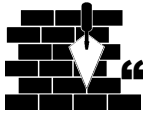


THE PHARISEE - "Is Being 'Good' Ever Good Enough?"



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Lk 18:11)** The Greek in Jesus’ parable is not easily discernible. It is not clear whether the Pharisee was “standing by/unto himself,” or “praying by/to himself.” In either case, he has isolated himself from others either because of arrogance or fear of contamination.
2. **(Lk 18:11,13)** The statement about the tax collector’s posture is very likely in the story as an implicit description of *the Pharisee’s* prayer posture. (I.e. the *opposite* of the tax collector).
3. **(Lk 18:11)** The phrase, “...*like other men*” comes from the Greek word, *loipos*, which is a word used for a “remnant,” or something “left over” from a larger group. The Pharisee’s prayer could be rendered, “*Lord, I thank you that I am in a totally separate category from the rest of mankind...*”
An excellent passage to compare the *meaning* of this word is Luke 8:10:
...he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that ‘seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.’”
Also, *loipos* is the identical word used in verse 9 of Luke’s account of the tax collector and Pharisee to describe a type of person Jesus was opposed to!
4. **(Lk 18:14)** The phrase, “...*down to his house*” must be understood in the context of Jerusalem. The Temple was on the highest part of the city, and the city was on a small mountain, Mt. Zion. *Everyone* “went up” to Jerusalem, no matter which direction they were coming from.
5. The length of the prayers is worth noting: the Pharisee’s prayer (in English) is 33 words; the tax collector’s is 7.
6. The way each begins his prayer is noteworthy as well. The Pharisee begins with “thanksgiving,” but the tax collector begins with confession.
7. **(Rom. 3:20)** The Greek word translated “justified” (ESV, NAS) and “declared righteous” (NIV) is the Greek word, *dikaiaō*, which means “*to declare one to be righteous.*” It is the verb form of the exact same noun used in Romans 3:10.
8. It is worth pointing out (in light of Rom. 3:20 and others) that if I can’t be “declared righteous” by what I do *right*, then what I do *wrong* is that much more serious!



“Stumbling Stones”

1. Throughout all of these chapters, if a question asks you to “Explain,” it is asking for a written “defense” of your answer. This is a *vital* part of doing these studies properly. Make sure your women know this from the very beginning. We want to know *why* they’ve written what they’ve written sometimes, not just *what*.
2. **A well-lived life:** Too often, as Christians, we are in such a hurry to “get to the Gospel,” or feel constrained to make sure “works” are not in the picture, that we may unintentionally (or intentionally!) totally disregard the value of a life well-lived. In so doing, we run the risk of communicating to someone that their life has been wasted, and is of no value to God.
Also, many Christians are afraid to admit that some people are just “good” people, quoting Paul in Romans 3:11-12 and Jesus in Mark 10:17-18. But, in so doing, we make a serious error. Some people *are* “better” than other people! There *is* such a thing as a “good person.” Paul talks about this person in Romans 5:6-7.

Even for the believer, the *quality* of their life will be judged by Jesus and rewards given (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13-16). We need to be *very* careful in talking with unbelievers about the life they've lived. A moral, well-lived life can be acknowledged without ever sacrificing the Gospel of Grace.

This demands on our part, the ability to help someone understand the difference between justification by grace through faith, and the quality of their lives. We might even tell them that "The life you've lived is *very* important to God. But, He will talk to you about that *after* you're with Him."

Our burden should always be to help them understand what it takes to *get to* that second conversation!

3. **(Rom. 3:10-18)** This is poetic literature. Paul is quoting mostly from the Psalms here. He is using Old Testament passages to illustrate the point he has just made to Jews that sin is much, much more than an issue of one's conduct—good or bad. Paul wants them to know that sin is rooted deep within human nature. But, poetic literature must be interpreted differently than straight didactic literature, like the rest of Romans.
4. To be "declared righteous" (NIV) or "justified" (NAS) does *NOT* mean that I am totally transformed. The promise of eternal security is rooted in *God's unchanging character* and the fact that *HE* has executed justice on Jesus. It is *NOT* the fruit of my "new condition."
Getting this wrong is almost certainly the reason some Christians become so judgmental and mean towards those still in sin. They have come to believe that *THEY* are the righteous one. Jesus is the Righteous One, and my righteousness is totally the result of me being "in Him."
Some excellent verses on this are: 1 Cor. 1:4, 30; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:24; 8:1; Eph. 2:6,7; Col. 1:13-14.
5. Paul and Jesus use the exact same word (*dikaiaō*; see *Lk. 18:14 and Rom. 3:20*), but we need to exercise care and caution that we don't overlay Jesus' use of the word with Paul's very well-developed doctrine of justification, which came years later.



"Going Deeper"

1. **(1a)** What is the error in the theology of the opening statement of the Pharisee's prayer?
Would it ever be appropriate to thank God that *I AM* like other people? Explain.
2. **(1b)** Why was the tax collector's conscience still tender and the Pharisee's wasn't?
What affect do you think passing judgment *on others* seems to have on our own consciences? Explain.
3. **(3 & 4)** Do you think the tax collector was able to separate in his own mind, who he was from what he did?
The Pharisee?
Which of the two do you think understood sin better? Explain.
4. **(5)** According to Job 25:4 *and* 5, is my "real problem" me or God? Explain.
5. **(6)** There are really *three* issues here: the nature of the gift, the nature of the giver, and the nature of the receiver.
Which one(s) is/are responsible for the statement in this verse? **(Note to Leader:** It's *NOT* the gift! A "better" gift, or more of them doesn't help this problem.)
6. **(8)** Was the Pharisee's conclusion about himself the result of an improper view of himself or of God? Explain.
What then, is the very best way to allow God to expose sin in my life?

7. **(10)** Do we carry this faulty view of God's "grading system" into our relationship with Him *after* we become Christians? If so, how? What does it "look" like?
8. **(11)** When are you no longer dependent upon God "declaring you righteous" to cancel your own unrighteousness?
Does it become less necessary the longer you are a Christian?