

# The Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector

## I. Introduction

- A. Luke records a parable Jesus spoke about a self-righteous Pharisee and humble tax collector. **Luke 18:9-14**
- B. Notice some key lessons to learn from this parable.

## II. Beware of *Self-righteousness*

- A. The Holy Spirit through Luke identifies this parable as one Jesus spoke to “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” **Luke 18:9**
- B. Such self-righteousness is exemplified by the Pharisee in the parable, who treated God as if He was fortunate to have the Pharisee, rather than the other way around. **Luke 18:11-12**
- C. The tax collector, unlike the Pharisee, acknowledged *his* need for *God*. The tax collector appeared to recognize that whatever good any of us has a chance to do is reason to credit *God*, rather than boasting in *self*. **Luke 18:13; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10**
- D. While we must hunger and thirst after righteousness, doing so involves recognizing that, *without God’s grace, none* of us could be declared righteous. **Matthew 5:3**

## III. Pursue *Proper* Self-examination

- A. Part of the cause for the Pharisee’s self-righteousness appears to be his faulty standards of self-examination. Instead of comparing himself to the perfect standard of God’s will (or God’s Son), the Pharisee compared himself to *other fallible people*. This is a “recipe” for self-righteousness. **Luke 18:11; 2 Corinthians 10:12**
- B. It is also noteworthy that the things the Pharisee emphasized in his boastful prayer are *outward* actions others could see. While who we are on the outside is important, being who God wants begins on the *inside*. Both “sides” must be considered when examining oneself. **Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 18:13**

## IV. Avoid *Hypocritical* Prayer

- A. The Pharisee in Jesus’ parable also exemplifies prayer that was *ineffective*. **Luke 18:11-12, 14**
- B. His prayer appears to have been spoken in hypocrisy, rather than with a sincere desire to communicate with the Almighty Creator. Such hypocrisy is among the reasons prayers are at times ineffective. **Matthew 6:5-7**

## V. God *Abases* the Proud

- A. Jesus’ conclusion to this parable shows that it was spoken, in part, to teach the principle that God abases those who exalt themselves. This principle is taught and exemplified throughout Scripture. **Luke 18:14; Proverbs 16:18**
- B. God “sees through” foolish boasting and arrogance, such as that which the Pharisee exemplified. He knows that we are hopeless without Him, and shuns those who fail to remember this. **Luke 18:11-12; Galatians 6:14**

## VI. God *Exalts* the Humble

- A. While God resists the *proud*, He gives grace to the *humble*. This is the positive side of this “2-sided coin.” God is pleased with those who approach Him in humility, as the tax collector did. **Luke 18:14**
- B. The tax collector particularly exemplified the humility that is needed to acknowledge, be ashamed of, and turn away from, sin. **Luke 18:13; 2 Corinthians 7:9-11**
- C. The tax collector seemed to recognize He was speaking to the Almighty Creator who we are undeserving of, and must meekly submit to. **1 Peter 5:6**

## VII. Conclusion

- A. May we each choose to *avoid* self-righteousness, examine ourselves *properly*, pray from the *heart*, and *humble* ourselves under God’s mighty hand.