

The Pharisee And The Sinner - Luke 18:9-14

This parable of Christ demonstrates truth by showing a contrast between the "religious" and the "non-religious" men. One claims to be righteous, based on his good works. The other man relies upon the Lord's mercy. There is no gratitude expressed the multitude of his blessings. The Pharisee is so smug he despises the others that he's judged to be inferior. In his mind there are two kinds of people: [a] the righteous and, [b] the immoral. He's proud to place himself among the best of the righteous. The tax collector is in a state of desperation. He is overwhelmed by his sin and condemnation and is not dividing people into these two sides. He recognizes his need for mercy while he stands near the Temple. His hope isn't based on anything he's done or deserved, but is entirely dependent on God's mercy.

The sermon for both this week and last week are both about prayer. Last week we had the positive example the widow. This parable contrasts the differences between the haughty whose pride in works justify themselves, and those who humbly condemn themselves as worthy to stand before a Holy God.

9: And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

The Pharisee's trust was in his own righteousness not in God.

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'.

He listed the works he did which were true. He didn't walk in immorality but was free from scandal and sin. He did not extort usury or oppress his debtors. He fasted twice a week (Monday & Thursday). He thought he glorified God by tithing of all he had (according to the Mosaic Law). Now all this was commendable. The Pharisee not accepted because of his pride and judgmental attitude (Matthew 23:23). The Pharisee thought God was under obligation to him because of these good works (Isaiah 64:6). Man may fool others but they can't fool God (Galatians 6:7).

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'.

The publican went to the temple because it was a house of prayer for all people (Isaiah 56:7). The publican's goal was to procure mercy.

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.

Conclusion: This parable shows the truth about justification by faith alone. All sinners are devoid of any righteousness of their own (Romans 3:23). To become righteous in the sight of God requires each one to come to Christ in repentant faith (John 14:6). As the publican faced the reality of his sin, he sought pardon and mercy (Ephesians 2:8&9).

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