

# Worthy?

Mar. 21, 2021

Luke 18:9-17

Pride makes grace difficult to accept. With this in mind, the Pharisees were the primary target of Jesus' teaching in this week's passage. While the outer appearances of the religious leaders made them look like they were right with God, Jesus made clear that was not the case.

Jesus told a parable about two different men who went to the temple to pray. The first man he describes as arrogant and extremely self-centered. Jesus says he was a Pharisee, a man who would be described by most people of the day as one of the most "holy" of all men. Jesus specifically says that the man "prayed about himself."

The tax collector, praying in the temple at the same time, approached God in a totally opposite manner than did the Pharisee. Tax collectors were some of the most despised men in any Jewish community. They were viewed as traitors. Yet, it was to this man who humbled himself in prayer: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner," he cried to God. It is this spirit of surrender that is the way to be true followers of Jesus. [excerpts from Jim Lemons and Glen Schmucker]

- **Religious Pride** (Luke 18:9-12)
- Pride was the original sin of Adam and Eve, and it haunts us to this day.
  - Since then, man has often tried to restore his relationship with God through works.
- The Pharisees of Jesus' day considered themselves more '**righteous**' and in better standing with God than the common people of the day. In fact, they '**despised**' others.
- Jesus used a parable to teach "**those who trusted in themselves**" about righteousness.
  - Two people go up to the Temple to pray, a Pharisee and a Tax Collector (Publican).
  - The Pharisee stands close to the alter and looks up to pray.
  - The Tax Collector stands far off (as if not worthy) and looks down to pray.
- "**God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.**" – The Pharisee's prayer was all about himself. There is no humility towards God.
  - Not only does the Pharisee exhibit pride, but he also denigrates others.
- "**I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.**"
  - **Where in the bible does it say we are saved by works?**
    - **Answer:** Nowhere. We are saved through faith alone by God's grace towards us.
  - No matter how 'good' we are or how many 'good' things we do, we must humbly submit ourselves before God.
  - We have all sinned and are in need of God's forgiveness.
- **Does our attitude towards God affect our attitude towards others?**
- **How does pride lead us away from God?**



### Godly Humility (Luke 18:13-14)

- In the parable, Jesus contrasts the Tax Collector with the Pharisee:
  - **“Standing far off ... would not lift us so much as his eyes unto heaven.”**
    - He did not feel worthy to come close to the God’s presence.
    - He did not feel worthy even to gaze toward heaven as he prayed.
  - **“Smote upon his breast”** – a Jewish way of showing remorse.
- **“Saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”**
  - The word ‘saying’ means the tax collector kept repeating his prayer.
    - **“God be merciful to me a sinner. God be merciful to me a sinner...”**
  - The tax collector confessed he was a sinner. He offered no excuse.
  - He simply asked for God’s pardon on the basis of His mercy.
- Then Jesus contrasts the two men:
  - The Tax Collector **“went down to his house justified.”** – Justified means to be declared right before God.
    - He came to the temple without any sense of merit. He knew he was a sinner.
  - On the other hand, the Pharisee tried to justify himself before God. He did not leave with God’s approval. *God resists the proud, ‘but gives grace to the humble.’ Prov. 3:34*
- **“for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased”**
  - God executes judgment on the self-righteous who refuse to repent.
- **“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted”**
  - When we think highly of God, then we recognize our poverty before Him. God then gifts us with forgiveness and blessing.
- The Bible is like a mirror, it reflects Christ’s image upon our own. We are then humbled.
- **What do you see when you look in a mirror? What do you see when you read the Bible?**



### Childlike Faith (Luke 18:15-17)

- This passage continues the theme of humility before God.
  - Childlike humility is necessary to become part of God’s kingdom.
- **“brought unto Him also infants, that He might touch them”**
  - People often brought sick family and friends to Jesus that He might heal them.
  - People also brought infants and children to Him that He might bless them.
- **“His disciples ... rebuked them”**
  - The disciples knew how busy Jesus was and thought the constant interruption of parents wanting a blessing for their children was too intrusive on Jesus’ schedule.
- **“Suffer little children to come unto me, forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.”**
  - Believers cannot earn or merit the kingdom, but with humble, childlike faith they can receive it through Jesus Christ.
- **How would you describe childlike faith?**

### Biblical Truth:

**God welcomes those who approach Him in humble and simple faith.**

*“Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” Luke 18:17*

