

# **“How to Be Right with God”**

## **Luke 18:9-14**

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### **I. Introduction**

- A. The most important question facing every person is “How can I be right with God?”
  - 1. Are you right with God?
  - 2. In our parable today, Jesus tells us how to be right with God.
    - a) The parable is both searching and comforting
    - b) It’s searching for those who are proud and self-righteous
    - c) But, it’s comforting for those who know their sin and unworthiness
  - 3. It’s a parable of contrast
    - a) Two men
    - b) Two prayers
    - c) Two results
    - d) One is proud, the other is humble
    - e) One praises his own merits, the other pleads for mercy
    - f) One in condemned and the other is justified
- B. Why did Jesus give this parable?

### **II. The Problem** (Luke 18:9)

- A. Only two roads
  - 1. Two ways
  - 2. You or God
  - 3. Works or faith in Christ’s finished work
  - 4. Most people today
    - a) It’s the religion of self-salvation
    - b) “unto certain” (v. 9)

### **III. The Parable** (Luke 18:10-14)

- A. Two men (v. 10)
  - 1. A Pharisee
    - a) The word “Pharisee” has a bad connotation today
    - b) Illustration- Jesus’s words (Matthew 23)
    - c) The common person looked up to them
    - d) Jesus said, “except you” (Matthew 5:20)
  - 2. A Publican (tax collector)
    - a) Hated and despised by the common person
    - b) Two extremes

- c) God looks at the heart
- d) Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance
- e) There is hope for the sinner
  - 1) “All have sinned”

## B. Two prayers

1. The Pharisee’s prayer (vv. 11-12)
  - a) His posture is self-promoting pride
    - 1) “Stood and prayed with or to himself” (v. 11)
    - 2) Illustration- “to be seen by men” (Matthew 6)
    - 3) No eye on God
  - b) He had a bad eye on others (v.11b)
    - 1) He saw others’ sins but not his own
  - c) He had a good eye on himself (v.12)
    - 1) “I” five times
    - 2) Praising himself
    - 3) Still today- “you can save yourself”
      - a. Illustration- Paul (Philippians 3)
    - 4) Proud of his race (a Hebrew of Hebrews)
    - 5) Proud of his religion (a Pharisee)
    - 6) Ritual (circumcised on the eighth day)
    - 7) Righteousness (“touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless...”)
    - 8) Paul said, “What things were gains...”
      - a. How about you?
      - b. Do you trust in yourself?
      - c. That you are righteous?
2. The publican’s prayer (v. 13)
  - a) His posture (v. 13)
    - 1) God looks at our hearts
  - b) His penance (v. 13)
    - 1) “Smote upon his breast” (v. 13)
    - 2) A song of sorrow for sin and a repentant heart
  - c) His prayer
    - 1) “God be merciful to me the sinner” (v. 13)
    - 2) He was truly talking to God
3. The contrast of the two prayers
  - a) The Pharisee talked to himself
  - b) The Publican prayed to God
  - c) The Pharisee proudly proclaimed his merits
  - d) The Publican prayed for mercy
    - 1) “God be merciful” is literally “be propitiated”
    - 2) How? The cross
    - 3) “to me the sinner”

- a. No boasting of his own righteousness or good works
- b. No fasting
- c. No tithing
- 4) His prayer was short, simple, and sincere
- 5) He was not playing at prayer; he was pleading for mercy
- 6) God saves us by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
  - a. He also shows us mercy (Psalm 51:1)
  - b. Illustration- Amazing Grace- John Newton

#### **IV. The Two Results (Luke 18:14)**

- A. The Pharisee went home unjustified, not forgiven, and not saved
  - 1. The listening crowd would have freaked out!
- B. The tax collector went home justified, forgiven, and saved
  - 1. Again, the listening crowd would be shocked
  - 2. Same when we get to heaven!
- C. What does “justified” mean?
  - 1. By faith alone in Christ alone
    - a) “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16).
    - b) Where is boasting then? Is it excluded by works? No, but by the law of faith.
    - c) “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28).
    - d) Today, we can be justified by faith in Jesus
    - e) “For everyone that exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14).
  - 2. You must come humbly to Jesus as a sinner for mercy and forgiveness
    - a) Jesus will forgive you
    - b) There is hope for the sinner
    - c) Humble yourself, and God will exalt you