

The Gospel Truth

BIBLICAL INSTRUCTION AND ENCOURAGEMENT
FOR THE MISSION FIELD WORLDWIDE.

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

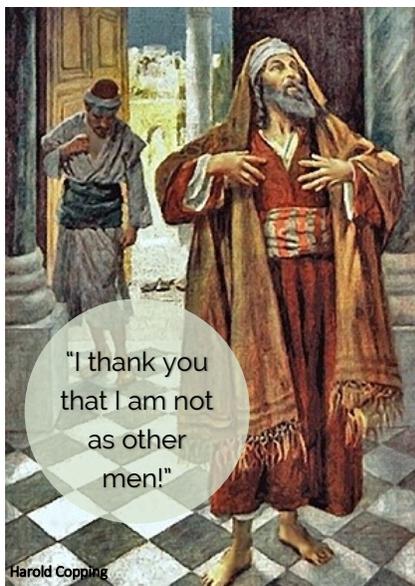
(The following account is a narrative of the parable told by Jesus in Luke 18:9-14 KJV).

BACKGROUND:

The Pharisees were one of the largest and wealthiest sects among the Jews. They adhered strictly to many of the laws of Moses and felt just as bound to the oral Mosaic traditions. The word Pharisee means *separatist*. They separated themselves from the pollution of the Jewish worship and stood apart as holy and undefiled. They observed the rules of their institution and felt justified by their conformity to the law. While in the beginning they were acceptable to God, most of the Pharisees eventually lost the spirit and purpose of the law as they focused on outward cleanliness rather than the heart. Their worship tended to be ostentatious as they sought for public recognition. They were left with a form of godliness and many of them became haughty and self-righteous, looking on others with disdain.

Publicans were tax collectors. They were usually Jews and they worked for the Roman government who ruled the

Jewish people. Publicans were despised by their fellow countrymen and seen as traitors because they collected tribute for the oppressor. The publicans were often corrupt and dishonest in their financial work.



PARABLE:

A Pharisee strode boldly into the temple. His long robes swished as he rudely brushed by a publican who was walking into the temple to pray with his

head bowed low. The Pharisee gave the publican a scornful look as he stepped away so as not to be polluted by the sinner's presence.

Standing apart, the Pharisee raised his hands in worship and lifted his eyes heavenward. His voice echoed through the temple as he prayed.

"God! I thank you that I am not as other men are—corrupt, dishonest, unclean, adulterers. Thank you God that I am not like this publican. I fast twice in the week and I give tithes of all that I possess."

The Pharisee prayed on. While acknowledging God and giving thanks, he extolled his own virtues and righteousness. In a distant corner, the publican fixed his eyes to the ground in distress and grief because of his sin. As was a common practice to express overwhelming grief, he beat upon his chest. Voice quivering in anguish of heart, the prayer of the publican could scarcely be heard.

"God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner."

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WHAT THE BIBLE

Teaches About...

Word of God

2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35

Relationship of Love

Matt. 22:37-40; John 14:21-23; 1 John 4:7-11

Repentance

Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30; 2 Cor. 7:10

New Birth

John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Rom. 6:1-4;

Eph. 2:1, 5-6

Freedom From Sin

1 John 5:18; Matt. 1:21; John 8:11

Infilling of the Holy Spirit

Acts 19:2; Acts 15:8-9; Acts 1:8

Holiness

Luke 1:73-75; Heb. 12:14; 1 Peter 1:15-16;

Titus 2:11-12; Rom. 6:22

Kingdom of God

Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17; John 18:36

The Church

Acts 2:47; Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col 1:18

Unity

John 17:20-23; Gal 3:28; Rev. 18:2-4

Ordinances

Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 26:26-30;

1 Cor. 11:23-27; John 13:14-17

Divine Healing

Luke 4:18; Isaiah 53:4-5; James 5:13-16

Sanctity of Marriage

Matt. 19:5-6; Luke 16:18; Rom. 7:2-3;

1 Cor. 7:10-11

Outward Appearance

1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Cor. 11:14-15; Deut. 22:5

End of Time

2 Peter 3:7-12; John 5:28-29; 2 Cor. 5:10;

Matt 25:31-46

Pacifism

Luke 6:27-29; Luke 18:20

Worship

John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19; 2 Cor. 3:17

Great Commission

Mark 16:15

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LESSON:

Jesus spoke this parable to those who trusted in their own righteousness and despised others. "I tell you," Jesus said, "the publican went to his house justified rather than the Pharisee. Every one that exalteth himself shall be brought low, but he that humbles himself shall be exalted."

The Pharisee had a form of religion and followed many good principles, but his heart was proud. He was self-righteous and saw himself as spiritually superior to others. His good works and sacrifice to God did not save him. The publican, in humility of heart, asked God for mercy. He was the one that was forgiven of his sin and saved that day.

Salvation is a gift of God to those who humble themselves and acknowledge their sin and neediness. Morality, religion, and good works do not justify the heart of man. The church today is called to be separate from the sin of the world. While separate, may every child of God worship and live in humility of heart and not fall prey to a pharisaical, self-righteous spirit. All true righteousness is not of ourselves but is of the Lord.

—mws

THE GOSPEL TRUTH

The Gospel Truth periodical is published in the name of the Lord for all people of all lands in the interest of establishing and encouraging them in the truth of God's Word. This publication teaches and promotes the truths of the Bible that have been established since the time of Christ and the apostles.

The Word of God is the singular, acceptable rule of faith. It teaches salvation and deliverance from sin through the atonement of Jesus Christ; a subsequent infilling of the Holy Spirit to lead, direct and empower; practical holiness in every area of life; and the unity and oneness of God's people. Acceptable service to God is through a personal relationship of love founded in truth. Special thanks to Alyssa Clevenger for photography and artwork contributions for this issue.

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SUBSCRIPTION

The Gospel Truth is an electronic publication that is published quarterly as the Lord leads. Visit us online at www.thegospeltruth.org to subscribe to the email notification list and receive current publications. Feel free to send lists of names and email addresses of others who might be interested in receiving this publication to the editor.

CONTACT

The Gospel Truth is printed in various countries for local distribution. This and other missionary efforts from this office are supported by free-will offerings in the name of the Church of God.

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Editorial



He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? —Micah 6:8

We owe a debt to our Savior which can never be repaid. We were unworthy and undeserving of His grace and love, yet He forgave us. There are many important teachings in the Bible, but humility is one of the greatest. God wants every child of His to walk in humility and love. It is saddening to see spiritual pride so often exhibited by people who have knowledge of so much truth.

The burden God placed on me for this quarter is on the subject of self-righteousness. While this is a deviation from the type of theological truths studied in past quarters, it is just as vital. We can have understanding of many truths and doctrines; but if we have spiritual pride and trust in our own works, we will miss the true blessings of the Kingdom in this life and in the life to come.

I remember as a boy observing a group of people who began to exalt their own holiness. They were right on many points, but they embraced a harsh, critical spirit. They became self-righteous and exalted their way as the avenue to the Father. I remember my earthly father telling me that if we leave love out of this truth, we have lost it all. It is vital for us, as children of God, to walk in love and humility. We can never earn our way into favor with God or be 'good enough' in our own strength.

I am daily dependent upon the mercy and help of God to enable me to live a life of holiness. It should be all of our desire to bring forth good fruit and to be zealous of good works. Those works are not the merits of our salvation but the evidence of Christ within.

Our speech, our preaching, our lives and our very spirit should be such that Christ is exalted. Some of the most difficult people to be around are those who rely on their own works and thinking and are spiritually arrogant and proud. There are people who will not apologize even after conducting themselves in very spiritually unbecoming ways. Self-righteousness is an ugly thing. It is exhibited both in fanaticism and in compromise.

May Christ be lifted up in our lives and in the body of Christ. We have no salvation or grace to offer to mankind in our own power, but we can point to the one who died for us. May the world see Christ and may He be the one on display, for He is the author and finisher of our faith.

Michael W. Smith

July 2015



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These ye ought to have done...

(Matthew 23:23-24; Luke 11:42)

Jesus addressed the self-righteous Pharisees on multiple occasions. Christ did not minimize their carefulness nor their strict adherence on issues of the law; but He reproved them for omitting the weightier matters—judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God.

"These things ye ought to have done and not left the other undone."

As the self-righteous of today, the Pharisees were very strict on some observances and yet often exhibited a carnal, unloving spirit.

Some people find their justification in their faith to the exclusion of medical aid. Some find it in their modest dress. Others find it in their giving. Some of these same people greatly lack in the love and humility of Christ.

Keep being obedient and careful in outward issues but do not leave the more important matters of the spirit undone.

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

SUBJECT: SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.* —Ephesians 2:8-9

Summary: Self-righteousness is contrary to the essence of the gospel message and brings spiritual death. Salvation is not earned but is a gift of God. All glory should always be given to the Father and never to self or to an institution of man.

I. Characteristics of Self-Righteous People

- A. Luke 10:29 Justify themselves before men.
- B. Matthew 23:27-28 Outwardly righteous but inwardly full of iniquity.
- C. Matthew 6:1-2 Love to be seen of men.
- D. Romans 10:1-3 Establish their own righteousness.
- E. Matthew 7:3-5 Are quick to point out the needs of others.
- F. Luke 7:39 Condemn others.
- G. Isaiah 65:5, Luke 18:9 Elevate themselves and despise others.
- H. Proverbs 20:6 Proclaim their own goodness.
- I. Proverbs 30:12 Are pure in their own eyes.

II. Our Own Righteousness

- A. Luke 11:42-44 Is external.
- B. Isaiah 64:6 Is as filthy rags.
- C. Isaiah 57:12 Is unprofitable.
- D. Luke 16:15 Is an abomination to God.
- E. Revelation 3:16-17 Blinds.
- F. Matthew 5:20 Will keep us out of heaven.

III. True Righteousness & Justification

- A. Ephesians 2:8-9 Is not of ourselves but by grace.
- B. Galatians 2:16 Is not of the law but of faith.
- C. Titus 3:5 Is not of works but by mercy.

IV. The Object of Glory

- A. Isaiah 42:8 God will not share the glory.
- B. Daniel 4:28-31 Example of Nebuchadnezzar.
- C. 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 Glory in the Lord.
- D. Matthew 5:16 Works to glorify the Father.

Conclusion:

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts. To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin. —Proverbs 21:2-4

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

Companion article for Bible Study

SALVATION IS A GIFT OF GOD

Salvation is an experience of divine favor which God gives to those who humble themselves and repent of their sins. Salvation is not attained through one's own strength, fortitude or ability; but it is a miraculous work of God. The scripture warns that it is "not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:9). Self-righteousness is the strong belief of one's own goodness, opinions and actions while believing that other people's are wrong. There have been many that have committed the sin of self-righteousness. A professing child of God who is self-righteous is one who trusts in his own goodness and works in an attempt to be justified before the Lord. Jesus spent much of His earthly ministry addressing those who had spiritual pride and were self-righteous. "Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees," Christ instructed. That leaven is hypocrisy, self-righteousness and a deluded sense of one's ability and position.

HOLINESS IS POSSIBLE ONLY THROUGH CHRIST & THE SPIRIT

All have sinned and come short of the glory of God and are in need of a savior. It is only through Christ that mankind is able to live holy. Hence, all glory and honor goes to the Father and there is no place for pride or spiritual egotism. The Apostle Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me..." (Galatians 2:20). All grace and ability to live acceptably before God comes only from the work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. The focus and dependency should be on the power of God, not on the feeble ability of man.

SIGNS OF A SELF-RIGHTEOUS SPIRIT

The self-righteous are characterized by a number of traits which are identified in the scripture. It behooves the saint of God to be aware of this sin and to be able to recognize it when it crops up. The self-righteous tend to justify themselves (Luke 10:29) when their lives are less than what the Bible teaches. As exemplified by the Pharisees, they often follow some commandments rigidly in outward observances so that they might appear righteous. Jesus said that they appeared beautiful outwardly but were within full of hypocrisy and

iniquity (Matthew 23:27-28). They love to be exalted and seen as an icon of spirituality (Matthew 6:1-2).

ESTABLISHING ONE'S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Paul spoke of those who went about to "establish their own righteousness, [and] have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3). The self-righteous allow their opinions and ways to take precedence over the simplicity of God's Word. They are quick to proclaim their own goodness



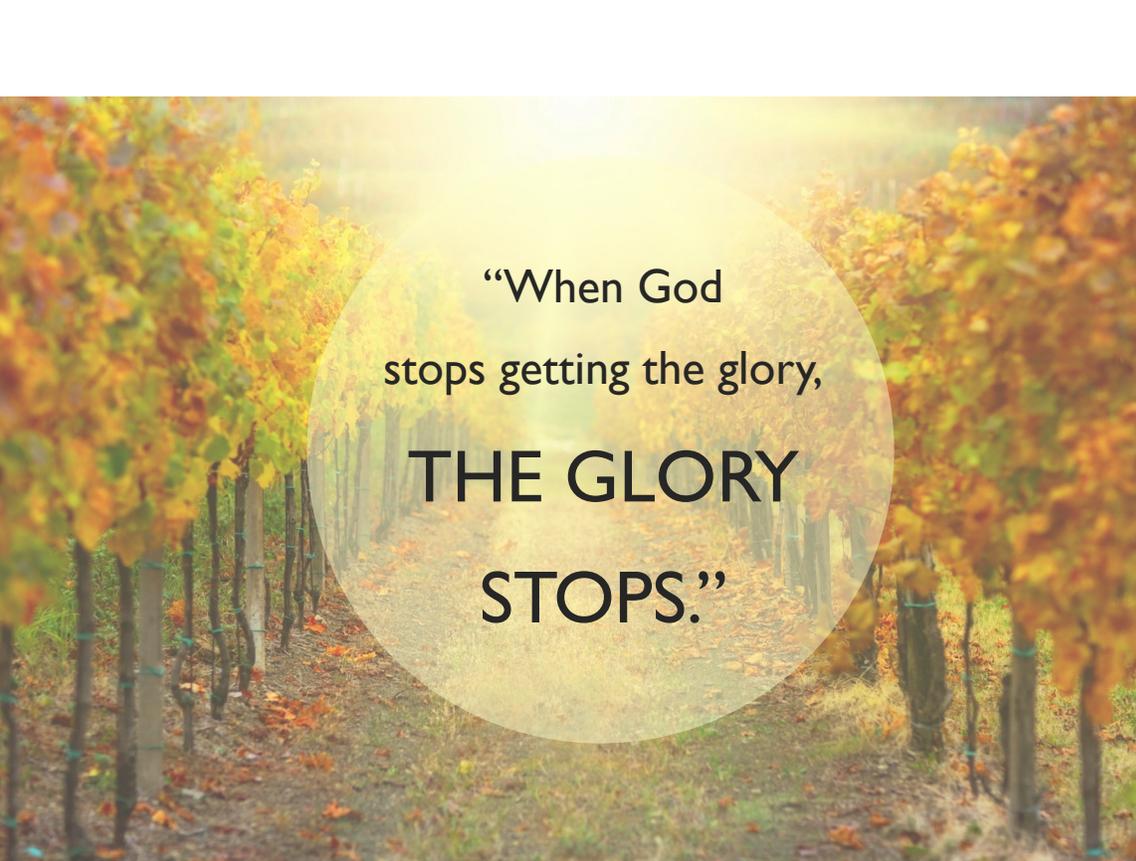
(Proverbs 20:6) and are pure in their own eyes (Proverbs 30:12). All the while, their spirits are filthy and prideful. They profess and appear holy (Isaiah 65:5) but their works are unacceptable with God.

The self-righteous tend to be judgmental and quick to condemn others (Luke 6:41). "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew 7:3).

MAN'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS EXTERNAL

The righteousness of God within a person leads him to outward holiness with a spirit of humility and love. The righteousness of man is external (Luke 11:42-44) and is as filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6). Man has no true righteousness of his own and has no power to change the condition of his heart without the power of God. All of the righteousness of man will profit

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“When God
stops getting the glory,
**THE GLORY
STOPS.”**

A FORM OF GODLINESS

The Pharisees had a form of godliness. They prayed, fasted, tithed, etc. but they trusted in their own merits rather than in the redeeming grace of God. "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ....by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified" (Galatians 2:16). A man can follow many of the doctrinal teachings of the word and dress ever so modestly. He can give liberally and pray much. He can be faithful in worship service and yet miss heaven because he lacks the spirit of love, humility and dependency upon the

righteousness of Jesus alone. While outward standards and precepts are important, true holiness begins in the heart.

WHERE IS YOUR FOCUS?

Self-righteousness focuses on self rather than God. God will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8). When God stops getting the glory, the glory stops. The glory is not defined by how loud a group of professing saints can shout or how they can dress up. The glory is the divine anointing of God in the daily life which brings peace, joy, power, love, and humility. "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Corinthians 10:17-18). As a child of God brings forth good works in their life, it should be for the purpose of glorifying the Father which is in Heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Be on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees. Self-righteousness can pervade an individual or a group of people. "Lord, help us live humbly, trusting not in our works of righteousness but solely in the merits of the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen."
—mws

(Continued from page 5)

nothing (Isaiah 57:12). Good works and deeds are beneficial but without the motivating power of God Himself working within, they are of no eternal value.

THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS WILL NOT ENTER HEAVEN

Self-righteousness has a blinding effect and often people are deceived into a false spiritual security. "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). The congregation at Laodicea thought themselves sufficient and spiritually rich; but without the fervent love of God, they were poor, naked, and blind in their self-righteousness. They had lost their dependency on God and rested in their ritualistic good works. Self-righteousness is sin and will keep one from going to heaven. Jesus said, "That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).



OF WHAT VALUE ARE GOOD WORKS IF THEY DO NOT SAVE US?

Ephesians 2:8-9 is a very important scripture and often quoted. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Salvation is a divine work of God in the heart of man and is neither deserved nor earned. This is a wonderful truth but many neglect verse 10 which follows. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

There are many professing Christians that claim God's saving grace in their lives but their works, conduct, and attitudes have not changed. Grace is used as a cover or excuse for evil works and disobedience to the Word of God. We are not saved by works but are created unto good works and are to walk in them. "...as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:19).

Jesus said that we would know people by their fruit, or works (Matthew 7:16-17).

People's works often identify who they are on the inside. Hearts are not made pure by works of fasting, praying, giving, sacrificing, modesty, church attendance, service etc.; but if a man is saved by the grace of God, good works will be the fruit of the holy heart.

The Bible gives much instruction on how saints are to live and conduct themselves as holy people of God. They are to be separate and distinct from the sinful world not only in attitude and devotion but also in dress and activities of life.

Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words....He that loveth me not



keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:23-24). Obedience brings forth good works. Good works do not save one, but the absence of them can cause one to lose salvation.

The book of James clearly teaches that faith without works is dead. Active faith or belief in God will bring about holy and profitable works. The absence of good works indicates a dead love and an empty faith. Jesus came to redeem mankind from all iniquity that they might be a peculiar people zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14).

It is a wonderful life to bear good fruit and have the works of morality and righteousness springing forth. Those works do not save a man, but they help him maintain and grow in his experience with God.

WHAT ABOUT CHURCHES WHO PROMOTE THEMSELVES AS THE ONLY ENTRANCE TO SALVATION?

Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). There is no man, church, or body of ministers that can give salvation. There is no method for earning or working for our salvation. Salvation is a gift of God through His son and no other.

It is the epitome of self-righteousness and spiritual egotism for a church to promote itself as the gateway to heaven. The church is composed of a called out people who have been saved from sin. The message of the Church is to point others to the

cross and to the faith of the Word of God. Any minister or body of people who teaches a doctrine of salvation by works or that teaches one must come through them to be ready to meet God is corrupting the pure gospel of Christ. This is contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. Those who teach such things are in error and should be avoided (Romans 16:17).

—mws



DID YOU KNOW?

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. —Isaiah 64:6

God saw the Israelites as unclean and defiled in spite of their prayers, sacrifices, alms and praises. He detested their acts of worship because they were mingled with corruption.

Their righteousnesses were as filthy rags. The outwardly pious deeds were classified as highly unclean. The term "filthy rags" in the Hebrew means literally, a "menstruous rag."



A Word
In Season

Preach What I Give Thee

Contact

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Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. —Jonah 3:2

God gave the prophet Jonah a commission to go to Nineveh and "preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." The other prophets may be displeased, the people may not like it, and you may not get recognition for your sacrifice. You may even be run out of town, but be faithful. Do not preach opinion or your ideas, but preach what the Spirit says with love, judgment and Holy Ghost boldness.



It is not the job of the ministry to simply make the sheep feel good. While there are times for ministering comfort and encouragement, growth often comes from discomfort and effort. How will there be growth if the ministry does not proclaim that which the Spirit says?

The devil will try to bind the mouth of every true minister of God. If you preach this, that person will be offended. If you preach that, someone else might not like it. Pretty soon, there is never an 'acceptable' time to preach on certain subjects. What shall we then do? To what pressure will we bow? What shall we preach?

Preach the Word. Preach the truth. Preach what God bids thee to preach when He calls for it. Fear not man. Fear not your position. Fear not others. It will be lonely at times, but God will be faithful to His messengers and to His truth.

—mws

HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD