

## 1. The Essential Contrast: Pride vs. Humility

- The **Kingdom of Heaven** is revealed to those with a humble and receptive heart, but hidden from the proud.
- **Humility** is the defining characteristic of Kingdom citizens; it is essential.
- It is the only proper response when we recognize our wretched sinfulness and the insurmountable gap between our righteousness and God's perfect requirement.
- The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

**Luke 18:9–14 (NET):** "Jesus also told this parable to some who were confident that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else. "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself like this: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: extortionists, unrighteous people, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.' The tax collector, however, stood far off and would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, be merciful to me, sinner that I am!' I tell you that this man went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

## 2. The Characters, Their Posture, and the Content of Their Prayers

- **The Pharisee:** The religious elite ("separatist"), known for law-keeping and social status.
- **The Tax Collector:** The universally despised extortioner.
  - **Matthew 21:31–32 (NET):** "...“I tell you the truth, tax collectors and prostitutes will go ahead of you into the kingdom of God! For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe. Although you saw this, you did not later change your minds and believe him.”"
  - Jesus said Tax Collectors and Prostitutes would enter the Kingdom ahead of the Pharisees.
- **The Pharisee's Posture:** Stood to be seen and heard, boasting.
  - **Matthew 6:5 (NET):** "Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray while standing in synagogues and on street corners so that people can see them. Truly I say to you, they have their reward."
- **The Tax Collector's Posture:** Stood far off, unwilling to lift his eyes, feeling the crushing weight of guilt.
- **The Pharisee's Prayer:** Self-exaltation and comparison with others

- ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people...’
- ‘I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of everything I get’
- **The Error of Sin (Pharisaical View):** Sin is only the external deed or action. Jesus taught that sinful thoughts are enough to condemn a person (Sermon on the Mount).
- **The Critical Error of Self-Righteousness:** They judge themselves against a false standard. They use a horizontal comparison (other people) rather than the vertical comparison of God’s Holy Standard.

### 3. Justification and the Present Reality of Grace

- **Justification** is the critical point: Two men went to the Temple; one was justified, the other condemned.
- **Core Truth:** It’s not your works that justify you; it’s your faith, held in humility.
- **Justification is a present reality.**
  - **Romans 5:1 (NET):** "Therefore, since we **have been** declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"
- **The Heart’s Deception:** If we are justified by works, we can keep our sinful heart.
- **Warning to the Self-Righteous:** You can have all the external markings of a ‘good’ Christian and still end up in hell.

### 4. The Root of Self-Righteousness and God’s Standard

- The root of self-righteousness is having too high a view of ourselves and too low a view of God.
- **We have nothing to offer God.** Our best efforts are insufficient.
  - **Isaiah 64:6 (NET):** "We are all like one who is unclean, all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight. We all wither like a leaf; our sins carry us away like the wind."
  - **Psalms 14:3 (NET):** "Everyone rejects God; they are all morally corrupt. None of them does what is right, not even one!"
  - **Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NET):** "For there is not one truly righteous person on the earth who continually does good and never sins."
- Sin brings condemnation and God’s wrath.

- **Romans 6:23 (ESV):** "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
- **Romans 1:18 (NET):** "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness..."
- A false Gospel that skips confronting sin under God's wrath is a self-righteous, Pharisee-producing machine.
  - The proper view of God leads to humility.
    - **Isaiah 6:3–5 (ESV):** "And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"
- **Godly grief** leads to genuine repentance.
  - **2 Corinthians 7:10 (ESV):** "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret..."

## 5. A Final Call to Humility

- **The Hope for the Hopeless**
  - **Romans 6:23 (ESV):** "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
  - **Romans 3:25 (ESV):** "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith..."
  - **1 John 2:2 (NET):** "and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world."
- **The Great Exchange:**
  - We receive Christ's righteousness (wrought by His perfect life).
  - He receives our just punishment (the wrath we were due).
- We are exalted in our humility because Christ humbled Himself.
- **Call to Repentance (for the self-righteous):** Repent of trusting your own merit and playing the comparison game. Ask God to humble you.

- **The Invitation (for the hopeless sinner):** If you know you don't measure up and feel like the chief of sinners, call on the name of Jesus and receive His grace.
  - Trust in Jesus and humbly receive His grace.
  - Like the Tax Collector, you too can leave justified.