



[Luke 18:9-14](#)

(9) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: (10) "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers evildoers, adulterers—even like this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' (13) "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' (14) "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

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Notice Jesus' teaching in verse 9: "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." This specific problem is religious egotism; the Pharisee despised others. *Despised* means "to count as nothing" or "to be contemptuous of." Can one have a good relationship with someone he despises? [Pride](#) finds fertile ground in our process of evaluation and begins to produce corrupt fruit.

This parable reveals the Pharisee to possess a misguided confidence that caused him to magnify himself by comparing himself against someone he felt to be inferior. It fed his own opinion of himself, causing separation from his fellow man. While that was happening, it also brought him into war with [God](#)! The Pharisee became separated from God because, as the parable says, he was not justified.

We need to take warning because, if we begin to feel contaminated in the presence of a brother—if we begin to withdraw from him or are constantly finding fault with him and being offended by almost everything he does—we may well be in very great trouble! The [sin](#) of pride may be producing its evil fruit, and the division is strong evidence of it.

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This parable features a self-applauding lawkeeper and an abased publican. One is not simply good and the other evil; both are equally sinners but in different areas. Both had sinned, but the outward form of their sins differed. Paul taught Timothy that some men's sins precede them and others follow later ([1 Timothy 5:24](#)). The publican's sins were obvious, the Pharisee's generally better hidden.

The Pharisee's pride deluded him into thinking he had a righteousness he did not really possess. His [prayer](#) is full of self-congratulation, and like a circle, it keeps him firmly at its center (notice all the /s in [Luke 18:11-12](#)). He makes no lowly expression of obligation to God; he voices no thanksgiving for what God had given him; he gives no praise to God's glory. He asks for nothing, confesses nothing, and receives nothing! But very pronouncedly, he compares himself with others. He is filled with conceit and is totally unaware of it because his pride has deceived him into concentrating his judgment on the publicans—sinners who were contaminating his world!

The humble publican did not delude himself into thinking he was righteous. What made the difference? It was a true evaluation and recognition of the self in relation to God, not other men. The basis of their evaluations—pride or humility—made a startling difference in their conclusions, revealing each man's attitudes about himself and his motivations.

The one finds himself only good, the other only lacking. One flatters himself, full of self-commendation. The other seeks [mercy](#), full of self-condemnation. Their approach and attitude toward God and self are poles apart! One stands apart because he is not the kind of man to mingle with inferiors. The other stands apart because he considers himself unworthy to associate himself with others. One haughtily lifts his eyes to heaven; the other will not even look up! How different their spirits! Anyone who, like the Pharisee, thinks he can supply anything of great worth to the [salvation](#) process is deluding himself!

Against whom do we evaluate ourselves? Pride usually chooses to evaluate the self against those considered inferior. It must do this so as not to lose its sense of worth. To preserve itself, it will search until it finds a flaw.

If it chooses to evaluate the self against a superior, its own quality diminishes because the result of the evaluation changes markedly. In such a case, pride will often drive the person to compete against—and attempt to defeat—the superior one to preserve his status ([Proverbs 13:10](#)). Pride's power is in deceit, and the ground it plows to produce evil is in faulty evaluation.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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