**THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN**

***Luke 18:9-14***

Sunday School Lesson

*Parables of Jesus Christ*

Week 4 – 11/12/2017

**Introduction:** The parable of the Pharisee and the publican shows us the stark contrasts between the humble and the proud. The sin of pride is one of the greatest sins in the Bible. It is listed among the seven sins that the Lord hates in Proverbs 6. The sin of pride is recorded as the first sin to ever exist, as Satan lifted himself up with pride (Isaiah 14:12; Ezekiel 28:12). The Word of God tells us that pride always leads to destruction. As followers of Christ, we must always be aware that pride can sneak into our lives and destroy our walk with God.

1. WE MUST REALIZE THAT LOOKING GODLY AND BEING GODLY ARE NOT THE SAME.
2. **Notice that the Pharisee attended church, but he did not have a relationship with God.** The Bible says that he “went up into the temple to pray.” While attendance to the church is vital to our Christian walk, it does not singularly portray where we are at spiritually in our lives. Sitting in a restaurant alone does not make someone full. It is possible to sit in there without ever eating anything. The Pharisee came to the temple, but he did not come to find what God wanted for him to do. He came to tell God what he was already doing for Him.
3. **Notice that the Pharisee prayed, but he wasn’t praying to God**. The Bible says that he “prayed thus with himself.” God was not present in his prayer life. Although he called out to God, his god was not the one true God. The Pharisee worshipped the god of self. His prayer was elegant, but it was also empty. We have to be careful in our prayer life to have meaningful prayer to God. This is one of the great concerns when it comes to public prayer. We should not worry what other men think regarding the style or articulation of our prayer, as we ought to be praying to God and not to man.
4. **Notice that the Pharisee was thankful, but he misattributed the blessings of God.** The Pharisee was praying and thanking God for perceived blessings that he had been given. In his mind, everything in his life was going great. The only problem is that he does not actually say anything that God has done for him. Everything he mentions is what he personally had done. He thought that the blessing from God was found in his own ability to avoid “big” sin, sacrifice some of his time, and have wealth abundantly. The Bible says that we are more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)
5. **Notice that the Pharisee was serving, but he did not have a servant’s heart for God.** The Pharisee was very active in the church. He was a faithful tither, and he even fasted twice per week. There was no doubt that he was very dedicated to his religious cause. The issue is that he was more dedicated to the church than to the God of that church. If we are not careful, church can become our own version of a social club. We do not just need more active members. We need members whose activity is a result of their personal desire to please the Lord.
6. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT BEING HUMBLE AND BEING INSECURE ARE NOT THE SAME.
7. **Notice that the publican was ashamed of his sin, but he still came to the church.** Too often, we allow our shame over our sin to keep us from coming to the Lord. This is not to say that we should be unashamed of our sin. We understand that our sinful behavior absolutely offends a sovereign God. However, this is exactly the reason why we must come to the Lord. Unfortunately, there will be many who never put their trust in Christ simply because they were too ashamed to come to Him. As Christians, we come to the church to be convicted of our sins and confess them to the Saviour. The Devil loves nothing more than a person who stays defeated in their sins. The publican knew he had failed God, and he came looking for a resolution.
8. **Notice that the publican was standing afar off, but he was still standing.** The publican was willing to publicly show that he was unworthy of the grace of God. He was not too proud to admit that he had flaws. Usually, those who are the most insecure are not those who are willing to openly confess that they are sinners. Instead, the insecure one’s often try to make it seem that they have no problems or issues in their life. I heard a pastor once say that all pastors should strive to barely show their feet of clay to their church members. While I understand the point that was being made, Paul had no issue showing that he had a body of clay to the various churches of the New Testament. He knew it was only by God’s grace.
9. **Notice that the publican was broken, but he trusted that God would fix him.** The publican simply asked, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” As mentioned before, the publican knew that he had failed the almighty God. There are some who come to church looking for the answer, but they do not trust in God that He can deliver them from their problem. This is incomplete humility. When our humility is complete, we realize not only that we are very limited by our sin, but also that there is One who can help us overcome that sin. We have to be willing to trust that He is greater than our largest and most troubling sins in life.
10. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT OUR PRIDE CAN CAUSE THE HUMBLE TO STUMBLE.
11. **Notice that the Pharisee’s pride caused him to speak of the sins of others.** In order to deflect from our own sin, our pride causes us to focus on another. The Pharisee tried to be discreet in this by mentioning it during “his prayer.” He was essentially gossiping during his prayer. There is no doubt that there were others in attendance in the temple. The most dangerous gossip is the one who is covert in his presentation. God especially dislikes when mankind tries to mask sinful things as spiritual.
12. **Notice that the Pharisee’s pride caused him to single out a particular person.** If there were ever anything likely to cause a fellow Christian to fall away from the things of God, it would have to be when they are singled out by their brethren. Now, we ought not to confuse this with the Bible principle of church discipline, as there are times where it is necessary to handle a matter publicly. However, in this case, the Pharisee specifically targeted the publican and showed exactly how much he despised him.
13. **Notice that the Pharisee’s pride caused him to push others away.** There is no way for us to help a brother or sister in Christ, if we are constantly pushing them away. In this parable, we see that the publican was standing afar off from the Pharisee. It is clear that our pride can cause others to feel unworthy and make them feel that they cannot find help in the church house. We need to remember that the church is a hospital for sinners to find help for their infirmities. We have to make sure we have proper bedside manner in our interactions.

**CONCLUSION**: The parable of the publican and the Pharisee ought to remind us that serving Christ starts inwardly and then manifests itself externally. Too often, we get caught up on the work and not the Person of the work. We need to make sure that we are serving the Lord with a humble spirit. The Bible says that the one who exalteth himself will ultimately be abased. Pride goes before destruction. Let’s make sure that we are on a path of victory in our Christian life!