

Church Matters

The Church and The Faithful Pharisees

Pastor Brian Fannin / June 28, 2015 / Grace Fellowship Church

Luke 15:11-32

Heart Quiz*: Answer, Yes or No. If you are unsure, put a Yes beside it.

1. You have some questions about why God allows so much injustice and would like for him to explain why.
2. You expect others to work as hard as you.
3. You hear people complain and you recognize it.
4. You have been told you are critical person.
5. You have asked a mature Christian to help you see if you regularly complain.
6. You are perpetually late.
7. Others make you late.
8. You can carry a conversation.
9. You become a different person behind the wheel.
10. You may not say it, but you kind of believe, ..."Nice guys finish last."

What does Jesus teach us about the elder son, which confronts hidden things we also face?

Principle 1: The gospel is scandalous for it identifies a desperate need for grace in the flagrant sinner as well as the faithful church member.

Expect to be dumbfounded by how the kingdom works the more out of touch you are with seeing your own sin.

Here is why it is offensive:

1. **Forgiveness and acceptance are acts of mercy and grace initiated by the Father.**
2. **God does not consult us about His saving act.**

Isaiah 64:6 says that our "righteous deeds are like filthy rags."

2 Cor. 5:21 – He made him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

According to Elyse Fitzpatrick and Dennis Johnson in "Counsel from the Cross", individuals find themselves in one of three camps: (*Which best describes you?*)

- a. The Happy Moralist – I believe God loves me. Why shouldn't he? I'm a good person. I try to do right.

- b. The Sad Moralist – I try to do right, but I am often weak and fail. How could God possibly love me? What’s wrong with me? Constantly criticizes himself/herself and compares themselves to others.
- c. The Amazed Believer- I’m amazed every day how God’s love found me, is changing me and made me right with him.

The younger brother was confident and self-centered. He might even be a happy moralist. It’s as if he was saying, “I simply want to party. I don’t want to hurt anyone. I just want what is mine. I know my father loves me and will give me what I want!”

The older brother, however, is focused on what he must do to please the father and get rewarded. This is called, “works”. Relationship with God is a relationship to work. This is not verbalized, but it is how life is lived-out.

All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders (v. 29). Those words betrayed the fact that the older brother thought he had a relationship with his father because of his work. He served his father not out of love but out of a desire for reward. *John Walvord, Bible Knowledge Commentary*

Principle 2: The Father never changes; He pursues relationship regardless of where you are.

- a. He comes out (v.28)...just like He did with to the younger son.
- b. He entreats him. He gently calls him in. (v.28)
- c. He reminds him that all He has is his.

The parable ends abruptly, and purposely so. All who heard and who now hear and read that ending automatically ask themselves: “What did that brother do in answer to his father’s appeal?” But that is the very question you must ask yourself if there is the least self-righteousness in you. What do *you* answer?
R. C. H. Lenski, Commentary on Luke

Principle 3: The tragedy of the human condition is that self-perceived righteousness way and keeps us from God.

Sin lives in a costume; that’s why it’s so hard to recognize. Life in a fallen world is like the ultimate masquerade party. Impatient yelling wears the costume as zeal for truth...craving for power and control wears the mask of biblical leadership. The pride of always being right masquerades as a love for biblical wisdom. ...We are all very committed and gifted self-swindlers...no one is more influential in their own lives than they themselves are because no one talks to them more than they themselves do. We are all too skilled at looking at our own wrong and seeing good. We’re all much better at seeing the sin, weakness, and failure of others than we are our own. ...sin causes us not to hear or see ourselves with accuracy. And we not only tend to be blind, but, to compound matters, we also tend to be blind to our blindness
Paul Tripp, Whiter Than Snow

As Jesus told this story, he looked into the eyes of the rule keepers, the guardians of religion and honor of orthodoxy. AND, He *gently* spoke to them. Remember, the most religious put Jesus on the cross.

They did not want a conversation (like we say we do). What we really want is for Him to reward us and interpret life from our perspective...*or die*. We are after OUR kingdom and not until we confess that we ourselves have gone terribly wrong will we come in and join the celebration. We want what we think is fair and good...as long as it benefits us.

Principle 4: The Gospel is not fair.

God emptied heaven of its greatest Resource to save you. If a holy God was fair, you and I would get death and hell.

Tim Keller said, “How can the inner workings of the heart be changed from a dynamic of fear and anger to that of love, joy, and gratitude? Here is how. ***You need to be moved by the sight of what it cost to bring you home.***”

Let's get PRACTICAL: Look at *Jesus' call to “Come In”*. What does that mean to the faithful who have Pharisee tendencies?

- A. Confess and repent of your grumbling heart.

Scripture never allows us to believe in an unmotivated humanity. ...behind everything we do or say, we are pursuing *something*—some hope or dream or thing we refuse to live without. ...The very things we seek to possess begin to possess us. We live for shadow glories and forget the only Glory that is worth living for. ...the Bible requires us to make one painfully humbling admission—the one confession we work so hard to avoid: *that the deepest, most pervasive, and most abiding problem is us!*
Paul Tripp, Lost in the Middle

- B. Be open and transparent as you build Christian relationships — according to the Father, they are brothers (Luke 15:32) and they have burdens (Galatians 6:1-2) we are intended to bear with them.
- C. Move toward celebrating your Savior and His saving work in everyone that claims Christ.

Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”
(John 15:35 NLT)

*For more insight into heart motivations: “From Pride to Humility” by Stuart Scott and “Motives” by Ed Welch. Both are available in the Resource Center.