

The Gospel of Luke

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

1. The Audience Described (v.9)

A. View of Oneself: Pride / Self-Righteous / Righteousness

Jesus directed this parable to people who believed that they were righteous and had no need of the righteousness of God (Luke 5:31-32). The example Jesus uses is a Pharisee (vs.10-12), but pharisees are not the only ones who are correctly described in this way (cf. Gal. 3:3).

B. View of Others: Other-Despising / Contemptuousness

Contempt for someone else may remain tightly guarded (Rom. 14:3, 10), but it can also be manifested as a dismissal of something as unimportant (1 Cor. 16:10-11; 1 Thess. 5:20; cf. 1 Tim. 4:12) or in open mockery (Luke 23:11).

2. The Specifics Defined (v.10)

A. The Setting

This parable is set in the temple, the centerpiece of the Jewish religion, likely during either the morning or evening prayers. While prayers to God could be offered at any time, times of public worship and prayer coincided with the daily sacrifices offered by the priests (Num. 28:2-8; cf. Acts 2:15; 3:1).

B. The Characters

The Pharisees were universally recognized as the epitome of religious piety and righteousness whereas the tax collectors were the personification of contempt for the Jewish nation and religion (Luke 5:30; 7:34; cf. Matt. 21:31-32).

3. The Actions Detailed (vs.11-13)

A. The Pharisee's Prayer (vs.11-12)

This short prayer exactly expresses the sentiments of the self-righteous. The Pharisee did not request God's mercy or blessing, but instead he gives evidence and examples of his superior righteousness.

B. The Tax Collector's Prayer (v.13)

He offers no argument or justification for his sins, but instead he mournfully pleads for God to be compassionate to someone as unworthy as himself.

4. The Lesson Declared (v.14)

The tax collector was immediately justified and his life would be show the effects of it (cf. Luke 19:8). God is not pleased with those who exalt themselves, He exalts the humble in heart (Ps. 138:6; Prov. 3:34; cf. Matt 23:12; Lk. 14:11).