

Hope For The Sinner

Luke 18:9-14

Pastor John Miller

I want to read the whole text, Luke 18:9-14, so you'll get the feel for what's happening.

"Also He spoke..."—that is, the Lord Jesus—"...this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Here's the parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector..."—or "publican." "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying..."—here's his prayer—"...'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you..."—Jesus said—"...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...."—or "justified" or "saved."

The most important question that anyone could ever ask is asked in Job 9:2 where Job asked, "How can a man be righteous before God?" I propose that it is life's greatest question. Or to phrase it another way, "How can I know that my sins are forgiven? How can I know that when I die, I'll go to heaven? How can I know that I have eternal life?" Are you a Christian? Are you a child of God? Have your sins been forgiven? Do you know that when you die, you'll go to heaven? That's life's most important question.

This simple parable—but not simplistic—is profound and theologically deep; there are all kinds of important truths and doctrine in it. It is basically teaching us that there is hope for the sinner. Look at verse 14. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." So basically Jesus is saying that the tax collector or publican was forgiven or saved and would go to heaven, but the Pharisee, the religious man, was lost and would be damned if he didn't repent and trust God for his salvation.

The parable is both searching and comforting. It is searching for those who are proud and self-righteous and plead their goodness to God, and it is comforting to those who are sinners, and know they are, and feel a sense of unworthiness.

The parable is a parable of contrast. We will be focusing on the contrast between two men, the contrast between two prayers and the contrast between two results. So it has two men, two prayers and two results. One man is proud; the other is humble. One is pleading his merits; the other one is pleading for mercy. One is condemned; the other goes home justified.

The first thing we want to do is find out why Jesus spoke the parable. What is the problem that Jesus was addressing? Look at verse 9. Luke says, "Also He spoke this parable." Now there is no reference to time or setting, but in the context of Luke 18:1-8, Jesus has been speaking about prayer. He was speaking about the kingdom of God in chapters 17 and 18 and now

about prayer.

The question is, how do we enter the kingdom, and how do we pray? In Luke 18:1-8, He tells us we're to pray with persistence, and we are to pray continually and without ceasing. We're not to be weary in well-doing; we're to keep praying.

Now Jesus moves into another aspect of prayer and how to enter the kingdom, and that is that we pray humbly, with a contrite heart, out of a sense of unworthiness, that we are sinners and we call upon the Lord for forgiveness and for mercy.

So it's really a message that there is hope for the sinner; that God forgives sins. I want you to note it: "He spoke this parable..."—or this earthly story with a heavenly meaning; this "parable," which means to "lay alongside." So he gives us a story—"...to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous..."—and notice this—"...and despised others."

Now Jesus is going to give us the parable, because there are a lot of people who think they are good and righteous. They think that they can get to heaven by their merits if they are holy enough, work hard enough and are good enough; then God will accept them into heaven.

This is pretty much the religion of the day. Nine times out of ten, when you ask somebody, "Are you a Christian? Are you saved? Are you going to heaven?" they will say, "Well, I'm pretty good. I'm not as bad as my neighbor; he went to jail. He gets drunk and has wild parties and plays his music loud, and I have to call the cops on him. So I'm a better person." A lot of people say, "Well, I'm not too bad; I'm pretty good." Most people think that they're good enough to go to heaven, and they're not bad enough to go to hell. It's interesting what we think about ourselves.

This Pharisee was self-righteous. He was proud. We're going to see that when he prayed, he only pleaded his merits; he didn't cry for the mercy of God upon his sinful heart. Pretty much today, that's the issue.

I believe you can summarize verse 9 by understanding that people believe there is more than one way to get to heaven. There are two roads or two paths or two religions in the world, so to speak, to heaven. Only two. There is the religion of works, of self-righteousness, of your own merits—basically, you could say it like this: either you save yourself or God saves you. They don't work together; either you save yourself, or God saves you. There are those who believe it is a combination of you working hard and then God saves you by His grace. It's either by God's grace or by your works. You either get to heaven by your own goodness and righteousness, or you get to heaven by God's grace. You can't combine the two.

But the Bible is very, very clear about the route to heaven. It says that you're not good enough and I'm not good enough. The Bible says that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. There is no one righteous; no, not one." Therefore, it's not by works of righteousness that we are saved, but according to His mercy He has saved us. It's by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. God has to give you new life. A Christian is a person who

has the life of God in their soul. We call it being “born again,” or “regenerated” is the theological term. God’s life comes into us. Our sins are forgiven.

So basically, Jesus is speaking to that issue in this parable. He said it another way in another place. He said that there are two roads. One is very broad, and many are going down that road. It leads to a broad gate, which leads to destruction. He said there is one other road. And only one other road; He didn’t say there are many other roads. He said that other road is very narrow, “and few there be who find it.” That road leads to a narrow gate, which leads to eternal life. So there are two roads, two gates and there are two eternal destinies. They coincide with the two men, the two prayers and the two results. Two ways to get to heaven: save yourself or trust God to save you by faith. Trust the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Most people today fall into this category in verse 9: they trust themselves that they are righteous. And when you are legalistic, proud and self-righteous, you naturally are going to despise others; you think they’re not as good as you, they don’t keep your standards, they don’t deserve to go to heaven. But you think you do. So Jesus is speaking to those self-righteous people who think they can earn, merit or deserve eternal life.

Secondly, Jesus gives us the parable in verses 10-14. He had addressed the problem, so now He gives us the parable which is a portrait of self-righteousness and salvation by faith. We’re going to look at the three contrasts in the parable. There are two men. We’re introduced to them in verse 10. “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.”

You can’t get more extreme or far apart in the spectrum than these two men. One is devout, holy, devoted, a religious Jew, and the other—a Jew, no doubt, as well—is an ungodly, unrighteous, irreligious and worldly individual. He is a tax collector.

They went up to the temple to pray, both of them together. They would pray daily at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. There would be the morning and afternoon sacrifice, and they would gather there in the temple. Both went to pray, but the Pharisee is going to pray a little differently than the tax collector. They have two prayers different prayers.

What is a Pharisee? We understand that the Pharisees were the most religious sect of the Jews. They devoted themselves to keeping every jot and tittle and precept of the Law. But the word “Pharisee,” in our day, has become synonymous with hypocrisy or a hypocrite. If you call someone a Pharisee, you are saying they are a hypocrite. Jesus indicted them in Matthew 23. He said that they were like “white-washed tombs”; they appeared beautiful on the outside, but inside they were full of dead-men’s bones. They are like a cup or a platter where the outside is clean, but the inside is full of extortion and evil thoughts. He said that from your heart come these evil things. They looked very good externally; they had the robes, bordered garments, prayer shawls, large phylacteries on their foreheads and on their arms. They prayed very eloquent prayers. But God is basically saying that “Their hearts are far from Me.” That’s the same indictment that the prophet Isaiah brought on Israel in the Old Testament. He said, “You

lift your hands, but your heart is far from Me.”

This parable reminds us of a very important truth: God looks not as men do on the outward appearance. We're impressed by robes and phylacteries and religious activity. But not God. God looks at the heart. God sees the heart and the motives of the heart and intentions of the heart. That's what God is looking at when He looks at these two individuals.

The people would be awestruck by the Pharisee. The populists of the day highly respected the Pharisees. There was no one more religious than they were. But it's interesting that Jesus, in His Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:20, said, “Except your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” Again, the people would be thinking, How could we have more righteousness than the Pharisees or the Scribes?! Jesus was saying that there's was external and there wasn't any reality.

A greater righteousness is internal, and it is real and it is imputed by faith in Jesus Christ. So the righteousness that is greater is a gift that is given to us by God, the righteousness of Christ. And it is an internal righteousness that manifests in outward works because there is a change in our heart. So people would be blown away by Jesus' use of the Pharisee as not being justified at the end of this parable.

The other man we're familiar with, as well. He was a publican or tax collector. He was a Jew who worked for the Romans. He was a turncoat. He was despised by the crowd, by the people. Everyone would adore the Pharisee, but they would despise the tax collector. These men weren't just collecting taxes; they were criminals and crooks. They were shysters and robbers. They lavished all their money on themselves. They were like the Mafia; they owned all of the casinos in Las Vegas. They were very ungodly and worldly. New Testament mobsters is what they were.

These two individuals couldn't be farther apart on the spectrum as they enter into the temple to pray. But the fact that the publican was even there was an indication that Jesus came to call not the righteous but the sinners to repentance. There is hope for the sinner.

Now they pray, so let's look at their prayers. We have the contrast of the men and now the contrast of the prayers. First there is the prayer of the Pharisee, and then there is the prayer of the tax collector. Let's look at the prayer of the Pharisee in verses 11-12. It's amazing. “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’”

I can hear the crowd clapping. He takes a little bow, you know. “Ooh, aah; isn't he awesome! He's so holy. Look at how amazing this guy is!”

I want to point out three things. When this guy prayed, he had no eye on God. His posture is self-promoting and proud. Notice it says that he “stood and prayed...with himself.” In the Greek, this would actually indicate that he was praying to himself. Think about that. Standing

was okay; God doesn't really look at your posture in prayer. You don't have to fold your hands and kneel down in order for God to hear your prayers. God doesn't look at the position of your body; He looks at your heart. But the Jews would often stand when they prayed. They would often lift their hands when they prayed. They would often lift their eyes to heaven. I think that's great. You're looking up to God with expectation to receive from Him.

In the midst of this great gathering in the temple—and at 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., hundreds would gather there to pray on Tuesday and Thursday. They would do that specifically, because it was the time that the market was going and people were there.

So the Pharisee stood and prayed, but he was not talking to God. He was talking to himself about himself. The text clearly indicates that he was talking to himself about himself for the benefit of others, to show them how awesome he was.

In Matthew 6, Jesus said, in light of the prayer of the Pharisees, "Do not pray to be seen or heard by men." He said, "Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing." He's not actually telling us we have to fake out our hand in church on Sunday when we pray. He's saying, basically, "Don't do it to show off. Don't put on an ostentatious show. But enter into your closet." Remember when Jesus said that?

First you have to clean your closet, by the way, in order to get in. Some of you would open your closet, there'd be a landslide and you'd be dead right there. So you go in the closet, shut the door and you pray.

Again, He's not saying that you have to pray in your closet, but He's saying to shut yourself out from those around you and "pray to your Father Who is in secret, and your Father, Who sees in secret, will reward you openly," or "publicly." So He's telling us about our heart and our attitude—that we need to focus on God. But this Pharisee had no eye on God.

Secondly, he had a bad eye on others. Notice the end of verse 11. He used the name "God," but just because it's a formality. He said, "God, I thank You..." That's kind of amazing, because why would you be thanking God if you think you can go to heaven by your good works? If you're not saved by grace, you don't have anything to be thankful for. You save yourself. You might as well praise yourself, and that's what he does. He said, "...I am not like other men..."—first he gives the negative; he wants God to know and the other people to know what he is not. He gets very specific—"...extortioners..."—in other words, he doesn't rob from other people—"...unjust..."—or "unrighteous"—"...adulterers..."—or a "sexually immoral person"—"...or even as this tax collector."

How do you think this made the tax collector feel? Can you imagine coming to church on Sunday morning, you're sitting in your pew and the person sitting next to you starts to pray and says, "Lord, I thank You that I'm not like this wretched, wicked, vile sinner sitting to my right. I pray, God, You would smite him with lightning! In the name of Jesus!" God bless you. Welcome to church. Can you imagine that the dude singles you out?! "That wretched, vile

sinner that just came in the door. Thank you, God, that I am a good person.”

Again, not only do people think they're righteous and they trust themselves, but they despise others. They look down on others. “I'm not as bad as this. I'm not an extortioners.” I've talked to people and asked them, “Are you a Christian?”

“Well, I haven't killed anybody. I don't do heroin. I don't steal.”

“I didn't ask you that. I asked you if you are a Christian.”

I asked one guy if he was a Christian, and he said, “No, thank God. I'm a Baptist.” Really? You can be a Presbyterian or a Methodist or a Lutheran; I don't care. You need to be born again is what you need to be. You need to know Jesus.

It is so often that people look down on others. When you think you're going to go to heaven, you always think there are people who are worse than you. You always want to point them out. “Well, I do have my mistakes, but I haven't lied like them, or I haven't committed adultery like that person.” We point out others, and we put others down so we can lift ourselves up.

So the Pharisee had no eye on God. He had a bad eye on others. He saw other's sins but not his own. Now thirdly, he had a good eye on himself, verse 12. Did you notice that in two verses, he used the personal pronoun “I” five times? Notice it in verses 11-12: “I thank You I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” So in verse 11, he says what he is not, and then in verse 12, he says what he is, how good he is.

Under Jewish law, you only had to fast once a year on the Day of Atonement. Then the Jews kind of upped it a little bit and said that they should fast once a week. This guy doubles it. “I'll do better. I'll fast twice a week.” And everyone went, “Ooo! Wow! It's amazing.”

Then the Pharisee said, “Not only that, but I give tithes of all that I possess.” They were to give 10%, but not of everything they had. Jesus said, “You Pharisees, you count out your spices and mint and say, ‘One for God and nine for me.’” They went above and beyond what even the law required. They're thinking that they're something. Jesus realized that this Pharisee's heart wasn't right, so He told the parable. The Pharisee had a bad eye on others and a good eye on himself.

Phariseeism is not dead. “Save yourself” is the philosophy of the day. The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee, as he said in Philippians 3. He was tongue-in-cheek boasting of his race. He said he was “a Hebrew of Hebrews.” You know there are people today who are proud of their race? They think that being a certain race gets you to heaven. He was proud of his religion. He said he was a Pharisee. And people are proud of their religion. He was proud of his ritual. He said that he was circumcised when he was eight days old.

I ask people, “Are you a Christian?”

“Well, I’ve been baptized,” or “I’ve been confirmed; I’ve gone through confirmation.”

“That’s not what I asked you. I asked you if you are a Christian. Have you been born again?”

A Pharisee was proud of his rituals. He was proud of his own righteousness. Paul said, “Touching the righteousness, which is in the law, I lived a blameless life.” That was the proud Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. But on his way to Damascus, when Saul encountered the risen Jesus, Saul was struck to the ground by the great light of His presence. After that, Paul said, “Those things that were gain to me, I now count as loss for Christ.” All of Paul’s religious pedigree, all the things he had according to the flesh—his race, his religion, his righteousness, his rites, his rituals—he now considered it all a pile of manure. Paul said, “I count them as refuse, that I might be found in Christ; not having my own righteousness, which is according to the law, but that which is through the faith of Jesus Christ.”

Are you trusting God to make you righteous? Are you trusting Him for salvation or are you trusting in yourself?

Now notice the tax collector’s prayer, in comparison, in verse 13. “And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying...”—here’s his prayer—“...‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” In the Greek, it would read “the sinner,” not “a sinner.”

I want you to notice these things: his posture was “standing afar off,” not “raising his eyes to heaven.” This is an indication of his humility and a sense of unworthiness. That’s a good thing. This man understood that I am not worthy to be here. I should be kicked out of this group. So he stood on the perimeter, on the outside edge. He didn’t feel worthy to approach God or the altar. He wouldn’t lift up his eyes, because he was ashamed of himself and his sins, so he looked down. But God saw his heart.

Notice not just his posture but his penance. Verse 13, he “beat his breast.” For the Jew, that was a sign of sorrow. It is rarely seen in the Bible, by the way. It’s found in the story of Jesus dying on the Cross and the Jews went away grieving and beat upon their chest. Why the chest? Because it is the symbol of the heart. They’re beating on their heart saying, “My heart is sinful. My heart is desperately wicked.” Beating on their chest was a sign of sorrow and remorse over their sins. So this tax collector felt his unworthiness, he stood afar off and looked down and began to beat upon his chest as he saw his sin in his heart.

Then thirdly, notice his prayer. This is one of the most beautiful, amazing prayers in the entire Bible. He said, “God...”—and I believe he was actually addressing God. He wasn’t talking to himself. The Pharisee was talking to himself about himself, but this tax collector was talking to God about his sin. It’s interesting; the Pharisee made no mention of sin or repentance or unworthiness. He made no plea for mercy or forgiveness; just boasting his merits.

But this tax collector said, “God, be merciful...”—and in the Greek, don’t miss this; it’s a powerful statement. The words translated “be merciful” is a unique kind of Greek phrase which

literally could be rendered—and is in some translations—“be propitiated.” It means he was pleading to God for an atoning sacrifice. Before Calvary, before the Cross, he had an understanding, as a guilty sinner, that he needed someone to pay for his sins. “I’m unworthy.” “Be propitiated.”

Propitiation is the work of the Cross toward God. Not only did Jesus die on the Cross for sinners, but He also died for God the Father. The Bible says that God is holy, God is righteous and God is just. His law had been broken. The Bible says that “The soul that sins shall surely die.” This is why even though God is loving and gracious and merciful and forgiving, we can’t just come to God and ask Him to say, “Oh, I love you. I forgive you.” No. His righteousness and holiness demand that a penalty be paid for our sinning against Him.

If you got a speeding ticket and were brought before a judge, and he asked, “John Miller, were you going 120 miles an hour in a 45 mile an hour zone?” (This is just hyperbole; it’s my own parable, so don’t freak out. It didn’t happen. Close, but it didn’t happen.) I would say, “Yes, your honor; I was speeding.”

The judge would say, “Aren’t you John Miller, the pastor of Revival Christian Fellowship?”

“Yeah.”

“Okay; I’m just going to be nice to you today and let you go.”

Would that be righteous? It would be good, but it wouldn’t be righteous. It would be great for me, but he wouldn’t be a good judge. He wouldn’t be upholding the law. But if the judge came down from the bench, took out his wallet and paid the fine, because he’s a good guy and loves me, that would be good. Then righteousness would be satisfied—the law would be satisfied because the fine would be paid—and God’s love would be demonstrated.

God did both; He sent His Son to die for your sins. He paid your penalty, and He satisfied the demands of God’s holy, righteous law.

So all that theology and doctrine is packed into this penitent prayer, “Be propitiated to me the sinner!” Not “a sinner.” It reminds us that Paul said, “I am the chief of sinners,” or “I am the big sinner.”

So the tax collector realized his unworthiness and was praying that God would be propitiated; he was asking for an atoning sacrifice.

What a contrast in the two prayers! The Pharisee talked to himself; the tax collector prayed to God. The Pharisee proudly proclaimed his merits; the tax collector prayed for mercy. “God be merciful” or “be propitiated.” “God, satisfy my broken sin that has violated Your law.”

So in verse 13, we see that Jesus said this man came with humility, he came and confessed and it all is a picture of true, godly sorrow and repentance and, I believe, faith. He’s not

boasting of his own righteousness or good works.

Notice that the publican doesn't mention that he tithes. He doesn't mention that he fasts. He doesn't mention that he is better than other people. A lot of times people will say, "Well, I go to church. I pay tithes. I've been baptized. I'm a good person. I take communion. I believe in God." He didn't say anything like that. All he said was, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" His prayer is short, simple and sincere.

It reminds me of Peter when he was walking on the water in the storm, and Jesus came and rescued him. Remember what Peter prayed when he got his eyes off Jesus and he looked at the waves and he started to sink? He said, "Lord, save me!" He didn't even say, "In Jesus' name" at the end. When you're sinking in the sea in a storm, you don't have time to say, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done...." Then he would sink.

Now there's nothing wrong with The Lord's Prayer. We spent eight weeks studying it on Sunday morning. It's a great thing to pray. But God looks at your heart. And if you're just crying out in desperation, "Lord, save me; I can't save myself. God be merciful. God be propitiated toward me the sinner," the Bible is so clear that God will answer your prayer, and God will forgive your sins. The tax collector cried out and pleaded for mercy.

God saves by His grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "By grace you have been saved..."—grace is unearned, unmerited, undeserved favor—"...through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

When David sinned and committed adultery with Bathsheba, he murdered her husband, Uriah, to cover his sin and then lied about it. Finally after Nathan the prophet came and exposed his sin, David confessed his sin and said in Psalm 51:1, "Have mercy upon me, O God." He cried out to God for mercy.

John Newton, the wicked slave trader, was saved by God's amazing grace and wrote that song we sing today, Amazing Grace.

"Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;

Was blind, but now I see."

How wonderful when God opens your eyes to see your true condition.

There are two men, there are two prayers and thirdly and lastly, there are two results, verse 14. Jesus said, "I tell you...." Now whenever Jesus uses this phrase or "I say unto you," notice that

He's not quoting authorities. He's not saying, "Rabbi Hillel says..." or "Rabbi Shimeai says..." He's not saying, "The Torah says..." He's not quoting some other person. He's saying, "I tell you." Jesus is the Son of God. He's saying, "I tell you, this man..."—the tax collector, who the people deemed to be such a wicked sinner—"...went down to his house justified..."—notice that word that Jesus used—"...rather than the other."

Now when the people listening heard that, they were blown away. They were completely freaking out. "You want to tell me that a Pharisee is not justified, but a tax collector is?!" They hated tax collectors. They wouldn't allow a tax collector anywhere near them. They wouldn't want to touch one; they would be defiled.

Jesus turned everything they believed upside down and on its head. Jesus said, "I want you to know something: that very "religious" man, in his self-righteousness, pleading his mercy, went home unsaved. He was lost." If he didn't repent, he would go to hell, because he wasn't saved.

The tax collector, being wicked and despised and being irreligious—Jesus saw his sin and his need. The man came humbly and Jesus felt his need. He cried for mercy, God heard his prayer and God forgave his sin.

Jesus said that he went "justified." The New Testament teaches the doctrine of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. That's clearly taught in the Bible. Justification is the act of God in which God declares the believing sinner to be righteous, based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

It's a forensic or legal or courtroom term. It would be like coming guilty before a judge in a courtroom and the judge says, "We drop all charges; they're dismissed. You're guiltless. You're free. Go." You've been declared righteous.

Now you're not made righteous practically but positionally. Positionally, you stand in Christ complete and perfectly righteous. If you're a Christian, you've been justified. Some like to break it down and say, "Just as if I'd never sinned." The reality that God declares me righteous—how good is that! All my sins have been forgiven, and I'm righteous before God! Because Jesus died on the Cross, and when I trust Him as my Savior, His righteousness is given to me, and my sin is paid for at the Cross. What a glorious thing that is!

All this justification takes place through faith. Even in the Old Testament, it says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him as righteousness." In the Old Testament book of Habakkuk 2:4, it tells us, "The just shall live by faith." This verse, which is one of the most important in the Bible, is quoted three times in the New Testament. It's quoted in Romans—"the just"; it's quoted in Galatians—"shall live"; and it's quoted in Hebrews—"by faith." "The just shall live by faith."

It was that verse that Martin Luther, the self-righteous, devoted, religious, Catholic, German monk, came to understand that by his own goodness he couldn't appease the wrathful God. He labored and tried so desperately to be good enough to get to heaven. He was a very devout

monk, but he realized he wasn't good enough. Then God opened his eyes; "The just shall live by faith." Then he realized that salvation was a gift from God that came by faith, and faith alone.

This is why Paul wrote in Galatians 2:16, "...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in..."—or "trust in" or "put our faith in"—"...Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." Then in Romans 3:27, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith." You can't boast, as this Pharisee did, because you are saved by God's grace through faith. Romans 3:28 says, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."

Today, you and I can be justified by trusting in Jesus Christ by faith.

Notice, in closing, verse 14. Jesus gives the spiritual axiom. "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." That's a truism. That's a true statement given by Jesus Christ. You must come humbly to Jesus as a sinner for mercy, and He will forgive you. Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me, I will in no wise cast him out." There is hope for the humble sinner. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and He will lift you up."