



[Luke 18:9-12](#)

(9) Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. (12) I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

New King James Version

The Pharisee's [prayer](#) manifests his mindset ([II Peter 2:3](#)). People like him trust in their own works to gain [salvation](#) and [eternal life](#), not trusting in [Jesus Christ](#) for them. They do not really think they need His sacrifice or help because they think they are good enough in themselves. So, they toot their own horns, making sure [God](#) knows how righteous they are. While kneeling before Him, they tell Him all the good things they are always doing, and believe that He is impressed. They act as if God owes them salvation because of their good works.

This attitude shows how little they understand of the true [holiness](#) of God and the lowliness of our spiritual state. While on earth, Jesus worked more easily with tax collectors and sinners than with the Pharisees, though the latter were more dedicated to adhering strictly to the letter of the law. The Pharisees, knowing they were more righteous, made sure others knew it. In their self-delusion and self-righteousness, they could learn little from Christ.

The Pharisee, considering others as nothing, treats them accordingly. It is typical of human nature to elevate itself while putting down others, and some believe that this is the only way to elevate themselves above their peers. Isaiah writes about such people: ". . . who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am holier than you!' These are smoke in [God's] nostrils, a fire that burns all the day" ([Isaiah 65:5](#)).

The Pharisee compares his own flaws, not with God's infinite perfections, but with the

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imagined greater flaws of others. His [pride](#) has made him bankrupt of genuine compassion and concern ([James 2:13](#)). He presumptuously errs in his prayer in that it is neither his duty nor his right as a sinner to point out another's sins. In trusting in Christ for righteousness, our inadequacies and guilt are revealed, and we become willing to admit that others may be much better than we are.

— Martin G. Collins

To learn more, see:

[Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector](#)

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