

# More on Contrasting Results for Self-Exaltation and Humility

by Bob Hoekstra

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*The sermon teaches that humility leads to exaltation, while self-exaltation leads to abasement, as seen in the contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 143:2, Luke 18:13, Romans 4:5, James 4:10, 1 Peter 5:6

**Topics:** "Humility Before God", "Self Righteousness"

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## Description

Bob Hoekstra preaches on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, emphasizing the dangers of self-righteousness and the blessings of humility before God. The Pharisee's prideful prayer and the tax collector's humble plea for mercy serve as contrasting examples of self-exaltation and humility. The tax collector's acknowledgment of his sinfulness and desperate need for God's mercy led to his justification, while the Pharisee's self-glorifying attitude resulted in his abasement before God. This parable highlights the principle that those who humble themselves will be exalted by God, while those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

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## Transcript

And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" . . . everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 18:13-14)

Our present meditation continues Jesus' parable that warns against self-righteousness and encourages lowliness of mind. In this teaching, the Lord declares contrasting results for self-exaltation and humility. "Everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." The contrasting examples in the parable are the prayers of a vainglorious religious leader and a contrite publican.

The Pharisee's prayer was addressed to himself and was filled with glorying about himself. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men . . . I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess' " (Luke 18:11-12). In stark contrast to this arrogant, feigned prayer, the tax collector would not so much as lift his countenance toward heaven. Instead, he pounded his guilt-ridden chest, humbly pleading for mercy. "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'" His attitude was like David,

who knew he could not withstand the righteous judgment of God. "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous" (Psalm 143:2).

These two men (who both appeared to be praying to God) faced drastically differing results. "I tell you, this man [the humble publican] went down to his house justified rather than the other [the self-righteous religious leader]" (Luke 18:14a). The self-exalting Pharisee was abased. He was dishonored before God and confirmed in his guilty, unrepentant state. "Everyone who exalts himself will be abased." The humble tax collector was exalted. Through humble dependence, he was raised up to the blessed realm of justification. "To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Romans 4:5). He was declared not guilty, forgiven, righteous in God's sight. "He who humbles himself will be exalted."

Lord God, I deserve to be abased for the times I have exalted myself in Your sight. I want to take my stand with this repentant tax collector. I want to humble myself before You, pleading Your mercy. I hope in You to lift me up to new realms of obedience, godly growth, and service, through Christ Jesus, my Lord, Amen.

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