

**Parables: Small Stories – Big Truths**  
**“How to Be Right with God”**  
(The Pharisee and Tax Collector)  
**Luke 18:9-14**

*Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / August 7, 2016*

**I. Jesus Puts His Finger On Something that Every Human Being is Trying to Achieve**

We all desire approval from others. This drive and hunger for approval on a horizontal level from other people is just a symptom of a much deeper longing and unsettledness that we have for approval and validation from our Creator, God!

**II. Apart from a Grace Awakening, Most People Spend Their Entire Lives Working on an Outside-In Approach to Righteousness**

This approach could also be summarized by the word ‘Achieve’ because you’re trying to achieve a level of righteousness by your own effort.

Jesus describes we’ll be like if we try to achieve God’s approval:

**A. You’ll Be Focused on Outward Behavior Far More than Internal Character and Christlikeness**

v. 11 “not an extortioner, not an adulterer, give tithes of all I possess”

**B. You Basically End Up Trusting Yourself**

v. 9 “those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous”

With the ‘Achieve God’s approval’ approach you’re at the center of this spiritual endeavor. God gets relegated to the sidelines as an observer. He’s just someone you perform for in an effort to achieve His approval. You don’t TRUST God.

**C. You’ll Start Mixing Your Personal Convictions and Choices with Biblical Commands Because You Need to Do Everything You Can to See Yourself as Better than Others**

When you’re trying to get God’s approval you feel like you need to pile in on any way you can.

v. 12 “I fast twice a week”

**D. You’re Far More Inclined to Pull Away from Other People You Think Aren’t Doing as Well as You Think You Are**

v. 11 “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself”

You only want to be with others that are doing the same things you’re doing. It makes you feel better and bolsters your shaky confidence that you’re on the right path.

**E. Your Strongest Emotion Towards Other People Around You is Most Often Contempt Rather than Compassion**

v. 9 “and despised others”

It’s a graceless approach to life, so you have no grace to give to others.

**James 4:6** “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

**F. Your Prayer Life Degenerates into Nothing More than a Platform for Boasting about Yourself Instead of Praising God and Confessing Your Own Sin**

v. 11 “God, I thank You that I’m not like...”

Do you see yourself anywhere on this path of trying to ACHIEVE God’s approval?

Praise God that He gives us another path!

**III. You Can Humble Yourself and Recognize Your Spiritual Bankruptcy so that You Can Submit to an Inside-Out Approach to Righteousness**

This approach could be summarized as ‘Believe and Receive.’ This parable is showing us two RADICALLY different ways to go about feeling approved or accepted in God’s sight.

**A. You Stop Comparing Yourself to Anyone Else But God – and You’re Gripped by Your Own Sin**

v. 13 “be merciful to me, *the* sinner”

**B. You’ll Beg God to Take Care of Your Sin Problem in a Way You Know You Could Never Do On Your Own**

In v. 13, the word ‘merciful’ is not the usual Greek word (‘eleos’). Rather, it’s the word ‘hilasterion’ that means ‘atone for my sin.’

**Hebrews 2:17** “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful (eleos) and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation (hilasterion) for the sins of the people.”

**C. Your Spiritual Life Is Characterized by Looking Away from Yourself and to Your Savior – Jesus Christ – Again and Again!**

**Hebrews 12:2** “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

**2 Corinthians 5:21** “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

#### **IV. Don't Miss the Stomach Punch of This Whole Parable!**

v. 14 “I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**Justified** – God’s act of remitting the sins of guilty men, and accounting them righteous, freely, by his grace, through faith in Christ, on the ground, not of their own works, but of the representative law-keeping and redemptive blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ on their behalf. Packer, J. I. (1996). Justification. In D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, & D. J. Wiseman (Eds.), *New Bible dictionary* (3rd ed., p. 637). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.