

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican at the Temple

Luke 18:9-14

“9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

I. INTRODUCTION

This parable is a comparison of two temple worshippers who had different attitudes, different prayers and different outcomes.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the parable is twofold.

- i. To expose those who practice comparative righteousness by judging others and believing themselves to be better than others. This type of person despises others, proclaims their self-righteousness and believes that they do not need God’s mercy and forgiveness.
- ii. To teach the need of humility and faith in prayer.

III. THE SETTING

The temple, the place of worship of the one true God.

IV. PEOPLE INVOLVED

- V11 – A religious, self-righteous Pharisee
- V13 – A publican; - a public servant working for the Roman government. He extracted money from the Jews and was viewed as

corrupt. He was not able to give evidence in a court of law because of public hatred.

- V9 – Jesus, who spoke on a serious subject that should be made clear concerning salvation.
- V9 – certain people who trusted in themselves and despised others.

V. THE ATTITUDES OF THE TWO MEN

A. THE PHARISEE

1. He obviously did not communicate with God in the house of God. He prayed thus to himself.
2. He had no sense of the presence of a holy God.
3. He was full of himself. His obsession with himself hindered his prayer. The Pharisee “thanked God” they were:
 - a. not women
 - b. not Gentiles
 - c. not tax collectors
4. He was full of pride; His obsession with himself made him think he was better than others and had no need of humility and forgiveness from God.
5. His self-righteousness and reliance on good works gave him a “better than” mentality. He considered himself to be “better than:”
 - a. Ordinary men
 - b. Extortioners
 - c. Unjust
 - d. Adulterers
 - e. Publicans
 - f. Others who fasted once a week (a requirement of Jewish law); this one claimed to fast twice a week.
6. He looked at his works and since he did more than others, he felt self-justified.
7. He failed to take into account his sins and failings as well as his lack of love for God and fellow man.
8. He was “blind spotting” and hence failing to see his own sin and need.
9. His prayer amounted to little more than “congratulations.” What a contrast with the experience of the man of God in the temple! Isaiah 6:5, *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of*

unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

B. THE PUBLICAN

1. He went to the temple seeking God.
2. He was broken hearted over his sin.
3. He realized he was standing before a holy God.
4. He stood afar off.
5. He bowed down, expressing physically his feeling of unworthiness and sinfulness. This showed humility and reverence.
6. He smote upon his breast, in tears, for his oft failings and lost condition.
7. He truly sensed the presence of God in the house of God.
8. He responded with reverence and Godly fear.
9. He **cried out** for mercy. This is the true work of God often seen in revival, the Welsh revival in particular. In the house of God people cried out under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. They were humbly acknowledging their unholiness and need of cleansing and forgiveness.
10. This man went down justified. V14
 - a. Forgiveness of his sin.
 - b. Justified by faith.
 - c. In a relationship with God.
 - d. Walking with God.
 - e. Humbled.
 - f. Delivered from his old life.

IN SUMMARY:

We note the glaring contrast between a sinner forgiven upon his confession and a self-righteous Pharisee, full of his own good works. He was arrogant, but put himself above all others, despised others and was unwilling to bow.

VI. THE LORD'S IMPORTANT WORDS OF CONCLUSION

Luke 18:14, *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

VII. REMINDER ON PRAYER

- A. We should sense the presence of God.
- B. We should humble ourselves, (bowing down upon our knees.)
- C. We must confess our sin and need:
- D. Clearly place our petition before God:- make clear requests, not vague.
- E. Receive from God mercy, forgiveness and grace.
- F. We should thank God for his listening ear and willingness to answer our prayer.

VIII. A WORD ON JUSTIFICATION

Justification by faith is not just a New Testament doctrine. God has always been merciful and full of grace. For example, in the Old Testament Abraham believed God. Sacrifices and offerings only availed when administered with faith. The sinner today is justified by looking to the work of the cross.

Ephesians 2:8-9, “*8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.*”

IX. THE MISUSE OF THE TEMPLE BY PHARISEES

- A. Their faith was terribly misguided.
- B. They were focused on their own actions
- C. They attended the house of God, but did not engage in real prayer to God.
- D. They engaged in a lot of activities to validate their own righteousness.
- E. Some were money changers.
- F. Some were merchandisers.
- G. Some even sold animals used in offerings.
- H. Jesus had to drive out those who turned the house of God into a market.
- I. Reciting of scripture plus laws, catechisms, vain heartless repetitions.

X. THE RIGHTFUL USE OF THE TEMPLE

- A. Jesus declared the temple to be:
 - 1. The house of God.
 - 2. The place of prayer.
 - 3. The place for a sacrifice of praise.
 - 4. The place of confession to God and of seeking forgiveness.
- B. The New Testament church should be the place where we meet God face to face in prayer and worship. It is to be the place where people sense their need as sinners and realize that no works could ever pay the price for their sins. It is the place where people realize that only the

precious blood of Jesus Christ can wash away their sin as a result of confession, repentance and faith. It should be the place where people are given the opportunity to hear the gospel and then repent and find salvation in Christ.

WARNING: The pharisaical attitude of being “better than” others should never exist in our church. There is no room for “snobbishness,” “cliques” or other attitudes that put people down in an attempt to make themselves look good. At best, we are all sinners saved by grace!

QUESTION: Who do you avoid speaking with at church? How hard would it be to join your circle of friends?

XI. THE APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE

A. JESUS WARNS AGAINST SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

1. The Pharisee trusted in his own good works, but it was to no avail.
2. He should have recalled the words of Isaiah 6:5, *“Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”*
3. We should remember the words of Jesus and of Paul.
Luke 17:10, *“So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.”*
Ephesians 2:8-10, *“8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*
Titus 3:3-5, *“3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”*

B. JESUS WARNS AGAINST ARROGANCE

1. The Pharisee despised others
2. He failed to compare himself to the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. He should have recalled the words of Solomon.
Proverbs 8:13, *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.”*

Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Proverbs 29:23, *“An unjust man is an abomination to the just: and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.”*

4. We should remember the words of Jesus and James.

Luke 14:11, *“For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

James 2:1-9, *“1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7 Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? 8 If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: 9 But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.”*

C. JESUS TEACHES THE VALUE OF HUMILITY

- Take the lowest place
- Scripture declares this to be necessary to prayer.
 - Humility before others: Luke 14:7-11 *“7 And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms; saying unto them, 8 When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; 9 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. 10 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 meat with thee. 11 For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*
 - The value of Humility before God: Isaiah 57:15, *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose*

name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

Isaiah 66:1-2, “1 Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? 2 For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.”

XII. CONCLUSION

- We should be people who sense our need of forgiveness.
 - 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
 - David’s heart cry: Psalm 51:1-3, *“1 <To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba.> Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. 3 For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.”*
 - Christ our Saviour: John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*
 - Christ our Advocate: 1 John 2:1b-2, *“And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”*
- Let us pray with the humility of the tax collector, who prayed like David, the man after God’s own heart. Psalm 51:1-3.
- Let us not trust in our own righteousness, but in the mercy and lovingkindness of God, offered so abundantly in His Son Jesus Christ!

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 18:14, *“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*