

Prayer and God's view of Pride and Humility*Luke 18:9-14*

Introduction: Today we continue our sermon series on prayer. We are examining various prayers found in the Bible and noticing that when people prayed well, they prayed in light of the character of God. We've seen that since God is faithful, we can plead with Him to fulfill His promises (Daniel 9:19, Psalm 70:5). Because God is compassionate, we can pour out our laments/complaints to Him (Psalm 42 & 43). Because God is forgiving, we can confess our sins to Him (Psalm 32). Today we are looking at a parable in Luke 18 in which Jesus puts prayers on the lips of two people – a Pharisee and a tax collector. One prayed in light of the character of God and one didn't. May this study encourage us to pray with the same heart as the one who prayed in light of God's character.

Read Luke 18:9-14

1. How does Luke describe the ones to whom Jesus told this parable (v. 9)?
2. What do you know about Pharisees and tax-gatherers and how they were viewed in Jesus day?
3. How would you characterize the heart of each man based on how each prayed?
4. What difference did it make how these men prayed?
5. What does it mean that the tax collector was justified and the other wasn't (v. 14)?
6. What does this parable teach us about prayer?
7. Read Proverbs 29:23 & James 4:10. What do these passages say about pride and humility?

Steve said:

If we're honest, we have to admit that (like the Pharisee) we all have two lists. First, even though you probably wouldn't say so out loud, you have a list of people that you are **so** glad you're not like. Complete this sentence: "I may not be perfect, but at least I'm not _____." At least I'm not lazy . . . not a liar . . . not judgmental . . . not superficial . . . not liberal/right-wing . . .

8. In what ways are you tempted to say with the Pharisee, "God, I thank You that I am not like other people" (v. 11)? In other words, how would you complete the sentence?

Steve said:

Virtues are good (that's why they're virtues). But when we begin to differentiate between ourselves and others because of the virtues we see in our lives, we're just like the Pharisee. Like fungus growing on the bottom of a rock, pride is growing on our virtues. Jesus wants us to know in no uncertain terms that "Those who exalt themselves will be humbled." God is opposed to the proud. Therefore, we should avoid the mentality of the Pharisee.

9. Are there any virtues that you really like about yourself, which you use to set yourself apart from others? If so, what are they?

Steve said:

Jesus invites us to adopt the mentality of the tax-collector – to clothe ourselves in humility before God in prayer. If we would be like the tax-collector at prayer, we first simply need to quit making lists and quit comparing ourselves to other people. We don't need shorter lists; we need to get rid of our lists altogether. . . To be clear, I'm not saying that we merely need to pretend that we're not superior to other people. We actually need to believe that we're not superior to other people – because that is the truth. I need just as much mercy as the people on my first list. They may sin in ways that I don't, but I sin in other ways that they probably don't. As far as I know God doesn't have a list of all 6.8 billion people on earth, ranking them from best to worst. It is true that some have made more progress than others on the path of discipleship, but we all stand before God just like the tax-collector. We all sin and therefore we all need God's mercy.

10. Practically, how can we adopt the mentality of the tax-collector? How do we clothe ourselves in humility?

11. What specific steps can you take this week to cultivate a spirit of humility in your prayer life?