

The Fundamentalist That Made God Sick
Luke 18:9-14

Question: If you were standing before Jesus right now and He were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my heaven?” What would you say?

Just take a moment to think about that and write in your answer.
I guess it’s better to think about that now than to wait until you are actually there and have to come up with an answer.

Your answer to this question is the most important thing in your life. Because your answer indicates your current spiritual condition and your ultimate eternal destiny.

Today, we want to look at two men who answered this question very differently. They took two different paths that led to two different destinies. They represent the two basic approaches to God in Jesus’ day and in our day.

Read Luke 18:9-14

Both of these men went to church that morning.
Both were marked present.
Both prayed.
Both gave an offering.
Both heard the sermon.
Both began their sermon with the word, “God.”
Both thought they were saved.

Jesus said, one walked away saved, and one walked away lost.

This is the story of a seemingly good man who went to hell, and a seemingly bad man who went to heaven.

Two Contrasting Lifestyles

The Pharisee:

We do not have a very flattering picture of the Pharisees in the Gospels since they almost always seemed to be in conflict with Jesus. However, they were quite a remarkable group. They were an elite group. There were never more than about 3,000 at any one time. They were not politicians, though they had a great influence. They were very nationalistic, very patriotic. They were religious. They believed the Bible. They believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. They were very dedicated to obeying the Old Testament laws and regulations to the most minute details. They were the Fundamentalists of Jesus Day.

Nicodemas, who came to Jesus by night in John 3 was a Pharisee. The Saul of Tarsus, who was later changed his name to Paul and wrote about 13 books of the New Testament, was a Pharisee.

The Pharisees were also looking for the Messiah. They believed the promises of the Old Testaments that God would send a Messiah. They were also interested in the moral climate of their nation. They wanted the Bible taught to every person in the land. They were highly respected in the nation.

No doubt, this man was a good neighbor, generous, hard-working, and knowledgeable. From all outward appearances, you would have judged Him to be a saved, spiritual man. God, however, looks on the heart.

The Tax Collector:

This man was a Tax Collector who worked for the despised Romans who dominated the people of Israel at this time. His neighbors would have considered him, “A no good, money-grubbing, cheating, Roman Collaborator.” He was a Jew, empowered by the Roman government to collect all they could. They were considered “sell-outs.” They “sold-out” to the Romans for profit. They were lining their pockets by the wealth of their countrymen. They were despised by most other Jews. They were considered by the Religious Leaders to be sinners on the same level with prostitutes. They were not even allowed in the Synagogues. Zaccheus was a Tax Collector. Matthew, who became a disciple of Christ was a Tax Collector.

This story today could be easily called, The Sunday School teacher and the Prostitute, or the Elder and the Drug Addict. Though they came from different backgrounds, and had contrasting lifestyles, these were both very religious people who were trying to approach God.

Today, there are many people here from many backgrounds who have come to church today to approach God. Everyone here is religious. Everyone has a desire to approach God and to have their prayers answered. What is the acceptable way to approach Him?

We have heard this parable of Jesus many times, but when that crowd originally heard it, the ending shocked and amazed them.

Two Contrasting Approaches to God

Man's Way

Vs.

God's Way

Man's Way is Full of Pride. “stood up” v. 11

Bragged on himself to God.

God's Way Requires Humility. “stood at a distance” “would not even look up”

5 Truths About Humility

1. **Pride refuses to admit its Need.**

It is not so much what the Pharisee said as what he did not say. There was no confession in this prayer. There was no petition in this prayer.

The church in Laodicea. Revelation 3:17 “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”

Humility readily admits its Need.

Let a sinner do that and he'll find a Savior.

2. **Pride refuses to admit that it cannot Meet its own need.**

Notice the Pharisee's use of the word, “I.” If I have a need God, I can handle it. Pride is Self-Sufficient. It is the idea of religious compensation. After all, my good works outweigh my bad deeds.

Humility is God-Sufficient.

“God have mercy on me.” Humility understands that we have needs that only God can meet. In John 15, Jesus said “Without me you can do nothing.”

3. **Pride is more concerned with what Man thinks, than what God thinks.**

The Pharisee went and stood up front where he could be seen. He wanted to make sure that everyone saw him and heard him. He was praying to be heard by the crowd. He saw who was there and wanted to impress them. “What will they think of me?” was his concern.

Humility says, “God, I am more concerned with what You think, than what People think.

The Tax Collector just beat his chest in deep repentance and sorrow over his sin. He did not try to “act spiritual.”

John 5:44 (NIV)

⁴⁴How can you believe if you accept praise from one another, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?

4. Pride always sees the sins of Other people.

The Pharisee mentioned “robbers, evil-doers, and adulterers” in his prayer. He was not praying for them. He just wanted God to know he wasn’t doing any of those things. “If the rest of the folks in this church would just get right with God, then we’d have revival.”

David prayed, “Search me and know my heart and see if there is any wicked way in me.” We often pray, “Search them and know their hearts, and see their wicked ways.”

Humility sees its Own sin and says, “God, be merciful to me.”

5. Pride is always Right.

It just never occurred to that Pharisee that he might be wrong. Here’s a thought for you sir, “You could be wrong.” What will you do if you’re wrong.? If you were wrong about your eternal soul, would you want to know it? Really? If you were wrong about your lifestyle, would you want to know it? Would you thank the person who told you or would you try to take a swing at them?

Humility readily admits when it is Wrong.

“God, have mercy on me, *a sinner*.” “Oh, God, I have been so wrong.”

Husbands can we admit it when we’re wrong? Wives, do you admit it when you’re wrong? Students, do you admit it when you’re wrong? When we have a hard time admitting it to each other, it is usually because we have a hard time admitting it to God. We prefer to justify our sins, rather than to admit them.

Man’s Way is Self-righteous. Compares itself to Others.

We prefer to compare ourselves with other people. And we always seem to be able to find someone who is a little bit worse than us. “Well, at least I’m not an axe-murderer.” This man felt very righteous when he was comparing himself to thieves, adulterers, and other sinful people.

God's Way acknowledges its own Sinfulness. Compares itself to God.

When we compare ourselves with God, we are able to see our true measure. It is difficult to see our own sinfulness when we do not consider the absolute purity and holiness of God. When we see God for who He really is, none of us will try to say how good we are.

There are three kinds of righteousness mentioned in the Bible.

1. Practical Righteousness
2. Self-Righteousness
3. Righteousness of Christ Philippians 3:9

Illustration: Evangelist D. L. Moody once visited a prison called "The Tombs" to preach to the inmates. After he had finished speaking, Moody talked with a number of men in their cells. He asked each prisoner this question, "What brought you here?" Again and again he received replies like this: "I don't deserve to be here." "I was falsely accused." "I was not given a fair trial." Not one inmate would admit he was guilty.

Moody finally found a man with his face buried in his hands, weeping. He asked, "What's wrong, my friend?" The prisoner responded, "My sins are more than I can bear." Relieved to find at least one man who would recognize his guilt and need of forgiveness. He shouted, "Thank God for that!" He then showed him from the Bible how he could be forgiven and saved, and that man in prison was released from the shackles of sin. Those other prisoners who refused to admit their guilt could not be saved. In order to be found, you must first recognize that you are lost.

Illustration: I'll never forget being in traffic court in Virginia and having to say the word, "Guilty." That was merely before a human judge. I know it's not easy, but it is necessary. God only saves sinners.

Man's Way tries to Impress people.

He stood up front, "I fast twice a week." He's not a Baptist. "I am a tither." He's a candidate for a Deacon. Put him on the Pulpit Committee.

God's Way knows it cannot Impress God.

"A Sinner." He knew he couldn't fool God. "God, I can't impress you. You know all about me. The Psalmist said, "You know when I sit down and when I stand up."

Proverbs 5:21 (NIV)²¹ For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.

Man's Way seeks Justice.

The Pharisee did not ask for anything. "I'll just take what I deserve."

God's Way seeks Mercy.

Tax Collector recognized He needed Mercy.

"*Have mercy*" literally means be Mercy-Seated to me. "Be Propitiated to me."

He was putting himself under the blood of sacrifice and pleading the blood as the only means to approach a Holy God.

Day of Atonement. Once per year. Sacrifices to cover the nation's sins for another year. Only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, with the blood of sacrifice. He would sprinkle that blood on the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. It was called the Mercy Seat. It was the place between guilty humanity and a Holy God. The Tax Collector said, "Let that sacrifice cover my sins." The Day of Atonement was designed by God to point forward to the sacrifice of the Messiah. The Sacrifice Jesus made for us when He died on the Cross.

Hebrews 9:22 (NIV)

²²In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Hebrews 10:4 (NIV)

⁴because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Ephesians 1:7 (NIV)

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

1 John 1:7 (NIV)

⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

The only way a sinner may approach God is through the atoning Blood of Jesus.

This man knew his sinfulness. He knew what God had done to deal with his sinfulness. This was a plea for mercy, based on What God had done.

In Jesus Christ, God has provided a full and perfect salvation.

Two Contrasting Results

There are two contrasting approaches to God, with two contrasting results. There is Man's Way is by human effort and merit. And there is God's Way through the merits of Jesus Christ and His shed blood on the Cross for your sin. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Jesus did not tell this story to excuse people for sinning. He told it so all of us would know how to deal with our sin appropriately. The truth is that there are two very different approaches. They lead to two different conclusions.

Luke 18:14 (NIV)

¹⁴"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

"*Justified*" means to be "Declared Righteous" by God on the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross.

Romans 3:28 (NIV)

²⁸For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

Romans 4:5 (NIV)

⁵However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Pharisee

Vs

Tax Collector

Trusted Himself
Left Unforgiven
Unrighteous before God
Self-Righteous

Trusted God Alone
Left Completely Forgiven
Righteous before God
Righteousness of Christ

What is your answer to Jesus' question?

Conclusion:

This is a very solemn message to the person who has come in here today thinking. “I am OK. I do not need what all these people think they need. I am not going to get caught up in all of this. I do not need a crutch.” Really? You had better take an inventory.

Are you trusting in your own goodness to get you to Heaven? Or,
Are you trusting in the work of Christ on the Cross?

To Find Salvation, You must Admit you are lost.

If you were standing before Jesus right now and he were to ask you, “Why should I let you into my Heaven?” What would your answer be? Would it be more like the Pharisees’ or more like the Tax Collector’s?