

# LUKE I Parable of Two Men Praying Text: Luke 18:9-14

*whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*

## Introduction:

### 1. Jim had a cartoon posted on back wall: ‘Lord, please destroy my worst enemy’

Next frame: Lightning bolt and little pile of ash, w/ a bubble caption: “Let me re-phrase that.”

a. **FIRST:** We are often our own worst enemy — without realizing it.

b. **SECOND:** We should be careful WHAT we pray for!

### 2. A Parable of Two Different Men, Two Different Prayers, and Two Different Results

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## I. THE PARABLE

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### A. TWO DIFFERENT MEN (v.9-10)

#### 1. THE PHARISEE:

a) **This Pharisee is a respected member of a devout & elite religious group**

b) **ON THE OUTSIDE** the Pharisees were respected, wealthy, religious, devout.

They were the Scribes and Lawyers of the Law—the “good guys.”

c) **BUT ON THE INSIDE** there was something darker...

(1) What started with good intentions—had become Selfish Ambition.

(2) They became self-focused, arrogant, greedy, condescending.

(3) Fake fasting, long prayers to be seen by men...

(4) Desiring the chief seats at feasts and in the synagogue,

(5) They loved to be called Rabbi in the streets...

(6) In their Selfish Ambition—They Had Used God’s Holy Law to Consolidate

Their Own Power! —And now they could not be questioned.

#### 2. THE TAX COLLECTOR:

a) The Tax Collector was a member of a group despised like no other!

b) They were considered Low-life traitors who collaborated with Rome.

c) Almost like Bounty-Hunters for Rome to collect taxes.

d) By taking their taxes—they were funding the pagan Roman occupation of Israel.

e) They were the untouchables — considered so unclean they were banned

from the Temple, and the Synagogues, and from Jewish society.

**But Remember that to everyone listening—**

**The Pharisees were the faithful—the tax-collectors were the traitors.**

### B. TWO DIFFERENT PRAYERS

#### 1. THE PHARISEE: (v.11-12)

**on the Outside he address God—on the inside he is honoring himself**

a) **He glories in WHAT HE IS**—“not like other men,”

b) **He glories in WHAT HE DOES**—“I fast twice a week.”

c) **He glories in WHAT HE GIVES**—“I give tithes of all that I possess.”

- d) He glories IN HIMSELF—everything he says begins with a capital – ‘I’
- e) He wasn’t Thanking GOD—he was thanking HIMSELF!
- f) He wasn’t Honoring GOD—he was honoring HIMSELF!
- g) He mentions God once—then just talks about Himself and how great he is!  
Can you hear the story he is telling himself?

## 2. THE TAX COLLECTOR: (v.13)

### a) It is a HUMBLE PRAYER—

- (1) standing afar off, he would not raise *his* eyes to heaven
- (2) He knows his sinful state before the Holy wrath of God
- (3) He considers himself unworthy to even approach God, or look up to heaven

### b) It is a PERSONAL PRAYER—

- (1) He isn’t trying to argue he is innocent / or blame others / or make excuses
- (2) He compares himself to God’s holy law / not to others who also fall short

### c) It is a HEART-FELT PRAYER—

- (1) He cries out from the depth of his soul in anguish
- (2) He beat his chest, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’

### d) It is an HONEST PRAYER—

- (1) He confesses he is a sinner and he pleads for God’s mercy
- (2) He was CONVICTED by a Good and Honest Conscience

## C. TWO DIFFERENT RESULTS (v.14)

### 1. Two Different Men... Two Different Prayers... Two Different Results!

- a) One Man EXALTS HIMSELF—and Goes back To His House DECEIVED,  
 —The Other Man HUMBLER HIMSELF—and goes home JUSTIFIED.
- b) One Goes back to his house GUILTY,—the other goes back FORGIVEN.
- c) One man asks God for nothing and he receives nothing—  
 —The other man asks God for mercy and he receives it.

### 2. The Question is WHY?

- a) Why is the Tax Collector Acquitted/ and the Faithful Pharisee is Not?

### 3. Jesus answers with an AXIOM—a SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH PRINCIPLE (v.14)

**NOTICE: God honored the man who humbled himself in honesty with the Truth—**

**God did not honor the man that was still rejecting the truth in order to honor himself**

*“God had to puncture his arrogance; he could not let the lie endure, especially since God had provided a true righteousness for sinners, and this man spurned it, manufactured a sham righteousness of his own instead, and tried to pass that off on God.” (Lenski)*

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## II. THE LESSONS

### A. THIS PARABLE EXPOSES THE DANGER OF SELF-DECEPTION (v.9)

#### 1. There is something unsettling about this parable...

- a) Because deep down within the heart and soul of every person is the Temptation...

- (1) to Trust in Themselves that they are Righteous...
- (2) And to Use the Faults of Others to Prove it!
- 2. This is the Danger of Self-Deception (Proverbs 16:2; 30:12)**
  - a) This is the story people are telling themselves...
- 3. This Pharisee was so eager to approve of himself—it became more than just his Reality—it became his Identity.**
  - a) He Created His Own “Good-Person” Gospel in which he doesn’t even need God!
- 4. This is the ‘Good Person Gospel’ We Create for ourselves today!**
  - a) Why would I Need Jesus? —I’m a “good person”
  - b) Why would Jesus need to die on a cross for me? —I’m a “good person”
  - c) Why would I need the blood of Christ? —I’m perfect the way I am!

*“A God without wrath, brought men without sin, into a kingdom without judgement, through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” –H. Richard Niebuhr*

- 5. We Try to Create Our Own Fake Self-Righteousness—and then Try to Pass it off onto God! (Matthew 7:21–23)**

## **B. GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE** (James 4:6 ESV)

*“In reality, humility means nothing other than complete honesty about yourself.”  
(Countryman)*

- 1. True humility is simply seeing things the way they are—and being honest**
  - a) The Pharisee saw himself as something great when he wasn’t,
  - b) and the tax collector saw himself as a sinner needing God’s mercy, which he was.
- 2. “We can only know God well when we know our own sin. And those who have known God without knowing their wretchedness have not glorified Him but have glorified themselves.” –Blaise Pascal**
- 3. Humility is about Honesty and Integrity before God...**
  - a) Complete Honest with Him and Honest with ourselves (1 John 1:8,10)
  - b) It’s About Honest Confession rather than Dishonest Deception (1 John 1:9,7)  
*“It was pride that changed angels into devils;  
it is humility that makes men as angels.” (Augustine)*
- 4. God opposes the Proud—but gives grace to the humble!**
  - a) This is Why Jesus Said... *“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Lk 18:14)*
  - b) Humble yourself in the sight of God—and He will lift you up!

## **C. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN FIND PEACE**

- 1. There is NO PEACE Apart from God...**  
**The Only way to have peace is to Be Made Right With God**

## 2. That is what the word JUSTIFIED Means—

*Jesus said: 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other...' (18:14a)*

- a) Being JUSTIFIED deals with our Legal Standing with God
- b) It means—to be made right with God... / to be made righteous
- c) JUSTIFIED — “just-as-if-i’d” never sinned.

## 3. We Can only Find Peace in being made Right with God! (Romans 5:1-2)

—But HOW Are We Justified? (Rom 5:6–9)

—We are Justified by the blood of Jesus!

### • We Could Not Save Ourselves—> with Our Own Self-Righteousness

- (Isaiah 64:6) “But we are all like an unclean *thing*,  
And all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags”
- Your Self-Righteousness Can’t Save You.
- You Need More than Filthy Rags to be in the Holy presence of God

### • We Couldn’t Save Ourselves—> Through Perfect Law-Keeping

- We have all sinned against God and fallen short of the glory of God
- (James 2:10 ESV) “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has  
*become guilty of all of it.*”
- By violating God’s Law—we are under penalty of God’s Law—  
The penalty is Eternal, Judicial Death

### • So God made a Way where there was no way (Titus 3:3–7)

- a) This is where the Peace is!
- b) It is the Peace of God that Surpasses All Understanding!
- c) The Peace of Being Right With God!
- d) The Peace Only Found in Christ (Romans 8:1–4)

## CONCLUSION:

(Psalm 139:23–24)

1. Like the Tax-Collector—we go to God in prayer...
2. Being completely humble & vulnerable & honest with God...
3. Asking Him to Forgive us, to cleanse us, and to lead us  
away from temptation and into His holy light.
4. That we may walk in the light as He is in the light, that the blood of  
Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)