



Cherreguine Bible Doctrine Ministries

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THE REALITY OF GRACE

Luke 18:9-14

Introduction

We hear about grace, we read about grace-- its magnificence, its awesome scope and magnitude, its unfathomable depths-- but what does grace teach? What is the actual practice and application of grace?

Luke 18:9-14 say's, **“And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax-gatherer, 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!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”**

Body

I. The Author of Grace Begins to Teach-- vv. 9-10.

The first thing we notice is who is speaking the parable. **“He”** is the Lord Jesus Christ-- immediately we recognize the principle that grace is revealed by the Living Word.

- A. **“Trusted”** in v. 9 means that they had confidence. Where did they place their confidence? Where else?-- **“In themselves.”**
- B. What were they so confident of? **“That they were righteous.”** This is nothing more than the self-righteous arrogance of religion, the inevitable result of ritual without reality!
- C. What kind of viewpoint did this self-righteous arrogance lead to?
 - 1) **“Others”** comes from the word *loipos* meaning- ‘the rest,’ i.e., *all* those who weren't Pharisees, who didn't belong to their exclusive sect.
 - 2) **“With contempt”** is the Greek verb *exoutheneo*- ‘despise utterly, treat with contempt and scorn.’ This teaches us two things right away.

- a. Self-righteous arrogance leads to contempt and scorn of everyone that doesn't fit your lofty ideal.
 - b. The fastest way to move from humility to arrogance, from grace orientation to self-righteousness is to trust in yourself-- *your* strength, *your* knowledge, *your* power.
- 3) The point is that grace teaches us *dependence*. Is our reliance and dependence on God's Power (HS) and God's Provision (Bible doctrine) absolute? How much reliance is there in your spiritual life on *self*-- what self desires, what self can achieve, what self can accomplish?
- D. In v. 10 we notice the two characters who've now taken the stage of our parable, both of them heading for the temple to pray-- the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer.
- II. The Rejecter of Grace Begins to Pray-- vv. 11-12.
- A. There is an amazing phrase that comes to life for us if we will read v. 11 with the utmost care and attention-- the Pharisee was praying **"thus to himself."** While we may find this humorous-- I find it hilarious-- it is no wonder to him, because in his mind he really was as good as God. He was *convinced* God held *his* lofty standard.
 - B. The term **"Pharisee"** is a transliteration of *Pharisaios*, which literally means- *the separated ones*.
 - 1) It was a name *originally* given them by their adversaries, however, they were indeed separatists-- legalists to an extreme!
 - 2) They called themselves *Chaver*, a Hebrew term used in the Mishnah and in ancient Rabbinical writings for 'one who strictly observes the law.'
 - C. He says **"thank you"** in v. 11 but there was no thanksgiving here. The statement about not being like other people was a bold-faced lie; he was *exactly* like other people.
 - D. In v. 12 we find the culmination of his impressive self-worth.
 - 1) Notice throughout his entire prayer that the Pharisee has no praise for God, only praise for *self*; in the place of praise was self-exaltation. He makes no request of God because he is *totally* unaware of any *need*; therefore, he *gets* nothing because he *asks* for nothing!

Which brings us to an important principle: *The trouble with our religious-- as opposed to spiritual-- ideals is that if we live up to all of them, we become impossible to live with.*
 - 2) "The gospel declares that no matter how dutiful or prayerful we are, we can't save ourselves. What Jesus did was sufficient (Jn. 19:30). To the extent that we are self-made saints like the Pharisees or neutral like Pilate-- never making the leap in trust-- we let the prostitutes and publicans go first into the Kingdom, while we ...are in the background having our alleged *virtue* burnt out of us. The hookers and swindlers enter before us because they know they cannot save themselves, they cannot make

themselves presentable or lovable. They risked *everything* on Jesus, and knowing they didn't have it all together, were not too proud to accept the handout of amazing grace." Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, pp. 77

"The blood of the Lamb points to the truth of grace: what we cannot do for ourselves, God has done *for us*." *ibid.*, p 72

3) What to learn from this Pharisaic prayer.

Some Church Age believers find the Royal Priesthood boring, lifeless, unsatisfying and unfulfilling. They get *nothing* out of prayer, giving or the study of the Word. And you know why?-- Because they *ask* for nothing. They see absolutely no need for anything that God has to give in grace; consequently, they get exactly what they ask for. Some Christians never benefit from Bible class, no matter how on target, how intense or how practical. They don't go away full because they don't come in hungry.

- a. In Luke 1:53 we find Mary, the mother of our Lord, praising the Lord God of Israel. She said, "**He has filled the hungry with good things** ['hungry' is from / root verb *peinao*, which metaphorically means- 'crave ardently, seek with eager desire;'] Jesus uses it in Jn. 6:35 of / hunger for spiritual food]; **and sent away the rich empty-handed** [/ 'rich' here represents / arrogant, / proud, those who recognize no need for that awesome demonstration of God's grace-- His Word]."

It's interesting that the word for "**empty-handed**" here, *kenos*, also means- *vain, devoid of truth; without content, power, profit or result*. *Kenos* was used to express the 'hollowness' of something. Metaphorically it means- *destitute of spiritual wealth*. It was used of one who boasts of his faith and yet is without the fruits of faith, one whose labors and endeavors result in nothing, in vanity and fruitlessness.

- b. Jesus told the religious Jews in John 6:35, that "**...I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.**"

III. The Recipient of Grace Begins to Believe-- vv. 13-14.

- A. To understand the background you must understand that "**tax-gatherer**" was just another way of saying "a tax-collector for the Romans." These men were considered traitors by their fellow Jews, and were *despised* by almost everyone, especially the Pharisees, who classed them as 'sinners' ranking right alongside harlots and Gentiles.

Historical Note: The exclusive attitude of 1st century Judaism with its cultural, religious and racial arrogance led some Rabbis of this period to proclaim, that "Gentiles were created to light the fires of hell."

- B. The fact that the tax-gatherer was standing away and apart, unwilling to even look towards God's direction was an indication of the emptiness in his soul. In utter humility he was about to fling himself recklessly at the mercy of God!

The main thing I want you to see in v. 13 is that grace teaches us about sinfulness. Who's the greatest sinner you know? If the answer is *anyone* but you, then you don't understand grace.

If you cannot look at yourself objectively in the light of the Word of God and in the light of grace, you will *never* understand the attitude of humility expressed by the tax-gatherer in Luke 18:13.

- C. **“Be merciful”** is from the verb *hilaskomai*, which in the pass. voice means- *be propitiated, be gracious and merciful*. It reminds us of the fact that grace gives us what we do not deserve, it is extended to those with absolutely *no* merit; while mercy withholds from us judgment we rightfully deserve, for mercy is extended, *in spite* of human merit.

The principle is: *The only people who can lay hold of grace are those who recognize their need for mercy.*

- 1) The tax-collector-- hated, rejected, an outcast in his own nation-- stood in the temple and uttered seven words, seven words that form one of the most profound prayers in the entire Bible: **“God, be merciful to me, the sinner!”**

He had no grand illusions about himself, no egotistically inflated ideas about being good enough for God. He saw how *awesome* his need was, and he knew that *nothing* but God's mercy could sustain him.

- 2) Mercy and grace are vitally united, inextricably linked in the Word of God. Mercy naturally precedes grace.

Here's the principle: *Mercy must remove the condemnation we rightfully deserve before grace can bestow the blessing that we cannot earn and never deserve.*

- D. In v. 14 Jesus tells us that the tax-gatherer left the temple **“justified.”**

- 1) **“Justified”** is *dikaioo*, a legal term meaning- ‘vindicate, acquit; *declare legally righteous.*’
- 2) This tells us that in the recognition of his need for mercy and grace the tax-gatherer had believed in the Messiah of Israel-- Yehowah Elohim-- for there is no other way to stand justified, vindicated, legally righteous before God unless we have received His absolute righteousness, the imputed righteousness which belongs to us through faith in Christ (Phil. 3:9).

Paul said in Galatians 2:16, **“nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we may be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.”**

- E. One man went up to the temple in humility, and for his faith received eternal life; the other entered with an attitude of arrogance and for his self righteousness received nothing.

Jesus gives us the reason why in the closing phrase of v. 14, **“for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles *himself* shall be exalted.”**

In Conclusion

“The deeper we grow in the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the poorer we become-- the more we realize that *everything in life is a gift*. The tenor of our lives becomes one of humble and joyful thanksgiving. Awareness of our poverty and ineptitude causes us to rejoice in the gift of being called out of darkness into the wondrous light and translated into the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son. ...The poor in spirit are the most non-judgmental of peoples; they get along well with sinners. ...The” humble “man and woman have made peace with their flawed existence. They are aware of their lack of wholeness, their brokenness, the simple fact that they don’t have it all together. While they do not excuse their sin, they are humbly aware that sin is precisely what has caused them to throw themselves at the mercy of the Father. They do not pretend to be *anything* but what they are-- sinners saved by grace,” and saints empowered by His Spirit.