

Humble Faith

Key Verse: *“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 18:13**

Selected Scripture:
Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-12, James Moffatt Translation

As stated in our Key Verse, the taxgatherer—or “publican”—felt differently. He did not see himself as even worthy to look up to heaven, but simply pleaded for God’s mercy. Jesus concluded the parable by saying that this man “went home accepted by God rather than the other man; for everyone who uplifts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be uplifted.”—vs. 14, *Moffatt*

From God’s standpoint, both men in the parable were sinners and needed forgiveness. The Pharisee trusted in his own imperfect works and asked no forgiveness, while the publican realized his condition and prayed for mercy. In Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were a prominent religious group which revered the Law and taught it to the people. However, through various parables, Jesus pointed out that with many of them religion was merely

JESUS SPOKE A PARABLE

to admonish those who felt they were righteous, and who looked down upon everybody else. He said, “Two men went up to pray in the temple; one was a Pharisee and the other was a taxgatherer. The Pharisee stood up and said his prayer as follows; I thank thee, O God, I am not like the rest of men, thieves, rogues, and immoral, or even like yon taxgatherer. Twice a week I fast; on all my income I pay tithes.”—

a visible show, and the keeping of the Law only outward obedience, which did not come from the heart.

Many Pharisees looked down upon the publicans, refusing their company. They criticized Jesus for eating with them as well as with confessed sinners. (Luke 5:30) Jesus did not look upon the outward appearance, but upon the heart. He did not love the publicans because they were sinners, nor disapprove of the Pharisees because they outwardly kept the Law. We are not to get the impression that God is more pleased with people who live in sin than with those who strive to live to the best of their ability in harmony with his Law. Rather, the lesson we should continually keep in mind is that we all come short of perfection and need God's mercy. The sinner who recognizes this is more pleasing to God, and nearer to forgiveness, than the more moral person who fails to see his own sins and shortcomings.

Jesus referred to this error of the Pharisees, saying, "They that are whole need not a physician; . . . I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (vss. 31,32) Jesus sought to call attention to the fact that although the Pharisees claimed to be righteous, they were not. They were imperfect and sinful, and in need of a Savior. However, they were not in a condition of heart to appreciate their need and to come to the Lord for forgiveness.

Both classes are represented among Christians today. Some trust in church membership and attendance, charitable works, or general morality for their salvation, while ignoring the fact that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23) Other believers, perhaps not so noticeable, more readily discern their own weaknesses and confess them, accepting forgiveness of sins and the promise of everlasting life as unmerited gifts of God, based upon the sacrifice of his only begotten Son. (Eph. 1:6,7) Let us, therefore, not trust in our own righteousness, nor despise others, but continue to develop our faith, with humility of heart. ■