

Expository Thoughts On Luke - Luke 18:9-14

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Transcript

PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

The parable we have now read is closely connected with the one which immediately precedes it. The parable of the persevering widow teaches the value of importunity in prayer. The parable of the Pharisee and tax-collector teaches the spirit which should pervade our prayers. The first parable encourages us to pray and faint not. The second parable reminds us how and in what manner we ought to pray. Both should be often pondered by every true Christian.

Let us notice, firstly, the sin against which our Lord Jesus Christ warns us in these verses. There is no difficulty in finding out this. Luke tells us expressly, that "He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." The sin which our Lord denounces is "self-righteousness."

We are all naturally self-righteous. It is the family-disease of all the children of Adam. From the highest to the lowest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to do. We secretly flatter ourselves that we are not so bad as some, and that we have something to recommend us to the favor of God. "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness." (Prov. 20:6.) We forget the plain testimony of Scripture, "In many things we offend all." "There is not a just man upon earth, that does good and sins not"--"What is man that he should be clean, or he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?" (James 3:2. Eccles. 7:20. Job 15:14.)

The true cure for self-righteousness is self-knowledge. Once let the eyes of our understanding be opened by the Spirit, and we shall talk no more of our own goodness. Once let us see what there is in our own hearts, and what the holy law of God requires, and self-conceit will die. We shall lay our hand on our mouths, and cry with the leper, "Unclean, unclean." (Levit. 13:45.)

Let us notice, secondly, in these verses, the prayer of the Pharisee, which our Lord condemns. We read that he said, "God, I thank you that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-collector. I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all I possess."

One great defect stands out on the face of this prayer--a defect so glaring that even a child might mark it. It exhibits no sense of sin and need. It contains no confession and no petition--no acknowledgment of guilt and emptiness--no supplication for mercy and grace. It is a mere boasting recital of fancied merits, accompanied by an uncharitable reflection on a brother sinner. It is a proud, high-minded profession,

destitute alike of penitence, humility, and charity. In short, it hardly deserves to be called a prayer at all.
No state of soul can be conceived so dangerous as that of the Pharisee. Never are men\

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