

The Parable of Two Sinners [Pride & Penitence]

Luke 18:9-14

There are five examples of prayer in Luke 18:

1. A praying widow (v. 3).
2. A praying Pharisee (v. 10)
3. A praying publican (v. 13)
4. A praying ruler (v. 18)
5. A praying beggar (vs. 35-38)

In this sermon we will focus on **the parable of two sinners** who went to the Temple to pray (vs. 9-14).

The PERSONS: A Pharisee and a Publican.

- The word “Pharisee” means “separated.” They were the personification of legalism. Their religion was mostly an outward show, but inwardly they were corrupt. Jesus called them “*hypocrites*.”
- The publican was the Roman tax-collector. They were often dishonest, extortioners, and unscrupulous.



➡ Similarities:

- Both went to the Temple, but only one went home justified.
- Both went to pray, but only one actually prayed.
- Both stand, but one stood “*afar off*.”
- Both begin their “prayer” with the word “God,” but only one man’s prayer was heard by God.

The PURPOSE of this parable is a two-fold rebuke of those who are...

1. **Self-righteous**—“...*trusted in themselves that they were righteous...*” Paul wrote, “***There is NONE RIGHTEOUS, no, not one... There is none doeth good, no not one... For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God***” (Rom. 3:10, 12, 23). “***We are ALL as an unclean thing, and ALL our righteousnesses are as filthy rags***” (Isa. 64:6). The only “righteousness” God recognizes is the righteousness of His Son.

2. **Scornful**— “...and despised others.” “Despise” means “to look down upon with contempt; to treat someone or something as worthless. It is seen by a “holier-than-thou” attitude that Isaiah spoke of saying, “*Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou*” (Isa. 65:5).

I. The sanctimonious PRIDE (vs. 9-12). His pride is revealed in...

A. His PUBLIC practice—Going to the temple to pray (Acts 3:1). Represents two kinds of people who go to “church”—One is saved the other unsaved.

B. His PHONY praying—“...prayed thus WITH HIMSELF...” He really wasn’t praying to God.

➡ His prayer is a perfect example of HOW NOT TO PRAY. Prayer is making a petition or asking something from God. He asks for NOTHING, and consequently he gets nothing!

1. His **beginning** in prayer. He starts off OK—“*God, I thank thee...*” Our prayers should begin by thanking God. “*Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving*” (Ps. 95:2). We have so much to be thankful for. “*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name*” (Ps. 100:4).

- But instead of thanking God for His mercy, the Pharisee “pats himself on the back” about what a fine fella he thought he was. He was part of that generation mentioned in Proverbs 30:12, “*that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.*”

2. His **belittling** of others. He exalts himself by putting others down—“*I am not as OTHER MEN are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.*” He compared himself with the worst of men. But how does he compare with the Lord Jesus Christ?

- While he was thankful he was not like other men, others could be equally thankful they were not like the Pharisee!

➡ He mentions three sins:

- a) Extortion— To extract money from people by force, blackmail, coercion, or misuse of authority. This was the practice of many tax collectors. But Pharisees did this also when they for pretense make long prayers to “*devour widows’ houses*” (Mt. 23:14).
 - b) Unjust— Treat people unfairly.
 - c) Adultery— Again, some of the Pharisee’s were also guilty of this sin (Mt. 5:27-28; John 8).
- ➡ No wonder Jesus called them hypocrites.
3. His **boasting** of self. The personal pronoun “*I*” five times in two sentences. It was all about himself and not God. God is not interested you telling Him what a great person you are!
 - a) “*I fast twice in the week*” (v. 12). But his fasting was to NOT unto God. Zech. 7:5—“*When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, **did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?***”
 - He did MORE than the law required, and made sure everyone knew it (Mt 6:16)!
 - b) “*I give tithes of all that I possess*” (Mt. 23:23). Better than many Baptists.
 4. His **blindness** to pride. He was oblivious of his true condition. Pride is DECEPTIVE—It deceives a person into thinking he is better than he really is. God said of Edom, “***The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwells in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord***” (Obad. 1:2-3).

II. The sinner’s PLEA (v. 13).

A. His CONTRITION. Seen in...

1. His **position**— “*standing afar off...*” Being conscious of his sinful condition, he remained on the perimeter of the Temple.

This is the position of every unsaved person to God (Eph. 2:13).

2. His **posture**— “...*would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven...*” Ashamed of his sin. Ezra prayed — “*O my God, I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads...*” (Ezra 9:6)
 - People pray with their eyes closed to eliminate the distractions around them so they can focus on talking to God.
 3. His **pounding**— “...*but smote upon his breast...*” He smote upon his breast indicating his anguish over his sin.
- B. His CALL— “*God be merciful...*”
1. The Pharisee did not ask for mercy, therefore received none! He failed to recognize his need. Like the Laodiceans in Revelation 3:14, he thought he had “*need of nothing*” and knew not that he was “*wretched, and poor, and blind, and naked.*”
 2. The publican, on the other hand, recognized his sinfulness and prayed for mercy and received it!
 - Titus 3:5— “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...*”
- C. His CONFESSION— “...*to me a sinner.*”
1. He made no excuse for his sin. He did not defend himself.
 2. Instead of telling God how “good” he was, he confessed “I am a SINNER... I am guilty as charged.”

ILLUS: On August 2, 2000, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a banner headline, “Guilty Plea Sets Inmate Free.” A picture showed the freed man embracing his sister. The article told how this man who was imprisoned for eight years cut a deal with the state's attorney's office and was set free based on “time-served.”

My first reaction was, “Another criminal gets off with a plea bargain.” Then I realized that was what happened to me: “Guilty Plea Sets Inmate Free.” Freedom is not found in a plea of innocence but in the admission of guilt. My sin is different, but the

headline fits perfectly—"Guilty Plea Sets Hughes Free." [Citation: Lee Eclow; Lake Forest, Illinois; source: *Chicago Tribune* (8-2-00)]

- No one can be saved until they admit they are a sinner.

III. The Savior's PRONOUNCEMENT (v. 14).

- A. The PROUD shall be Abased. No man can lift himself up into the favor of God by his own works. "*God resisteth the proud*" (James 4:6). As long as a man clings to his own "righteousness" he will never be saved.
- Humble yourself, or you will be humbled.
- B. The PENITENT shall be Exalted. "*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up*" (James 4:10). This goes contrary to the philosophy of this world. The way up is down!
- You do not need to "toot your own horn" for it to be tooted. "*Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips*" (Prov. 27:2).

SUMMATION: Each of us are represented by one of these two men... Which one represents you?