction humbly, he will bear fruit through your virtuous deeds. *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5).

If you find yourself in sin, like the tax collector, you need God. And if you come to him humbly, his mercy will exalt you in due time. *"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need"* (Hebrews 4:16).

If you find yourself in the depths of pain inflicted by a cruel world, like the widow, you need God. And if you come to him with persistent humility, the justice of God will be ready to comfort your spirit. *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me"* (Psalm 23:4).

If you find yourself free from challenges, like a little child enjoying the goodness of God, you need God. Keep receiving the kingdom with all the trust and confidence of a little child. Keep appreciating God's goodness and leaning on Him to help you through whatever challenges come your way,

*...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God* (Ephesians 3:17-19).

If you find yourself keeping God's commands with a heart ensnared by the cares of this world, like this rich young ruler, you need God. And if you come to him with a humble heart that is ready to receive him no matter the cost, God will help you overcome to stand victorious with him in eternal life,

*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith* (1 John 5:3-4).

Put your trust in God and receive him as a humble child. YOU NEED HIM!

## The Flesh

Tad Morris

Cancer is a strange disease. It's not an injury inflicted from outside the body. It's not a poison or a pathogen that attacks the body. The cancer is you. Cancer is a disease in which one of your own cells begins to reproduce uncontrollably, invading other tissues in the body, interrupting the essential functions of the body, and potentially (if left untreated) leading to death.

Sin is the same. It is not an injury, a poison, or a pathogen. It is the product of my own body. This condition is explained in **James 1:14-15**: *"But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death."* Every temptation and every sin is rooted in my desires. We are our own biggest problem.

The Bible calls this condition "the flesh," referring to our physical bodies and the natural desires of the body. It's not a "sinful nature" or a spontaneous creation of the fall. It's simply human nature, the same nature that has always existed in humans. The fleshly desires that lead to sin are essentially the same desires that God created in us in the beginning. The problem is Satan manipulates and even hijacks these desires to draw us into sin.

For example, it's perfectly natural to seek self-gratification and pleasure. That desire is neutral. It's not righteous; it's not evil. But that desire is what leads to fornication, adultery, pornography, every other sexual sin, and addiction. It's perfectly natural to seek self-preservation, but that desire is what leads us to lie, cheat, steal, and kill.

Consider the first sin in the Bible. Eve sinned because of the manipulation of her natural, God-given desires. **Genesis 3:6**: *"So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate."* Eve could see the fruit was good for food. The desire to eat is natural. Eve could see the fruit looked good to the eyes. Appreciating beauty is natural. Eve could see the fruit would make her wise. The desire for knowledge is natural.

What's the problem? Carelessly following the desires of the flesh is not a path that leads to God. **Romans 8:7-8**: *"Because the*

carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” Our natural human desires are exploited by Satan to trap us in sin. The flesh is like a cancer. These desires grow uncontrollably and invade every part of living and thinking. The flesh interferes with the essential functions of the mind and eventually (if left untreated) leads to death.

We are at war with ourselves. In **Romans 7:14-19**, Paul describes the nature of this conflict:

*For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

We want to change, but we don’t. We want to be better, but we aren’t. We want to conquer some sin, but we don’t know how. You’ve heard the saying, “*If there’s a will, there’s a way.*” According to Paul, that’s not true. We have the will to do good, but on our own, this is no way to defeat that sin.

We need to be saved from our own flesh, and Jesus alone can do that. There is no amount of personal discipline that can overcome the flesh. As long as we are living in the flesh, governed by the desires of the flesh, we will continue in the endless cycle of unrelenting sin. Jesus alone is the cure.

Jesus will make you free from the flesh, but it comes at a cost. The flesh must die. How does a physician cure a person of cancer? It’s different than other medical conditions. If you break bone, the doctor can put it back together and fix it. If you have a heart attack, the doctor can open the diseased blood vessel and you fix it. You don’t fix the cancer. You cure cancer by killing it. A part of that person has to die. So it is with Christ. Galatians 5:24: “*And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*” You have to die.

The Bible tells us exactly when and how we can crucify the flesh. **Colossians 2:11-13**:

*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of*

*God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses...*

In baptism, we share in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The body of the sins of the flesh is cut off.

This is possible only if we’re baptized *with faith* in the operation of God. People baptized without faith in the work of God will go into the water dead in their sins, and they will come out of the water dead in their sins. Baptism isn’t our work; it’s the work of our gracious and almighty God. The fleshly nature begins to die, and we begin to live free. We still live in the flesh, but we live in anticipation of the day when we are totally free from the flesh. We live in the hope of our eternal and glorious bodies: **1 Corinthians 5:1-2**,

*For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven...*

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## Blessed Are the Dead

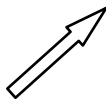
LuAnn Woody offered this tribute to her mother:

My dear mother, **Marlene Mae Bown**, passed away March 19 at San Gabriel Memory Care in Godfrey, IL. She was 88 years old. She was very talented and intelligent. She loved quilts and was always going somewhere with my late father, **Al Bown**.

They were instrumental in giving me a happy life. In 1974, they sent my brothers Rus and Randy and myself out to Speedway, Indiana, for a two week Bible study. I was only 14, so I think they just wanted to ship me off for a couple of weeks and get some peace and quiet. That is when and where I met **Tom Woody**.

Mom did what so many mothers did—she made us clothes. She helped me when I got into a bind when I sewed for myself. She was a farmwife, doing what needed to be done, no matter what the weather.

When they lived in Corydon, IA, Mom planted all kinds of



*Please check your expiration date!*

*Continued from page 3: "Blessed Are the Dead"*

beautiful flowers on either side of our front porch steps. They were really pretty.

She was ambitious and took accounting classes at Indian Hills Community College, Centerville, IA. She was able to put that skill to good use in whatever location they would move to, eventually coming back to the rural Iowa farm for retirement.

They were our next-door neighbors while our kids were growing up. They were always willing to help out.

Mom and Dad were regulars at the annual **Midwest Bible Campout**. They could be found sitting in front of their camper, always ready to have a conversation with anyone who strolled by.

## *Special Meetings*

The church in **Vandalia, IA**, has rescheduled its annual weekend meeting. Father's Day falls on June 15 this year, so to avoid conflicts with that holiday, the congregation has moved the meeting back to **June 7-8, 2025**. Lord willing, the meeting will return to the second weekend of June in future years.

The churches in **Unionville, MO**, and **Martinstown, MO**, are excited to host the fourth annual **Northern Missouri Fall Campout**. Lord willing, the campout is scheduled for **October 3-5** and will follow the same format used in past years. **Jay Graham** will teach the Saturday morning session, and **Flint Fenton** will be our Sunday morning speaker. Topics and schedules will be released later this summer.

For more information about meetings across the brotherhood, please consult [www.gospelmessage.net/meetings](http://www.gospelmessage.net/meetings). The QR code to the right can be used to navigate to the website with your tablet or phone camera.



## 2025 Special Meetings

- June 7-8.....Weekend Meeting, Vandalia IA
- June 30-July 4.....Midwest Bible Campout, Eminence, MO  
hosted by the **Prince Road COC, Alton, IL**
- July 19.....Family VBS  
hosted by the **Old Lamine COC, rural Blackwater, MO**
- August 30-31.....Labor Day Meeting, Pleasant Hill, IA
- October 3-5.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO  
hosted by the **Grant Street COC and Martinstown COC**
- October 18-19.....Weekend Meeting, Ozark, MO

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