

To Seek And To Save A Pharisee and A Publican Luke 18.9-14

A. A Comparison (vs 9-12)

1. The Persuasion (vs 9; Isa 64.6; Luke 18.18-30; Matt 16.26; 1 Sam 15.22-23; Prov 14.16) - “. . . Which trust in themselves . . . ”

- a. [False Confidences – Scripture speaks of numerous confidences that people place their eternal hopes upon. But they are all for the most part false confidences. For instance:]

- (1) [The Pharisee (Luke 18.9-10) in our text places his confidence in his **personally perceived goodness** in comparison to the publican beside him. Surely he must be in good shape, in respect to God, in comparison to the sinner beside him and his neglectful lifestyle. His good works must count for something.]

[Isaiah 64:6 ⁶ But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.]

- (2) [The Rich Ruler (Luke 18.18-30; Matt 16.26) – This rich ruler placed his confidence in his prosperity. He trusted that he must be right with God because of his blessed affluence. Surely God wouldn't have given him all his riches if he weren't right with God.]

[Matthew 16:26 ²⁶ For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?]

- (3) [King Saul and His Sacrifice (1 Sam 15) – King Saul placed his confidence in what he thought would please God. When he was commanded to destroy Amalek as a form of God's judgment, instead to kept all the best sheep, goats, and stuff of the land. He claimed he kept it to make sacrifices unto God. It just seemed, in his heart, like the right thing to do. But God told him through Samuel:]

[1 Samuel 15:22-23 ²² And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. ²³ For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.]

[Proverbs 14:12 ¹² There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.]

- b. **[His Persuasion** - The Pharisee in our text is making a false comparison. He is comparing himself to another person, and based upon his reasonable evaluation he has concluded that he must be in good shape with God. He has persuaded himself that he is eternally acceptable.]
- c. **[Our Persuasion** – Most of have the tendency to weigh our lives in the mortal scale of reason. We like to count up our good deeds and compare them to our bad deeds, and in so doing, we bank up our confidence and presume that we must be in good shape with God. But watch out for your persuasion may be based on circumstantial evidence rather than immortal spiritual empirical fact.]

2. **The Promotion (vs 10-12)** [- “Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 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.”** – Why is it that we are so easily persuaded by our situational ethics? So that we feel we can stand in God’s presence. **It is that we miss understand the eternally revealed principles of reward and recompense.**]

- a. **[Reward and Recompense** – This Pharisee is clearly judging his eternal stature through the gage of reward and recompense; and in keeping with his judgment he finds himself worthy of an undeniable promotion. He judges himself worthy of reward in comparison to the life he feels he has lived. We know in life that there are rewards and recompenses.]

(1) **[The Reward** - If we work hard, study earnestly, and diligently do the right things then there is an accompanying reward.]

1) [Do your Job faithfully and properly and you will receive a pay check.]

2) [Properly train and prepare for the marathon and you will place well, and may even win.]

(2) **[The Recompense** – On the other hand, if we are slothful and lazy or if we are law breakers there is an inevitable consequence.]

1) [If we are slothful in our job and fail to do what is required we expect that we will loose our job or fail to achieve raises or promotions.]

2) [If we break the law, then we expect that we will come under the justice that accompanies our actions.]

- b. **[Eternal Rewards and Recompenses** – Creation and the Bible seem to even support such rewards and recompenses. Prepare the ground and plant the seed and the fruit of a harvest is virtually promised. If Christians do the right things and live the right life then there are biblical promise provided. In essence people just apply the same life’s

principles to their eternal perspective and feel like they can make the same eternal reconciliation. The problem is that when people start measuring themselves they usually leave out one very important element in their equation, their justification.]

3. **The Problem (James 2.10-11; James 2.10-11; Rom 6.23; 3.23-26)** [– This Pharisee has a notable list of good and moral things that mark his life. If you were to ask him if he had any failures, or any sins in his life he would certainly admit that he does. We all find it easy to admit that we are all sinners. Our problem is that we feel our good by far outweighs our bad and hence we esteem ourselves as morally good people. The part of the equation that we leave out is the part of justification. It doesn't matter how much good you do, you still must pay the penalty for your transgressions, even if it is only one transgression and relatively small in comparison.]

- a. **[Justice must be served** – The breaking of the law makes one a law breaker.]

[James 2:10-11 ¹⁰ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. ¹¹ For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.]

[Romans 6:23 ²³ For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.]

- b. **[Wrong Comparison** - The Pharisee is making the wrong comparison. He is comparing himself to the publican, a fellowman, rather than to God Himself through God's Word. When we compare ourselves to other people, we can always find someone whom we perceive to be in worse shape than us. WE find personal promotion and confidence in such comparisons. But there is no eternal value in these false comparisons. **We must compare ourselves to Almighty God, and the only reliable source from which to make such a comparison is the Word of God.]**

- c. **[Justification precedes any reward** – The transgression of the law cannot be reversed by good and moral actions.]

- (1) **[Illustration** – Suppose a man is a thief. He robs numerous homes in his neighborhood. As he flees from the law he moves to another city happens to secure a good job and lives a good moral life. He doesn't steal, He becomes positively involved in his community, He is a relatively good citizen. Yet, one day, somehow, the law catches up to him and he is arrested for larceny. Regardless of how good his deeds in one community might have been, he is still a law breaker and must be extradited to the other community to face his day in court.]

[Likewise, we are all law breakers in God's eternal kingdom, and the penalties for our sins must be recompensed regardless of how good we feel we have been since. God is not only a loving and caring God, He is also holy and just and the penalty for your sins must be paid in full.]

- (2) **[Illustration - Convicted CEO's Good Works Don't Count - Bernard Ebbers** stood before the judge and asked for mercy. The former CEO of WorldCom had recently been indicted for orchestrating an \$11 billion accounting fraud that shut down the telecommunications firm in 2002, yet he asked for mercy.]

[His company's collapse represented the largest bankruptcy in U.S. history and devastated the lives of thousands of employees, yet he asked for mercy.]

[Speaking on behalf of his client, defense attorney Reid Weingarten cited 169 letters from Ebbers' supporters, detailing the 63-year-old's heart condition and numerous (often anonymous) charitable gifts.]

["If you live 60-some-odd years," said Weingarten, "if you have an unblemished record, if you have endless numbers of people who attest to your goodness, doesn't that count? Doesn't that count particularly on this day?"]

[The judge said no, sentencing Ebbers to 25 years in a federal penitentiary.]

- (3) [What is the penalty for your sin, even just one sin, it is death in hell.]

- d. **[Justification Through Christ - God provided a means for your justification]**

[Romans 3:23-26 ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.]

[If you refuse to accept the justification of your sins through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, then you must pay the penalty required yourself, because Justice precedes any reward. You will have your day in court, unless Jesus has already stood in court for you.]

- e. **[Hence, the problem that this Pharisee has is that he has failed to see his need of justification and reconciliation with God because he is falsely comparing himself to this publican.]**

B. A Confession (vs 13)

1. **His Lostness (Isa 59.2; Eph 2.1-5; Col 2.13)** [– “*And the publican, standing afar off, . . .*” – Notice that this Publican had a keen sense of where he stood with God. He stood afar off. He realized the gravity of his sin and the holiness of Almighty God.]

[Like this sinner we too stand far from God. You may think that you are very close to God, but apart from the justification provided by our Lord Jesus Christ you are very far from God.]

[Isaiah 59:2 ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.]

In Your Sins you are spiritually and mortally dead! The Bible proclaims:

[Ephesians 2:1-5 ¹ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; ² Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: ³ Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)]

[Colossians 2:13 ¹³ And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;]

[Sin causes a huge chasm of separation between us and God, and until we are reconciled and justified by the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, we stand very far from God. This Publican realized his spiritual position in respect to God and rightly stood far off from God. But, as we have emphasized throughout the book of Luke, Our Lord came to seek and save that which was lost.]

2. **His Humbleness (Prov 16:18; 18:12)** [– “. . . would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, . . .” – Not only do we note this publican's affiliation with his lostness in respect to Almighty God, but we also notice his humbleness in respect to God. Of having a humble spirit the Bible reminds us:]

[Proverbs 16:18 ¹⁸ Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.]

[Proverbs 18:12 ¹² Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.]

[In our day we like to be proud people. Parents do not want their children to be humiliated; they struggle to raise the esteem of their children and to help feel proud of who they are. However, such parents may lead their children into everlasting destruction. If your children are not allowed to come to the place where they realize their helplessness without Christ then they may grow up to be much like this Pharisee and may never come to a place of lostness and humbleness in respect to God. Individuals in such a case will be in peril for their eternal soul. For they may never be able to recognize their need for a Savior.]

3. **His Hopelessness (Rom 10.13; Acts 2.21; Titus 3.5)** [- “ . . . but smote upon his breast, saying, *God be merciful to me a sinner.*” - This lost sinner realized that his only how was to cry out to God for mercy. The Bible commends:]

[Romans 10:13 ¹³ For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.]

[Acts 2:21 ²¹ And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.]

[We human beings seem to want to make our own way for salvation. We just don't like the feeling that we are hopeless and helpless in ourselves. We like to feel as if we have done something to earn those things that we have acquired in life. But salvation is something that you can never work out through your labors. The Bible reminds us:]

[Titus 3:5 ⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;]

[This Publican was brought to the very point that every human being needs to be brought to. He realize his lostness, reckoned his lowliness, and called out to God in his hopelessness. Listen to his redeeming confession:]

[. . . God be merciful to me a sinner]

- C. **A Conversion (vs 14)** [- The heartfelt confession of this lost publican brought him to experience the New Birth. The heartfelt personal promotion of the Pharisee kept him from experiencing the New Birth. Consider then:]

1. **The Means Of Justification** [- “*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*” - Apart from your Justification there is no redemption and you are fully and wholly lost in your sinfulness.]
2. **The Mode of Condemnation** [- Are you a proud individual? Do you find yourself comparing your life and self worth to other people? Look out, you may be in peril for your eternal soul. Compare yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ and Him alone, and judge where you stand then.]