

Title: One Exalted, One Abased
Text: Luke 18: 9-14
Date: December 27, 2012
Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Luke 18: 9: And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

This was our Lord's audience. He was speaking to "certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others."

How can you know if you are like those to whom the Lord spoke? Do you think there is some good in you or that something you have done makes you righteous? That is trusting in self—"certain which TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES that they were righteous."

Proposition: The point our Lord is teaching in this parable is found in verse 14, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Luke 18: 10: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

The Master gives a parable. He sets before us two men which his audience regarded as the most opposite as men could possibly be.

This Pharisee was like those in our Master's audience. Those to whom he spoke would consider a Pharisee to be a holy and righteous man. But they despised a publican. A publican was one they thought far beneath them because he was such a wicked sinner.

Divisions: 1) The Pharisee; 2) The Publican; 3) The End of these two men

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I. THE PHARISEE

Luke 18: 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.

Exalted Self in his Manner

The Pharisee exalted himself in the manner in which he came before God—**the Pharisee stood and prayed.** He went right up in front of all and prayed for all to hear. Self-exalting men want to be seen and heard. What he did outwardly showed the inward corruption of his heart.

Is your religion a religion of show? Do you come here and go through the motions so others will see you here? In the world, do you wear your religion on your sleeve, on your car bumper, to men will behold you?

True humility is worshipping God in the heart, not for the purpose of being seen of men. Even in public worship: true singing, true praying, truly hearing the gospel and worshipping God—is done in the secret place of the heart. Merely coming here because we don't want others to think bad of us is hypocrisy.

True humility, true believers, come before God in private and in public because we need Christ, we need mercy, we need to hear a word from him—not to be seen of men.

Matthew 6: 5: And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Exalted Self in the Subject of his Prayer

The Pharisee exalted himself in the subject of his prayer—he “**prayed thus with himself.**” It means he prayed about himself. He did not cry for mercy. He did not confess himself to be a sinner. The Pharisee spoke of how pleased he was with himself. That is not prayer at all. Any prayer that has in it some other motive other than seeking God’s mercy is a vain show to exalt self.

Exalted Self as Holier by his Deeds

The Pharisee exalted himself by declaring himself holier than other men. And he did so based on what he had not done—“**God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers.**”

He was not thanking God for what God had done. The Pharisee was not thanking God that the Spirit of God had given him life and a pure heart. He was not thanking God that by the work of Christ, God had made him righteous in Christ. The Pharisee was not thanking God that God had restrained him by grace. He was justifying himself before God--He said, “God, I thank you I am not as other men are.” This is self-righteousness arrogantly imagining self to be better than other men because of self.

Do you imagine yourself to be better than other men? There may be someone that is close to you that has committed some grievous sin. Maybe they do things that, indeed, are wrong—things you have not done and would never do. But do you really think you are better than them? I don’t care how bad they are—do we think we are better than another?

And this same ‘holier than thou’ attitude is in irreligious folks, as well. Those who care nothing for the gospel, often consider all religious folks to have a “holier-than-thou” attitude. Did you know that is the same spirit in you who do not come to Christ seeking mercy?

Self-righteousness—this same “holier than thou” spirit--is what keeps sinners from coming to Christ for mercy. It is not sin that keeps men from Christ, it is self-righteousness, a holier than thou spirit. In the scriptures, we never find one self-righteous person coming and begging Christ for mercy—not one. We find sinners doing so, but not one righteous person ever came to Christ. Those in religion and out have this same “holier than thou” spirit by nature. And that haughty, arrogant spirit is despised by God.

Isaiah 65: 5: Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

God only is righteous. Christ Jesus the Son of God is the only Righteous One. Those who come to Christ confessing their sin and begging mercy shall find mercy and shall be saved in the righteousness of Christ. But those who meet God in their pride, trusting in themselves that they are righteous and despising others, shall be abased.

Isaiah 2:11: The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

In you and in me, we are no better than any other sinner. God says,

Romans 3: 10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12: They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one...23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Exalted Self by Comparing Himself with Another Sinner

The Pharisee exalted himself by comparing himself with someone he esteemed worse than himself—**“or even as this publican.”** Self-righteousness never compares self with someone better, always someone worse. When you begin speaking to someone about sin and they will say, “Well, I’m not as bad as so-and-so!”

Religious men talk a great deal about love and how they love all men. But they really despise others, like these “who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.” Self-righteous folks are critical of everyone but themselves. They are always pointing out other people’s weaknesses, faults in your worship service, faults in your children. All of this talk amongst preachers about healthy churches and unhealthy churches is nothing more but men saying, “I thank God my church is not as other churches are.” They like to say, “I would do this, I wouldn’t do that.” God despises a critical spirit and tongue.

Psalm 101:5: Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Comparing ourselves with another sinner is not wise.

2 Corinthians 10: 12: For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

Other sinners are not who we will be judged by if we come into judgment outside of Christ. It is Christ himself:

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Christ is the glory of God. Christ is the righteousness of God. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Salvation is accomplished by Christ coming in the flesh, being made a curse for his people and redeeming his people from the curse of the law. Christ is the Righteousness by which all men will be judged who are found outside of Christ, resting in their very best deeds for acceptance with God in the day of judgment.

Exalted Self Based on his Actions

The Pharisee based his righteousness on his outward actions—he said I am not an **“extortioner, unjust, adulterer. 12: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”**

He based his morality and holiness on what he did not do. If he did not extort outwardly, but in his heart, claiming holiness by the power of himself, he was robbing God of the glory which belongs to Christ alone. He may have dealt justly with men outwardly, but inwardly, calling himself just because of it, he was dealing unjustly with God. The Pharisee may have not been an adulterer outwardly, but attempting to come to God by your law-keeping is to be an adulterer in the heart. Then he based his righteousness and acceptance with God on what he did do, **“I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”**

Have we made ourselves holy and righteous with God by our works? Did “making a decision for Jesus” make you righteous? That is trusting in yourself—something you did. Has joining the church or coming to church services made you righteous? Perhaps, you don’t care for any of this religious stuff. You just think you’re not as bad as that real bad guy. You trust in yourself. Do you think that because you do not steal that you are righteous? Does dealing justly with others make you righteous? Perhaps you have never committed adultery, does that make you righteous?

None of us is capable of making ourselves righteous by anything we can do, not even by our best obedience to the law of God. That is opposite to God’s way of making his people righteous. It is counting the blood of Christ vain.

Galatians 2:21: I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

If you depend upon one part of your law-keeping to make you righteous before God then “Christ shall profit you nothing...you are debtor to do the whole law...Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you is justified by the law.” (Galatians 5: 2-4) You have completely rejected and turned from the gospel of grace. It is nothing but an attempt at stealing for self the glory which belongs to Christ.

Philippians 3: 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

II. THE PUBLICAN

Luke 18: 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.

I said to you, there may be someone here who has someone you really despise as being wicked and consider yourself better than them because of something in you. That was what this publican was to those self-righteous men. But notice the difference in this man’s heart.

Abased in his Posture

The publican abased himself in his posture—**“He stood afar off.”** While the Pharisee exalted himself, up front, loud and proud, this publican’s heart was humbled. He saw himself far off in sin against God, so he came abased—he stood afar off. The Pharisee had no fear of God—he was proud. This publican feared God—he revered God, he was in the Lord’s house, in the presence of holy God.

Abased in his own Sight

The publican abased himself even with his eyes to the ground--The Pharisee was casting his eye around to find someone he despised, someone he could use to exalt himself. This publican **“would not even so much as lift his eyes up to heaven.”** With a sense of his own guilt and unworthiness.

Abased in Heart

The publican abased himself from a heart broken and contrite—**“he smote upon his breast.”** The Pharisee was bragging about what he did and did not do. All his religion was outward in the fleshly deeds of his morality. But this publican smote his breast where his heart was because that is where his real problem was. His sin went deeper than his deeds, he knew it to be in his very heart.

Mark 7: 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Psalm 51: 5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. 6: Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts:...7: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

Abased in his Cry

The publican abased himself in his cry unto God, **“God be merciful to me a sinner.”** He did not come expecting to be acknowledged like the Pharisee expected to be acknowledged but he came begging for mercy, “God be merciful to me.”

He did not come crying up his goodness but confessing himself a sinner—**God be merciful to me a sinner.** In this publican we see an example of Micah 6: 8:

Micah 6:8 He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

With God—he did justly—he justified God in confessing he was a sinner. He was saying what David said,

Psalm 51: 4 Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

With God—he loved mercy—he begged, “God be merciful to me—be propitious to me.

With God—he walked humbly—he came bowed down with a broken and contrite heart. He was at the mercy of God to do with him as God would.

III. THE END OF THESE TWO

Heed the Word of Christ

Luke 18: 14: I tell you,...

This is Christ Jesus the GodMan Mediator. Listen to him---he says, “I tell you.” This is Christ to whom God the Father entrusted all his chosen children. Christ who came and redeemed each one from the curse and condemnation of the law by his own blood. Christ who is the Mercy Seat, who is the Propitiation for his

people. Christ who reserves mercy which he purchased for thousands. We would do well to listen to this one who is the only way to the Father!

The Publican was Justified the Pharisee Was Not

Luke 18: 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other:

The Pharisee went to the temple full of self, puffed up, confident in his own righteousness and self-esteem—he exalted himself. And God abased him—he went home empty, rejected of God, condemned. The publican came empty, poor, lost, confessing his nothingness and need of God to be merciful to him—he humbled himself. And God exalted him—he went home justified, rich in mercy, God remembered his sin no more.

The Lesson

Luke 18: 14: For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; The Pharisee justified himself and God condemned him.

Luke 18: 14:...and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The publican condemned himself and God justified him.

Everyone here, listen: There is no since trying to fool God with something you are not—he looks on the heart. He knows them that are his. God resists the proud. Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God and he will exalt you in due time.

If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin because Christ is the Righteousness of all he draws to crying for mercy. Christ is the Advocate with the Father for all who are given grace to abase themselves. Christ is the Propitiation—the free Mercy—for all those who come seeking to be found in his mercy!

I think I can hear that publican singing all the way home:

Micah 7:18: Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

Amen!