

Luke 18:9-14

Introduction: This second parable on prayer shows us the proper attitude we need to have, especially when we pray. Your underlying assumptions about how you think you can approach God reveal whether you are trusting in God or in yourself. Many trust in themselves, are self-sufficient, and trust in their self-righteousness. Jesus clearly condemns this attitude.

- 1) Luke identifies Jesus' audience—18:9 ⁹ *Now He also told them this parable to some ...*
 - a) Attitude of selfward confidence—*who put confidence upon themselves that they were righteous* [δικαίος]
 - b) Attitude of selfward superiority—and viewed the rest with contempt:
 - c) This includes some Pharisees, but also others with this same attitude.

- 2) Jesus compares two men—18:10-13 ¹⁰ *“Two men went up (because of it being on a hill) into the temple to pray, (9 AM or 3 PM)*
 - a) Polar opposites in their culture
 - i) Considered among the religious elite—*one a Pharisee*
 - (1) The common person assumed these men had a direct line to God
 - ii) Considered among the lowest of the lowly—and *the other a tax collector.*
 - (1) The common person assumed these men would never pray
 - b) Self-admiration—¹¹ *The Pharisee stood and was praying these things to himself:* (Note the 5 uses of personal pronouns) (cf. Prov. 20:6)
 - i) *‘God I thank You that I am not like other people:*
 - (1) His spiritual resume stated **negatively**—*extortionists, unrighteous* [ἄδικος], *adulterers, or even like this tax collector.*
 - (a) He's in a class all by himself!
 - (b) He assumes the tax collector is a sinner based solely on his job.
 - (2) His spiritual resume stated **positively**
 - (a) ¹² *I fast twice a week;*
 - (i) The Law required fasting/humiliation only on the Day of Atonement. Such voluntary fasting as this practiced *twice a week* by the Pharisee normally took place on Thursday (the day Moses ascended the mountain) and Monday (the day Moses descended the mountain).
 - (b) *I give tithes of all that I acquire.*
 - (i) The Law required tithing only on certain crops.
 - (3) EVERYONE has a spiritual resume. What does yours look like? What is on your list?
 - ii) When he referred to God it was a mere formality. His prayer of praise ended up being about himself, not God. (NET Bible)
 - (1) He assumes he is God's best friend.

- iii) In essence he says, “God, I thank you that I am such a great guy!” He has gone beyond the call of duty, so God should be impressed with his record. (Bock) He has no sense of his own sin.
 - iv) He asks God for nothing because he sees himself as being in need of nothing. He seeks no mercy, not grace, no forgiveness. (MacArthur)
 - c) Self-humiliation—¹³ *And the tax collector, standing far away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast* (symbolic of where sin resides), *saying,*
 - i) ‘*God, be propitiated to me the sinner.*’
 - (1) Godward—he requests that God’s wrath and justice toward him be satisfied and resolved.
 - (a) He assumes that he is God’s enemy.
 - (b) He assumes that he is unworthy to come to God.
 - (c) He assumes that he has no righteousness of his own to offer God.
 - (2) Manward—he requests that God show mercy to him the miserable sinner
 - ii) He recognized his sin, and knew that God alone could solve his spiritual dilemma.
 - (1) The Pharisee viewed others as sinners. He viewed himself as the only sinner.
 - (2) The tax collector views himself not just as any sinner but as the worst of all sinners. (NET Bible)
 - (3) He was completely dependent on God for establishing a right relationship with Him. (Moody Commentary)
- 3) Jesus applies the parable with a surprising twist—18:14 ¹⁴ *I tell you^{pl}, this man* (the tax collector) *went down* (from the elevated temple) *to his house justified* [pf. pass. of δικαιόω] (before God, a theological passive) *rather than the other* (the Pharisee),
 - a) Why? *because ...*
 - i) Self-elevation is dangerous—*everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,*
 - ii) Self-effacing—*but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*” (cf. 14:11)
 - b) God quickly heard the prayer of the humble, repentant tax collector. What mercy!
 - c) Position in the temple means nothing; the position of the heart means everything. (Bock)
- 4) Points for us to remember
 - a) God demands a humility that will trust Him totally.
 - b) God demands a humility that has confidence in His mercy.
 - i) Part of the cure for self-righteousness is self-knowledge.