

**I. Read Luke 18:9-14**

- A. In verse 9, we are told that Jesus addressed Himself to a certain sort of person. What sort of person was that?

**A person who believes he is righteous or inherently good.**

- B. In verse 10, Jesus uses a Pharisee in His parable. Why would He do this?

**Pharisees were *religious* men. They were the leaders of the Jewish religion and were known for their strict adherence to the law and to the traditions that had grown up around the practice of temple worship. Further, they saw themselves as being righteous men because of their position and their enthusiastic practice of Judaism.**

In verse 10, Jesus cites a tax collector as the second man in his parable. Why?

**Tax collectors were *persona non grata* in Israel. That is, they were socially unacceptable and disdained by the people of Israel. This was because they served the Roman Empire in collecting taxes from their own people, and because they were notorious for being dishonest. It was not unusual for tax collectors to collect more than they were entitled to for their own profit. In the eyes of the people of Israel, the tax collectors were terrible sinners.**

- C. Read the following scriptures and explain how the Pharisee represented something God hates. (Proverbs 6:16-19)

***Haughty eyes*— looking at others in comparison to yourself and believing you are better than them; standing before God with a proud and self-righteous attitude. (v11)**

***Lying tongue* — “I thank you that I am not like other men,” when in fact, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).**

***Hands that shed innocent blood* — The hearts of those who shed innocent blood are filled with hatred and bitterness, just as the Pharisee who looked down on his brother. (Matthew 5:21-22)**

***A heart that devises wicked plans* — Is there anything more wicked than refusing the mercy and grace of God and fashioning your own means of winning God's favor? (v12)**

***Feet that run rapidly to evil* — The Pharisees were actually anxious to make their religious shows and demonstrations for others. The example Jesus gave would not have been exceptional, but rather was typical of Pharisees. (Matthew 6:1-2)**

***A false witness who utters lies* — The Pharisee gave witness that his own religion was true and genuine, but he was a hypocrite. (Galatians 2:16, 21)**

***One who spreads strife among brothers* — Is there anyone more divisive and contentious than a self-righteous, legalistic, pompous hypocrite?**

- D. Notice in Luke 18:11-12 that the Pharisee's emphasis was all on what he did in comparison to what others did. The point is not that tithing, praying, going *to the temple*, or fasting were bad things, but that true religion is really about what God does for us rather than what we do. What then is true religion? (Read 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 5:8.)

**Trusting that Christ died for our sins *while we were utterly helpless and unable to save ourselves.***

How does the Pharisee miss the boat on true religion?

**True religion or faith in Christ's gospel requires an awareness of one's inability to earn or merit God's favor. The Pharisee had no conception of his own sinfulness and helplessness before God.**

- E. What critically important self-knowledge did the tax collector have that the Pharisee lacked?  
**He knew he was truly a sinner before a holy God.**

How does the tax collector "standing afar off ..." and the fact that he "would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven" demonstrate the proper attitude toward God? (v13, NAS)

**It demonstrates a complete lack of pride and utter humility before God.**

- F. What is the significance of the tax collector's plea, "God be merciful to me"? (See Ephesians 2:8, 9.)  
**Salvation is by grace or God's mercy alone. Justification never results from our works or effort.**

- G. In verse 14, Jesus speaks of justification. What is justification?  
**According to *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* "Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone."**

Who justifies us?  
**God.**

On what basis?  
**The imputation or crediting of the righteousness of Christ to us.**

How is it received?  
**By faith alone.**

- H. What is wrong with the following responses to the question "When you die, why will you be allowed into heaven?"
- \* "I am basically a good person." (**Romans 3:23**)
  - \* "I have been baptized." (**Galatians 2:16**)
  - \* "I don't think anyone will go to hell; a loving God would not judge us that way." (**Hebrews 9:27**)
  - \* "Because I have always worked hard to help the church and do my Christian duty." (**Matthew 7:21-23**)

What is the proper answer to the questions above?

**"Because I have trusted in Jesus' death and shed blood to cleanse me of my sins." The main emphasis in our answer should be on what Christ has done for us and not on anything we are able to do ourselves. It may be that we express our assurance a bit differently, but confidence in our own works or inherent goodness should be and is a red flag.**