

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector Luke

18:9-14

by David Servant

To be saved, a person must humble himself, admitting that he is a sinner who needs a Savior.

Scripture: Luke 18:9, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:21

Topics: "Justification By Faith", "Humility Before God"

Description

David Servant preaches about the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, highlighting the danger of pride in relying on our own good works for salvation rather than recognizing our need for a Savior. The Pharisee's self-righteousness blinded him to his own sins, while the tax collector's humility and acknowledgment of his need for forgiveness justified him before God. Justification means being declared 'just as if I'd never sinned,' a status believers receive through Jesus' perfect standing before God. Without Jesus, no one can have a perfect standing before God due to the universal reality of sin.

Transcript

This story was aimed at the Pharisees, who were generally proud of themselves for their supposed obedience to God and consequently despised everyone else. They were no different than many modern religious people who are proud of their outward conformity to God's law and who look down on others who don't come up to their standards.

The good points that the Pharisee listed about himself were commendable, as all of them indicated some obedience to God. He claimed that he never cheated, sinned or committed adultery. He fasted regularly and tithed. However, he had at least one major flaw: he was very proud. He thought that his good works earned his salvation. He didn't feel like he needed a Savior because he had saved himself!

We know, however, that the Pharisee needed a Savior, if for no other sin than the sin of pride. And most likely, he was guilty of a number of other sins as well. One, to be sure, was his lack of compassion for other people like the tax collector.

Unlike the Pharisee, the tax collector knew he was a sinner who needed forgiveness if he was to be saved. So he humbly admitted his sinfulness and asked for mercy from God. And Jesus said that his prayer was answered. He left his place of prayer saved, whereas the Pharisee left unsaved. To be saved, a person must humble himself, admitting that he is a sinner who needs a Savior. If we think, like the

Pharisee, that we don't need a Savior, then we cannot be saved.

Q. Jesus said that the tax collector, unlike the Pharisee, left the Temple justified before God. Do you know what it means to be "justified"?

A. The easiest-to-remember definition of the word justified is this: "just as if I'd never sinned." When a person goes to court and the judge says at the end of his trial, "You are justified," he means, "I find you not guilty for the crime of which you've been accused." A person who is justified is not a forgiven sinner, he is a person who has not sinned! The Bible teaches us that Jesus bore our sins and gives believers His right standing before God the Father. Because Jesus never sinned, He has perfect standing before God, and that is what we get when we believe in Him!

Q. Would it be possible to have a perfect standing before God apart from Jesus?

A. Only if a person never sinned could he have a perfect standing before God without Jesus. However, since every person has sinned (even so-called good religious people who might be more obedient than the average person), everyone needs Jesus to be saved.

Application: Kids raised in Christian homes are often well taught to do what is right, and consequently they do what is right most of the time. The danger that exists for them is that they might tend to think that their good behavior is what saves them, and they might not see their great need for Jesus to save them. The cure for such a proud attitude is to ask the Lord to show us our sins, especially the ones that are hidden from others, like wrong thoughts, motives and attitudes. Why don't you ask the Lord to reveal to you how much you need Him as your Savior today in prayer?

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