

## “How To Be Perfect Before God”

Luke 18:9-14

*Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: <sup>10</sup>“Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ <sup>13</sup>“But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”*  
Luke 18:9-14 (New Living Translation)

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector tells us **two ways to pursue righteousness** and gain a right standing with God.

### ● **RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH WORKS** (See Luke 18:11-12)

#### **Righteousness through Works is Wrong for Three Reasons**

- It uses **performance** to gain standing with God.
- We **compare** ourselves to others and not God.
- We are unrighteous **sinners**. (See Romans 1:18-3:20)
  - . . . *all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin.* <sup>10</sup>*As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous—not even one.”*  
Romans 3:9-10 (New Living Translation)
  - . . . *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, . . .*  
Romans 3:23 (English Standard Version)
  - *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. . . .*  
<sup>10</sup>*If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, . . .* 1 John 1:8, 10 (ESV)
  - *“If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin— . . . <sup>47</sup>yet if they . . . <sup>48</sup> . . . repent . . . <sup>49</sup>then hear . . . their prayer . . . <sup>50</sup>and forgive your people . . .”* 1 Kings 8:46-50 (ESV)

## Two Metaphors about Our Righteousness

- They are **soiled garments**.  
*We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.* Isaiah 64:6a (ESV)
- They are **garbage**. (See Philippians 3:8)

### ● **RIGHTEOUSNESS AS GOD’S GIFT (JUSTIFICATION)** (See Luke 18:13)

#### **How to Pursue Righteousness as God’s Gift**

- **See** your sin by comparing yourself to Jesus and His Word.
- See your own righteousness as **insufficient** before a holy God.  
*. . . “My destruction is sealed, for I am a sinful man and a member of a sinful race. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD Almighty!”* Isaiah 6:5 (NLT, 1996)  
*Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.*  
1 Timothy 1:15 (New International Version)
- Humbly **repent**.
- Receive the righteousness **of Christ** as a gift.  
*However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.* Romans 4:5 (NIV)  
*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup>Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!* Romans 5:8, 9 (NIV)  
*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)