

- G) To particularly distinguish himself from the tax-collector, the Pharisee "prays" about the strength of his accomplishments (18:12). Rather than dependence on God, the Pharisee reveals a dependence on his own abilities and strengths<sup>≈</sup>.

#### 4) Powerful & Effective Prayer

- A) The tax-collector's position and prayer stand in contrast to the Pharisee. His distance suggests a deep respect of God, and an unworthiness to approach God (18:13). His prayer is genuine and to the Lord, a plea of mercy without self-focus.
- B) Simply, the tax-collector is humble in his approach. His prayer is one of dependence and trust in the character of God, rather than his own sinful character. The tax-collector throws himself on the mercies of God, seeking forgiveness.
- C) There are no comparisons, no promises, no self-confidence, and no appearance of strength. The only route for improving one's spiritual health is God's mercy, not personal performance or position.
- D) Jesus validates that it is the tax-collector's prayer which is heard, because of its humility -- and not (shockingly) the self-serving prayer of the Pharisee (18:14). That one is nothing in prayer is what God finds acceptable. Simply put, the tax-collector, and not the Pharisee, is God's friend -- by virtue of weakness and humility.

≈ Fasting twice a week (δίδις τοῦ σαββάτου is a distributive genitive which literally means "twice per Sabbath," or somewhat idiomatically, "twice per week") was above the requirement of the Law, which only required fasting on the Day of Atonement. Voluntary fasting usually occurred on Mondays and Thursdays during the week, commemorating the days that Moses went up and came down from Mount Sinai. Christians in the early church who fasted in a similar pattern did so on Wednesdays and Fridays, a move which probably reflected the one-day shift in the Lord's Day. Even though a grower had already tithed for the produce of his fields, some Pharisees and scribes also tithed 10% of what they ate, which was not required in the Law. Further, Jesus criticized the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:23 for tithing "mint and dill and cummin" (herbs) while neglecting the "weightier provisions of the Law" (such as compassion and humility). These "super-spiritual" activities were in stark contrast to the tax-collector, and served to distinguish the Pharisees from all others as a "separatist" (Pharisee) group of people. Various sources, esp. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary, Page 1463-1464.

# Friend Of Sinners

Long Beach Alliance Church • August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**I TELL YOU, THIS MAN WENT  
TO HIS HOUSE JUSTIFIED  
RATHER THAN THE OTHER;  
FOR EVERYONE WHO EXALTS  
HIMSELF WILL BE HUMBLLED,  
BUT HE WHO HUMBLLES  
HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED.”**  
**~LUKE 18:14 (NASB)**

#### 1) Faith In Ourselves

- A) We know from Jesus Christ's introduction to His short parable (Luke 18:9), that He is addressing people who are self-righteous.\*
- B) The immediate audience of the parable are Jesus' disciples (cf. Luke 17:22), but there also appears to be a group of Pharisees (17:20) and wealthy rulers (18:18) interacting with Jesus. In addition to these groups, the "crowds" of followers are also present (18:15).

\* While it would be easy, given the inclusion of the Pharisees in the parable, to assume that the parable is directed at this singular group, the text seems to indicate a broader audience. John 18:9 notes that τινες, "certain ones" (translated "some people," NASB, or "some who," NIV), were the object of Jesus' story. This brings to light that the applications for Jesus' parable are for all who have a self-righteous attitude, even Christ's own disciples. This has certainly already been an issue for the disciples (cf. Luke 9:46-48; see also Mark 10:35-40). This attitude was rooted deeply in the male psyche of the Jew, who included thanks to God in some of their daily prayers for not making them a Gentile, boor, or woman. Various sources, esp. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary, Page 1461.

- C) It is notable that a self-righteous attitude manifested itself with a contempt for others (18:9). Jesus is still speaking about prayer (18:1ff) and exclusive faith in God (17:22-37).
- D) A self-righteous attitude destroys prayer (dependence on God's power and plan) and reveals faith (trust) in self, rather than faith in God through Jesus Christ.
- E) This attitude also prevents genuine service to others, since a person serves the object of their faith. If we trust (have faith in) God, we will respond with service to all people. If we trust in ourselves, our service will reflect a self-oriented faith, never accomplishing more than our own abilities.

## 2) A Pharisee & A Tax Collector

- A) Jesus sets the scene of His parable in the most sacred of locations, the Temple (18:10). One expected to find the pious Pharisee<sup>†</sup> in the Temple, but the presence of a tax-collector<sup>Ω</sup> would have been out-of-place for the listener.
- B) The Pharisee and the tax-collector belonged to the two opposite ends of the religious spectrum. The Pharisee's reputation was for piety and precision in religious practice. The tax-collector's reputation was for greed and deception.
- C) While both men offer prayers to God (18:11-13), the cultural expectation was that the prayers of the Pharisee would be more readily heard, rather than those of the tax-collector.

† Φαρισαίος (Pharisee), the Semitic words mean 'the separated ones, separatists'. This was the Jewish party of accurate and specific observance of the law. The Pharisees were the organized followers of the experts in interpreting the scriptures (scribes). It was the purpose of the Pharisees to take the pattern of a pious Israelite as established by the scribes, and to put it into practice as nearly as possible. Some became followers of Jesus Christ and others opposed him and his followers. Not all Pharisees were condemned, but they were often a target of Jesus' negative examples. Josephus noted that the Pharisees "appear more religious than others, and seem to interpret the laws more accurately" (The Wars of the Jews, 1.5.2). The Pharisees were particularly attendant to tithing and fasting, which swelled them great pride. Collected from various resources, most notably Danker, Fredrick William, s.v. Φαρισαίος. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature (BAGD), 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 2000, Page 1049.

## 3) Pointless & Powerless Prayer

- A) It was not uncommon for one to stand and pray, particularly in the Temple courts (18:11). However, note that the Pharisee is "praying this to himself," rather than to God. His standing is prideful because it highlights himself, rather than authentically approaching God in prayer.
- B) Even though we have an omniscient view of the Pharisee's prayer, we should not assume that the Pharisee is praying loudly (18:11). It was most common for people to pray silently or in muted tones in a synagogue or the Temple (cf. Hannah's prayer in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1:13). It's not the volume, but the content, of the prayer to which Jesus objects.
- C) It is worth noting here that Jesus strongly objected to showy and/or memorized prayers (cf. Matthew 6:5-8). Authentic prayer is not accomplished with memorized phrasing or the ability to pray out loud in eloquent words.
- D) These are examples of "praying from strength." Positioning oneself in prayer in a position of strength in comparison to others or in admirable service to God (Luke 18:11-12).
- E) Any time we thank God that we are "not like other people," we should immediately be cautious (18:11). Intentionally or not, we place ourselves in a position of viewing another's sin as more damning/devastating than our own.
- F) Most offensive in the Pharisee's prayer was his comparison to the tax-collector (18:11). His focus was on man, rather than God. We can always find fault in others!

Ω τελώνης (tax collectors) were among the most hated people in the Roman provinces (e.g. Judea & Galilee). The tax gatherers routinely charged commissions on top of the required tax in order to increase their own wealth. A tax gatherer often depended on "suspicion, intrusion, harassment and force" for success, which attracted unsavory characters for the job. The prevailing system of tax collection afforded a collector many opportunities to exercise greed and unfairness. Hence tax collectors were particularly hated and despised as a class. Various sources, esp. Schmidt, Thomas E., s.v. *Taxes*. Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, ed. J.B. Green. I. Howard Marshall (Consulting Editor), Scot McKnight. 1992. Pages 805-806.