

Level 1 - Lesson 2

SALVATION BY GRACE

By Don Krow

Jesus many times used parables, stories which illustrated spiritual truths. Luke 18:9-14 begins, *“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”* Jesus was targeting a certain audience: those who trusted that they were righteous and automatically despised and looked down on everyone else. He told this parable to these people who trusted in the things they did. We would call them self-righteous, which is what Jesus was speaking about when He said they looked down on everyone else saying, “I am better than you!”

In verse 10, Jesus says, *“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.”* We would say in modern language that they went to the church to pray, and one was a Pharisee. A Pharisee was a very religious person. The word actually means “separated one”, someone who was so religious that in a sense they would say, “Don’t defile me! Don’t get too close to me. I’m not like other men! I am better than everyone else!” The other man Jesus mentioned was a publican. Publicans were tax collectors and were known to be very evil, sinful people who cheated and defrauded. They collected taxes by any means they could, stuck a lot of the money in their pockets, and gave some of it to the Roman government, so they were not looked upon favourably by their peers.

The story continues in verse 11, *“The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not like other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.”* I want you to notice that. Who was he praying to? He was actually praying to himself even though he was saying “God” and using the right words. God was not acknowledging his prayer, and we’ll see later why that was so. Notice that he prayed, “God, I thank You I am not like other men.” This Pharisee, this religious man, said, “I am not like other men. I am not sinful. I am not an extortioner, not unjust, not an adulterer, and I am not like this publican right here who came to pray.” You see, he despised and looked down on others because he thought he was better than them.

In verse 12, the Pharisee said, *“I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”* He was saying, “Notice what I do?” Do you know what it means to fast? It actually means to go without food. He also gave money to the church. He was one of those people who say, “Don’t bother me! I live a good life! I give to charity! I give money down at the church!”

Then we come to the tax collector in verse 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.”* Notice his body language: “standing afar off”. He didn’t even go all the way into the church. He was so ashamed of his life and the things that he had done that he stood afar off and wouldn’t even look up, wouldn’t lift his eyes to heaven, but smote his breast. When the Bible talks of smiting the breasts in the Old Testament, many times they also tore their garments, which was a way of saying, “I am sorry, God, for what I have done!” It was a sign of repentance, a contrite heart, and a broken spirit, which God would not despise. This tax collector, sinful man that he was, cried out to God and prayed, “God be merciful to me, I am a sinner!”

Verse 14 says, *“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.”* The publican went home justified, declared righteous before God, in right-standing with God, forgiven by God. Why was he forgiven? Why did *he* go to his home in right standing before God and not the religious Pharisee? It was because the Pharisee exalted himself, saying “I am better than other people! I am not sinful! I am not like other men,” while the tax collector knew he had no standing before God, nothing he could offer Him. He was a sinful person. The Bible says Jesus didn’t come to save righteous people but sinners, and we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. This tax collector humbled himself and found forgiveness and pardon.

We’re talking about salvation by grace. Grace is a wonderful word, and I am going to give you an accepted definition of what it means, but grace means much more. In the Greek language in which the New Testament was written, grace is the word *charis*. An accepted definition of grace is this: the free, unmerited favour of God toward people who don’t deserve it. This tax collector didn’t deserve anything from God, but he found God’s favour because he humbled himself. There is another word in the Greek, *charisma*, which is *charis* with the suffix *ma* on the end. It means a specific manifestation or form of God’s grace, and this tax collector found justification, right standing, before God as a gift.

Romans 5:17 says, *“They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”* God offers you and me right standing before Him as a gift and, according to our passage, the tax collector found that gift of justification, that gift of righteousness that only comes through Jesus Christ. The Bible says in John 1:17, *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”* This grace is only offered to one kind of person – those who humble themselves and know they have no standing before God, who cry for God’s mercy. These people will find God’s mercy and pardon.

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Luke 18:9. What is a parable? _____
2. Read Luke 18:9. To whom did Jesus direct this parable? _____
3. Read Luke 18:9 (the last part of the verse). People that are self-righteous always reveal an attitude toward others. According to Luke 18:9, what is that attitude?
 - A. They like others.
 - B. They despise others or look down on others.
 - C. They love others.
4. Read Luke 18:10. Two people went to pray; in modern language, where did they go to pray? _____
5. Read Luke 18:10. Who were these people? _____
6. Read Luke 18:11. What was the Pharisee’s prayer? _____
7. Read Luke 18:12. What does fasting mean? _____
8. Read Luke 18:12. What does it mean to give tithes? _____

9. Read Luke 18:13. Where was the tax collector standing? _____ Why?

10. Read Luke 18:13. Why did the tax collector hang down his head and not look up?

11. Read Luke 18:13. What was this tax collector's prayer? _____
12. Read Luke 18:14. Which one of these men was declared righteous before God when he went to his home? _____
13. Read Luke 18:14. Why was the tax collector declared righteous and not the Pharisee?

14. Read Luke 18:14. Did God forgive this tax collector? _____
15. Read Romans 10:13. If you right now got down on your knees and cried out to God from your heart "God be merciful to me, a sinner," would God treat you the same way He treated the tax collector? _____

Scriptures to Use with Questions

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

Luke 18:10 – *"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican."*

Luke 18:11 – *"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 this publican."*

Luke 18:12 – *"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."*

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."*

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."*

Romans 10:13 – *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

1 John 1:8-9 – *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

Answer Key

1. Read Luke 18:9. What is a parable? **A biblical parable is a story that illustrates spiritual truth.**
2. Read Luke 18:9. To whom did Jesus direct this parable? **To those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous; that is, they were self-righteous.**

3. Read Luke 18:9 (the last part of the verse). People that are self-righteous always reveal an attitude toward others. According to Luke 18:9, what is that attitude?
B. They despise others or look down on others.
4. Read Luke 18:10. Two people went to pray; in modern language, where did they go to pray? **To the church.**
5. Read Luke 18:10. Who were these people? **A Pharisee and a publican/tax collector.**
6. Read Luke 18:11. What was the Pharisee's prayer? **God, I thank you I am not like other men (I'm not a sinner). I'm not a swindler, unjust, an adulterer, or even like this tax collector.**
7. Read Luke 18:12. What does fasting mean? **To go without food.**
8. Read Luke 18:12. What does it mean to give tithes? **To give a tenth of one's income.**
9. Read Luke 18:13. Where was the tax collector standing? **Afar off.** Why? **He was ashamed to go into the church (or temple) because he was such a terrible sinner, so he stayed outside.**
10. Read Luke 18:13. Why did the tax collector hang down his head and not look up? **He was ashamed. Have you ever done something wrong and would not look a person in the face?**
11. Read Luke 18:13. What was this tax collector's prayer? **God be merciful to me; I am a sinner!**
12. Read Luke 18:14. Which one of these men was declared righteous before God when he went to his home? **The tax collector.**
13. Read Luke 18:14. Why was the tax collector declared righteous and not the Pharisee? **Because he humbled himself before God. The Pharisee was full of pride; he didn't think he needed a Saviour.**
14. Read Luke 18:14. Did God forgive this tax collector? **Yes.**
15. Read Romans 10:13. If you right now got down on your knees and cried out to God from your heart "God be merciful to me, a sinner," would God treat you the same way He treated the tax collector? **Yes, He would. He would forgive me and cleanse me from all unrighteousness. See 1 John 1:8-9.**