

A Survey of the Parables of Jesus
Lesson 5 – Parables of Self-Righteousness and Humility

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Introduction: What is the greatest sin?

- A. Pride as described in scripture leads to many other sins.
 - 1. It is one of the three pillars of all sin. **(1 Jn 2:16)**
 - 2. Pride is the over exaltation of self. It is a serious form of blindness. **(Gal 6:3-4)**
 - 3. The need to be recognized by men creates a hatred of truth and reality. This shuts the mind and the heart into darkness.
- B. God condemns pride in the strongest terms.
 - 1. Look at the things that the Lord hates. **(Prov 6:16-19)**
 - 2. Having the fear of the Lord will combat pride. **(Prov 8:13)**
 - 3. God describes pride as an abomination with a certain punishment. **(Prov 16:5)**

I. The Parable of the Chief Seats (Lk 14:7-14)

- A. Jesus had been invited to a dinner by a ruler of the Pharisees. They looked to find fault in Him. **(Lk 14:1)**
 - 1. Jesus asks if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath as a man with dropsy stood before Him. They would not answer. **(Lk 14:2-4)**
 - 2. Jesus then asks if they would immediately pull a donkey or ox out of a ditch on the Sabbath. They would not answer. **(Lk 14:5-6)**
 - 3. This audience had minds blinded by pride and the desire to “please the party.” This was one of the greatest errors of the Pharisees. **(Jn 5:40-44)**
- B. Jesus gave an account that all who sought attention would recognize. **(Lk 14:7-10)**
 - 1. Large feasts on the Sabbath were common.
 - 2. The seats were placed in the shape of an “U.” The middle seats near the master of the feast were prized. There was a seating arrangement based upon “honor.”
 - 3. Those who considered themselves as “lesser” would come early and those who considered themselves as “higher” would come later.
 - 4. Those who thought of themselves as “greater” than the master of the feast thought of them would be humiliated by being asked to move to a lower seat.
- C. "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." **(Lk 14:11)**
 - 1. Jesus points out that even with the honor of men, it is not what you think of yourself that makes the difference.
 - 2. If we then would make application to the only honor that really matters. What does God think! **(2 Cor 10:12, 18; Mt 6:2-6)**
 - 3. He made sure that His disciples learned this lesson. **(Mt 20:21, 24-27)**
 - 4. When you look to the reward of God then you will serve others who cannot repay you! **(Lk 14:12-14)**

- 1. Define pride. Why is pride so bad?
- 2. Why is pride appealing? How can we know if we are drifting into it?
- 3. What common event did Jesus use in the parable concerning chief seats?
- 4. What is the most important lesson we should draw from the parable?

II. The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk 18:9-14)

- A. Background: Though the service of the temple was almost exclusively sacrificial, public prayer as well as private devotions had grown up around the offering of the morning and evening sacrifices (**Luke 1.10; Acts 3.1; 10.30**; Josephus, Antiquities, xiv, 4.3).
- B. Jesus addresses a common duo in the hearts of proud men: Self-righteousness and despising those who you view to be “lower than you.” (**Lk 18:9-10**)
1. Jesus names two men with specific backgrounds, a Pharisee and a tax collector.
 2. The Pharisee represented a popular denomination of Jesus’ day. They had a strictness that was primarily a product of human tradition. (**Mt 15:3-9**)
 3. The tax-collector was despised because most were dishonest and also that they represented the interest of the Romans. Not all were dishonest! (**Mt 18:17**)
- C. The Pharisee represents the prayer of a self-righteous man. (**Lk 18:11-12**)
1. Five times the Pharisee uses “I’s.”
 2. In this prayer he fails to ask God for anything, he fails to confess to God any sin or need but rather contrasts his “greatness” with the tax-collector. “He stood in a gold mine and admired the rocks.”
 3. The law provided an occasion fasting once a year (**Lev 23:27-32**). The tradition of the Pharisees did it twice a week.
 4. The law required tithing of certain things (**Deut 14:22-23**) while the Pharisee did it with all things. (**Mt 23:23-24**)
 5. God wanted justice, mercy and faith while the Pharisee pursued himself.
- D. The tax-collector represented a prayer of a penitent heart that sought God’s help. (**Lk 18:13-14**)
1. How can a man really see and know God and not be humbled in His presence?
 2. We face a real danger in seeing ourselves as the center of the universe and make our “esteem” dependent upon how others are perceived when compared to us.
 3. We should see our great need of God daily and thus approach Him just like this tax collector did. (**1 Pt 5:5-7**)
 4. It is from a self-righteous and self-centered religion that Satan does his most powerful work in turning hearts from God. (**Rom 2:17-24**)

Questions

1. Why was the temple a common place of prayer?
2. What are the background and characteristics of the Pharisees?
3. What role did human tradition play in the life of a Pharisee? Why?
4. What is the proper purpose of prayer? How do self-righteous men pervert prayer?
5. What things did the Pharisee do that were not required by the law? Were these actions wrong within themselves?
6. What can we imitate from the prayer of the tax-collector?