

# STUDY NOTES ON THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE <sup>1</sup>PUBLICAN: -

**NOTE:** - In this parable Jesus did NOT use symbolic language or terms. He was describing two different spiritual conditions.

Luke 18:9 – 14: - “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

- Jesus’ purpose in telling this parable was a rebuke to those who thought themselves as being righteous, and looked down on others.

Luke 18:9: - “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”

- The apostle Paul exhorted us not to compare ourselves with others. He also taught us that we are not to commend, or approve of ourselves. Rather, it is the fact that God approves of a person that is vital.

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10:12, 17 & 18: - “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. ... But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.”

- The Pharisees mindset was one of trusting and glorying in their own **supposed** righteousness. Their righteousness was merely external, they were obsessed with hollow formalism, covering a corrupt and iniquitous heart.

Romans 10:1 – 3: - “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being

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<sup>1</sup> The old English word “PUBLICAN” is defined as: -  
“PUBLICAN, n. [L. publicanus, from publicus.]

1. A collector of toll or tribute. Among the Romans, a publican was a farmer of the taxes and public revenues, and the inferior officers of this class were deemed oppressive.

As Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. Matthew 9:10.” – Noah Webster’s 1828 Dictionary.

From hence forth, this word shall be referred to as “tax collector”.

ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

Matthew 5:20: - “For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 23:27 & 28: - “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men's* bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

- There is a blessing contained in the Scriptures for those who put their trust in the Lord for their salvation.

2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 22:2 & 3: - “And he said, The LORD *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; The God of my rock; in him will I trust: *he is* my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.”

Psalms 91:2: - “I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.”

Proverbs 30:5: - “Every word of God *is* pure: he *is* a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”

Isaiah 12:2: - “Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH *is* my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation.”

- Only in the Lord Jesus Christ is to be found our righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5 & 6: - “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 1:29 – 31: - “That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:21: - “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

- The Scriptures condemn those who justify themselves. The only justification that counts in the Bible, is when God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, justifies a person.

Isaiah 53:11: - “He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.”

Luke 16:14 & 15: - “And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things: and they derided him. And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”

Romans 8:33: - “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? *It is* God that justifieth.”

- The Pharisee’s prayer was merely one of telling God all of his **supposed** good works. He was telling God how good he thought he was. Of course, his prayer never went ***higher than the ceiling***. He had a complete attitude of being “*holier than thou*”! Jesus labelled the Pharisee’s mindset as being one without mercy. Jesus also referred to another group of those who profess His name, as telling Him on the Day of Judgment all of their good works. Jesus **never** recognized this group of professed believers as being His people. They have the same mindset as the Pharisee.

Luke 18:11 & 12: - “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

Isaiah 65:5: - “Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These *are* a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.”

Matthew 9:9 – 13: - “And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

Matthew 23:23: - “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

Matthew 7:22 & 23: - “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

- The Tax Collector’s mindset was totally the opposite to the mindset of the Pharisee. He was completely humble and contrite because of his sins, and he recognized his lost condition as a sinner. He called out to the Lord to have mercy upon him.

Luke 18:13: - “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Ezra 9:6: - “And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.”

Psalms 41:4: - “I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.”

Psalm 86:3: - “Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.”

Joel 2:12 & 13: - “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”

- Being contrite in spirit is absolutely essential in getting right with God.

Psalm 34:18: - “The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

Psalm 51:17: - “The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Isaiah 57:15: - “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”

- The Tax Collector because of his humility and contrition of spirit, went home justified with the Lord, while the proud, self-righteous Pharisee was unjustified.

Luke 18:14: - “I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Matthew 23:12: - “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.”

- God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.

Proverbs 3:34: - “Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly.”

James 4:6: - “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:5: - “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all *of you* be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

- God hates pride, and the proud of spirit are under His curse. Pride of course is the opposite mindset to humility.

Proverbs 6:16 - 19: - “These six *things* doth the LORD hate: yea, seven *are* an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness *that* speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.”

Proverbs 11:2: - “*When* pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly *is* wisdom.”

Proverbs 16:5: - “Every one *that is* proud in heart *is* an abomination to the LORD: *though* hand *join* in hand, he shall not be unpunished.”

Proverbs 29:23: - “A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.”

Malachi 4:1: - “For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.”

1st John 2:16: - “For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

### **THERE IS NO SALVATION WITHOUT, OR APART FROM HUMILITY!**

#### **Where does the humble, contrite soul direct their prayers to, and where do they receive the grace, mercy and help from the Lord in times of need?**

- The Tax Collector called out to the Lord in his desperate need, wanting mercy from God. He did NOT even lift up his eyes to heaven, where he was directing his prayer.

Luke 18:13: - “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

- The Scriptures teach that the Lord is in His holy dwelling place in heaven; in fact, within His Heavenly Temple or Sanctuary, to which place God's humble, contrite people are to direct their prayers for forgiveness of their sins. This is because our Lord Jesus Christ is our Heavenly High Priest within the true Sanctuary in heaven, ministering at the throne of grace. It is at this throne of grace, through Jesus Christ our great High Priest, that we receive mercy [which was what the Tax Collector desperately wanted], and also grace to help us in times of need. [And as we have previously read, grace is only given to the humble of heart.] Please Lord send us help from thy Sanctuary, just as the Psalmist prayed.

2nd Chronicles 6:21: - “Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.”

2nd Chronicles 7:14: - “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

Psalms 11:4: - “The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.”

Psalms 18:6: - “In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.”

Lamentations 3:40 & 41: - “Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.”

Hebrews 4:14 – 16: - “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 8:1 & 2: - “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

Psalms 20:1 & 2: - “The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion.”

### Justification by Faith – an Introduction: -

As Jesus finished the parable with the teaching that the Tax Collector went to his home justified, this opens the door for us to have a brief introduction to the subject of justification by faith, the first step in walking with Christ. And a simple place to introduce this subject is found in Romans 3:9 – 31.

- The apostle Paul describes the desperate condition for BOTH the Jews and the Gentiles – the common human condition – we are **all under sin**. We are all unrighteous, no one does good, no one seeks after God.

Romans 3:9 – 12: - “What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

- The apostle Paul continues to describe the horrible natural condition of the human heart without Christ. It is full of rebellion, iniquity and sin.

Romans 3:13 – 18: - “Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

- Paul continues to describe the condition of both the Jew and the Gentile – all the world are **under the Law** – that is, we are all under the **condemnation** of the Law, as **guilty transgressors**. This is the same condition as the apostle mentioned in VS. 9 – **all are under sin**. Therefore, no person can be justified by the deeds of the law, because the law cannot justify those who are under its condemnation. The Law gives us a knowledge of our sins.

Romans 3:19 & 20: - “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

- God’s solution to this desperate human condition is the gospel message of justification by faith in Christ and His blood. There is no difference in the message of the gospel, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, because we have all sinned – VS. 23. This is the same condition as being “**under sin**” in VS.9; and being “**under the law**” in VS. 19. God has set forth Christ as our propitiation – our atoning sacrifice, for the passing over or the remission of **sins that are past**. God can be just or righteous in upholding the integrity of His Law in punishing His Son for our sins and transgressions of the Law [see Isaiah 53:4 – 6 & 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:3]; and yet He justifies the repentant, believing sinner, through faith in Christ’s blood. In VS. 28 the apostle Paul gives a **summary** of what he has just written: - A person is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law.

Romans 3:21 – 28: - “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

- Both the Jews and the Gentiles are justified by or through faith. But the apostle asks a vital question: - Does faith make void God’s Law? His answer is clear and unambiguous – No; Faith establishes God’s Law. The opposite of making it void.

Romans 3:29 – 31: - “*Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

**NOTE:** - Romans 3:31 is an inspired circuit-breaker inserted by the Holy Spirit, to stop us from being swept away by the current of false doctrine! The false doctrine being that faith in Christ makes void or abolishes God’s Law.

Matthew 5:17 – 20: - “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”