

Luke 18:9-14
April 26, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: To get us prepped for today's text, we need to wrestle with or pin down what it means **to be "righteous"** in God's eyes. To get there, let's start with, "What does it mean **to be self-righteous**?" [Let people engage]

Q: Now that we've identified what it means to be self-righteous, how do believers become **"righteous"** from God's vantage point? [Let people engage]

Transition: I think you nailed it on what it means to be self-righteous (Spiritual Pride) vs righteous (Godly Humility):

Man's way to attain righteousness describes fallen sinners seeking to be good enough or do enough "good" deeds to merit spending eternity with God in Heaven. [Proverbs 14:12](#) addresses man's attempts to achieve righteousness declaring "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." Rom 3:10 says, "There is no one who is righteous, no not one" – meaning one is "righteous" in their own flesh.

God's way of righteousness describes the merciful provision of His perfect righteousness to sinners by grace through faith ([Eph 2:8-note](#)) in the death, burial and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Paul summarizes God's way writing that "He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus Christ) Who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we (those who believe the [Gospel](#)) might become the righteousness ([dikaiosune](#)) of God in Him." ([2 Cor 5:21-note](#)). Rom 5:17 describes believers who "receive God's abundant provision of grace and **of the GIFT of righteousness** that reigns in the life of Jesus Christ.

I believe we're ready to begin. Notice the symptoms of spiritual pride. Would someone read our next parable, which is Luke 18:9-14 to get us started?

BOOK:

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The 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. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

¹³"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.'

¹⁴"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."

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn't understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus' application of the parable echoed His teaching in 13:30. It is necessary for people to humble themselves before God to gain forgiveness, and those who are proud will be brought low by God.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, p. 249). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Deluded Pharisee (Luke 18:9–14)

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus exposed the self-righteousness and unbelief of the Pharisees (see Luke 11:39–54). He pictured them as debtors too bankrupt to pay what they owed God (Luke 7:40–50), guests fighting for the best seats (Luke 14:7–14), and sons proud of their obedience but unconcerned about the needs of others (Luke 15:25–32). The sad thing is that the Pharisees were completely deluded and thought they were right, and Jesus was wrong. This is illustrated in this parable.

The Pharisee was deluded about prayer, for he prayed with himself and told God (and anybody else listening) how good he was. The Pharisees used prayer as a means of getting public recognition and not as a spiritual exercise to glorify God (Matt. 6:5; 23:14).

He was deluded about himself, for he thought he was accepted by God because of what he did or what he did not do. The Jews were required to fast only once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29), but he fasted twice a week. He tithed everything that came into his possession, even the tiny herbs from his garden (Matt. 23:23).

He was deluded about the publican who was also in the temple praying. The Pharisee thought that the publican was a great sinner, but the publican went home justified by God while the proud Pharisee went home only self-satisfied. To be “justified” means to be declared righteous by God on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross (Rom. 3:19–4:25).

The publican repeatedly smote his breast, for he knew where his greatest problem was, and he called to God for mercy. The publican knew the enormity of his sins, but the Pharisee was blissfully ignorant of his own heart. The Pharisee’s pride condemned him, but the publican’s humble faith saved him (see Luke 14:11 and Isa. 57:15). It is the prodigal son and elder brother over again (Luke 15:11ff).

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 250)

18:9–14. The purposes of the **Parable** of the Prayers of the **Pharisee** and the **Tax Collector** were to show that one cannot trust in himself for **righteousness** and should not view others with contempt (v. 9). The Pharisee’s prayer was concerned with telling **God** what a good man he was, for not only did he keep the Law by fasting and tithing (v. 12), but also he considered himself better than other people (v. 11). He was using other people as his standard for measuring righteousness.

On the other hand, **the tax collector** used **God** as his standard for measuring righteousness. He realized that he had to throw himself on the **mercy** of **God** for forgiveness.

Jesus’ application of the parable echoed His teaching in 13:30. It is necessary for people to humble themselves before God to gain forgiveness, and those who are proud will be brought low by God.

Butler, T. C. (2000). Luke (Vol. 3, pp. 297–299). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

B. Dedication to Humility: The Justified Sinner (18:9–14)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Dedicated kingdom living involves prayer that confesses one’s sin and seeks God’s forgiveness, not prayer that extols self and excludes others.*

18:9. The character of the two people in this parable is more important than their identity. Jesus described the Pharisees and scribes without naming them. They were religious. They kept the law. They told everyone else the requirements for being religious. They saw themselves as the perfect example of God’s righteousness. They saw everyone else as ignorant sinners to be scorned and sneered at.

18:10. Two personalities take center stage in this parable. The first is a Pharisee. Hearing the word *Pharisee*, the crowd would have had two reactions. This was a religious man who kept all the rules. This was also a man who opposed Jesus and constantly heard Jesus’ condemnation and ridicule. The second character was a tax collector. Hearing this word, the audience would have felt disgust and betrayal. Here was a person working for the foreign government that dominated

them. *This one takes our money and gives it to Rome*, they probably thought. *This one is probably a cheat and a thief, taking far more money than Rome authorizes him to take*. One might wonder what a tax collector was doing in the temple. How could such a person become ritually clean enough to be allowed inside the temple?

18:11–12. The Pharisee prayed. That would be expected. Pharisees legalistically followed every rule. Prayer was expected several times a day. His prayer was unexpected: He prayed about himself. He did not praise God. He thanked God for making him better than other people—especially better than the tax collector. The tax collector was grouped with robbers, unrighteous people, greedy individuals, and adulterers. The Pharisee confidently asserted his superiority before God over all these people. He described all his religious acts. He praised himself in the face of God. This was not persistent prayer, depending on God for one's needs. This was self-adulation, giving all the credit to self and none to God.

18:13. An entirely different kind of prayer came from the tax collector's lips. It was a prayer of humility, dependence, and desperation. The Pharisee prayed to God; the tax collector looked to the floor but raised his voice to heaven. The Pharisee was proud and confident; the tax collector grieved over his own condition as a sinner. The Pharisee described his righteousness; the tax collector begged for mercy to escape the judgment his sin deserved. Which one of them truly prayed?

18:14. Jesus had no doubts. The sinful tax collector was justified before God. He was righteous. He was clean. He was prepared for temple worship. His sins were forgiven. The Pharisee left the temple confident he had fulfilled his religious duty but still bearing his own guilt and sins. He had not prayed, because he never addressed God. He was not forgiven, since he never confessed his sins. He was not clean and qualified for worship, because he remained separated from God by his unconfessed sin. Jesus put it succinctly: praise yourself, God will humble you; humble yourself, and God will praise and honor you.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 18:9-17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.