

The Fatal Delusion of Self-Righteousness *(The Parable of the Two Debtors)*

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Luke 7:36-50 NASB

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.

37 **And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,**

38 **and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.**

39 **Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner."**

40 **And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher."**

41 **"A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty." *(denarius = 1 day's wages)***

42 **"When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?"**

43 **Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."**

44 **Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair."**

45 **"You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet."**

46 **"You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume."**

47 **"For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."**

48 **Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven."**

49 Those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this man who even forgives sins?"

50 And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Lessons from the Parable:

1. **What God Wants From Us** - *God hates our religious deeds generated from our own sense of obligation, guilt, self-discipline and spiritual pride while our hearts are far from Him. He wants our hearts - tender, broken, needy, overflowing with gratitude and love, seeking Him alone for our forgiveness, deliverance and salvation.*

Psalm 51:16-17 NASB

16 **For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.**

17 **The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.**

Matthew 5:3-4 NASB

3 **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

4 **"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

2. **The Deception of Self-Righteousness** - *the appearance of your own good works and the sinfulness of others can blind you to your true spiritual condition.*

Simon was forgiven little, not because he had little to forgive, but because he was repentant for little. He was blinded to his own desperate need for forgiveness and the condition of his heart.

Simon the Pharisee needed God's forgiveness just as much and just as desperately as the woman. Thinking that he didn't was his perception but it was not reality.

Matthew 9:11-13 NASB

11 **When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?"**

12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "**It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick.**"

13 "But go and learn what this means: '*I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,*' for **I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.**"

Matthew 23:13 NASB

"But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..."

Matthew 23:14 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..."

Matthew 23:15 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites..."

Matthew 23:16 NASB

"Woe to you, blind guides..."

Matthew 23:23 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

Matthew 23:25 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

Matthew 23:27 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

Matthew 23:29 NASB

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

Matthew 23:33 NASB

"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of hell?"

Luke 18:9-14 NASB

9 And He also told this parable to some people who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:**

10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "**The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'**"

12 "**I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.**"

13 "**But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'**"

14 "**I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other;** for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The pride of self-righteousness has two sources:

- a. **good works** (*either pretentious or genuine*)
- b. **comparing yourself to the sinfulness of others**

Jeremiah 17:9 NASB

9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick [KJV - wicked]; Who can understand it?"

1 Samuel 16:7 NASB

7 "...God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3. **The Absence of Self-Awareness** - *you cannot be forgiven, you cannot be cleansed, until you see your need.*

"The most godly Christian is the one who knows himself best, and no one who knows himself will believe that he deserves anything better than hell."

— A.W. Tozer

God is seeking your honesty, not a perfect performance.

1 Samuel 15:9 NASB

9 **But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were not willing to destroy them utterly; but everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed.**

1 Samuel 15:13 NASB

13 Samuel came to Saul, and Saul said to him, "**Blessed are you of the LORD! I have carried out the command of the LORD.**"

14 But Samuel said, "What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

15 Saul said, "**They have brought them from the Amalekites, for the people spared the best of the sheep and oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; but the rest we have utterly destroyed.**"

2 Samuel 12:1-7 NASB

1 Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, "There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor.

2 "The rich man had a great many flocks and herds.

3 "But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb Which he bought and nourished; And it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, And was like a daughter to him.

4 "Now a traveler came to the rich man, And he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, To prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; Rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him."

5 **Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.**

6 **"He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion."**

7 **Nathan then said to David, "You are the man!** Thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'It is I who anointed you king over Israel and it is I who delivered you from the hand of Saul.

1 John 1:6-10 NASB

6 **If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;**
7 **but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

8 **If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

9 **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

10 **If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.**

"You must ask for God's help. Even when you have done so, it may seem to you for a long time that no help, or less help than you need, is being given. Never mind. After each failure, ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again. Very often what God first helps us towards is not the virtue itself but just this power of always trying again." — C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

Job 27:6 NASB

6 [Job] **"I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days."**

Job 29:7-17 NASB

7 [Job] "When I went out to the gate of the city, When I took my seat in the square,
8 The young men saw me and hid themselves, And the old men arose and stood.
9 "The princes stopped talking And put their hands on their mouths;
10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, And their tongue stuck to their palate.
11 "For when the ear heard, it called me blessed, And when the eye saw, it gave witness of me,
12 Because I delivered the poor who cried for help, And the orphan who had no helper.
13 "The blessing of the one ready to perish came upon me, And I made the widow's heart sing for joy.
14 **"I put on righteousness, and it clothed me;** My justice was like a robe and a turban."
15 "I was eyes to the blind And feet to the lame."
16 "I was a father to the needy, And I investigated the case which I did not know."
17 "I broke the jaws of the wicked And snatched the prey from his teeth."

Job 40:1-5 NASB

1 Then the LORD said to Job,
2 **"Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."**
3 Then Job answered the LORD and said,
4 **"Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth."**
5 "Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; Even twice, and I will add nothing more."

Job 42:5-6 KJV

5 [Job] **"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."**
6 **"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."**

4. **Our Righteousness - Filthy Rags**

What I produce, no matter how goodly the appearance, is no righteousness at all. Only Jesus in me, living through me, is able to produce any good in me.

Isaiah 64:6 NASB

6 **For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.**

Romans 7:18 NASB

18 **For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.**

Romans 7:21 NASB

21 **I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good.**

John 15:4-5 NASB

4 **"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me."**

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Philippians 3:2-9 NASB

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;

3 **for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,**

4 **although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more:**

5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee;

6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

7 **But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.**

8 **More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,**

9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,

5. How God Breaks Through the Delusion of Self-Righteousness

God breaks through the delusion of our self-righteousness by personal encounters of the Holy Spirit, His Word and trials which He ordains for us.

Isaiah 6:5 NASB

5 [Isaiah] Then I said, "**Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips,** And I live among a people of unclean lips; **For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.**"

The light of God's presence is the only thing that can show you your darkness.

Hebrews 4:12-13 NASB

12 **For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**

13 **And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.**

The Word of God has supernatural power to reveal ourselves to us.

Jeremiah 17:9 NASB

9 "The heart is **more deceitful than all else** and is **desperately sick** [KJV - wicked]; **Who can understand it?**"

10 "I, the LORD, **search the heart,** I **test the mind,** even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."

We learn the most from the trials that hurt us the most.

"And now it remains only that I prepare to resign to God a soul washed in the blood of my Savior. I know it stained with many sins..." Elizabeth, Princess of the Palatine (in modern Germany), 1680, in a letter to her sister