

A Pharisee and the Sinner

Gospel According to Luke

By Ken Wimer

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Shreveport Grace Church
2970 Baird Road
Shreveport, LA 71118

Website: www.shrevegrace.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/shreveportgracech

For the message, let's take our Bibles and look together in Luke 18. I want to read from verse 9 down to verse 14 and the message title is simple, "A Pharisee and the Sinner." A Pharisee and the sinner. Luke 18, beginning with verse 9. This is a parable and yet it's Christ taking real life situations and from those teaching us spiritual truth and so here's the real life situation, here's why he taught this parable. It says in verse 9, "And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." I find it interesting that it's put in the singular because typically when you think of despising someone, you see, there is a person that comes to mind that you think of, that in your mind whether you've ever told anybody or not, you despise them. It might change but you can't really think upon more than one person at a time. But this was their nature that they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican." Publicans were the tax collectors of the day. They were actually Jews that were hired by the Roman government to collect taxes from their own kin, their own kind, and therefore they were despised because these tables were set up, you couldn't get into the marketplace without coming by one of these. And they fixed their fees, they knew how much they had to get to the Roman government and the rest they lived on so they were considered to be hucksters.

And of course, the Pharisees, that word "Pharisee" actually means "purist." This was a group of people that arose back in that intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew, 400 years when God did not raise up a prophet; between Malachi and John the Baptist there were 400 years of silence that the Lord did not raise up a prophet. And like people today, if they don't think that God is working, they're going to start making it happen so they started forming their own group of pure Jews and they were going to bring back the Jewish nationality; they were going to bring back the law. These would have been the legalists. On the one hand the Bible thumpers but on the other hand the legalists. They had the law of the Old Testament, now the application. The interesting thing is that they couldn't even get along with each other which is typical whenever you start getting legalistic because somebody is going to think you're not applying it enough and you've got to come over here and so they started dividing among themselves. They had different schools with over 600+ interpretations of the law and that's what they

looked to over time versus actually what the law taught and these were the ones that confronted our Lord Jesus Christ when he came. They were the purists. A little bit of background there.

But here in verse 11, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself." It doesn't say he prayed unto God but he prayed thus with himself. I dare say that every invocation that men give today that is not Spirit-inspired is nothing more than praying with yourself even though they use the name God. And there is interesting as well, they were politically correct in their day. Don't get more precise than that, God. It's like in our generation, people don't want to offend so we're just going to say God.

But here's what he prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican." So there is for him the other, "and despise other." He saw this publican as being one to be despised because these were not only purists as far as the law was concerned but they were nationalists. And for them the Roman government was evil, remember they kept coming to Christ and saying, "Do we have to pay taxes to this evil government?" Do you remember what our Lord said? "Get a coin, whose image is stamped on it?" They said, "Caesar's." "Well, render to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what's God's." Our Lord Jesus never came to stir up a revolution. He did not preach a social justice Gospel. He rather declared that everything that was in place was exactly according to God's purpose and will. Give us an idea of how we're to live our lives. We're not to be upset and turned and out there in the streets marching and carrying banners. If we're the Lord's we have one purpose: to glorify his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in him.

Robert just read it in Matthew 6, how he taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." We get up this morning and we hallow God's name for exactly how this day will unfold because it's going to unfold exactly as he has purposed. Whether you agree or not, whether you're along for the ride or not, you're along for the ride because God has purposed it and that's why he says the very first thing is what? "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." And every part of that is very simple, isn't it?

"Give us this day our daily bread." What are most of us thinking? We're thinking two or three days down the line, a week. Who said you even have today? "Give us this day our daily bread," that which is necessary not only for my physical well-being but especially spiritually. Who is my daily bread but Christ?

"Forgive us our sins," continue to forgive us our sins. There is no greater blessing or freedom than that, to be in Christ and know my sins are forgiven and then we fuss about what? Well, how our neighbors are treating us, or how this and that. We spend all our time just spinning like we were still bondmen. We're free men if Christ has paid our debt and you let the world knock you off kilt? You let that person over there get you upset and running down the road and acting just like they are? They act the way they do because they're in bondage. If there is any calm or peace or rest that this world does not know about, it is being in Christ so live as children. Live as those that God by his grace and

mercy has redeemed and justified in his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll tell you what, Christ said, "I give you peace, not as the world because the world's peace is temporary. I give you that peace," because he says, "I have overcome the world." I can't think of any...that's true of what's going on out here, that's true of what's going on in here. You get down and try to wrestle with this thing in here, try to get it sorted out and categorized and figured out, it's going to beat you up, leaven you black-and-blue and left for dead. That's not what the Lord said, he said, "Look to Christ. Run this race having your eyes fixed upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

So that's what it is to be in Christ but here this Pharisee not only looking at the law, comparing himself with others, nationalistic, everywhere...you can't look to Christ when you haven't been given eyes to see Christ and that's his statement. That's why he prays within himself the way he does.

"I fast twice in the week." Why do most people fast? To get what they want. They really think that if I could just give up something, God is going to give me something. That's really what they do. They got in mind what they're going to do and they think, "Alright, I'm going to fast until I get it." But beware when you read the Scripture of God giving you what you want and sending leanness to your soul. I'd think twice before I'd ask. It says there in the Old Testament, while that quail was quail, eat, while it was still in their throats, God destroyed and killed them. They couldn't even swallow it.

"I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Why do people tithe? Why do they still talk about tithes today? It's not because they're really liberal in their love for God and thinking, it's because, "I want God to treat me right so I'm going to count my 10%. But, oh, by the way, preacher, do we count that on the gross or on the net?" That's how they reason. It's self-serving, all of this is. It's like we see in religion today. This is the Pharisee.

But then verse 13, "the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me," now in the original it says, "the sinner." I don't know why the translators put here "a sinner" but there is a very specific definite article in the original. "The sinner."

In contrast to the Pharisee who had his eyes on other and there was one specific that he despised which was standing right there. Think about it in worship, somebody showing up that you despise – don't think it doesn't happen – then all of a sudden it just knocks you off kilt. It's like, "What are they doing here?" So his eyes were on other but here his eyes were on himself. Well, I say that but actually on Christ the merciful.

But he said, "God be merciful to me the sinner." When God by his Spirit makes it so plain who you are and who I am, we have eyes for no other. Every time the Gospel is preached and Christ and him crucified, exalted, I am by God's grace and his Spirit so focused on me, the sinner, to Christ, that Savior, it's as if no one else is in the room and that's the way it ought to be. Our eyes ought not to be on one another in worship because

so drawn to the Savior am I that I am that sinner and I'm the most needy. That's worship there if God by his Spirit is pleased to grant us.

And he says, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified," justified in his cry. We know justification happened at the cross but here it's talking about in the sense of between these two, which one. And their prayer would be justified before God. It says there, "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

So here's the text that we have. Now, I think most of us at some point or other in our lives have taken one of those personality tests and had to answer questions to figure out. I remember, that's got different names. Are you sanguine? Are you melancholy? Are you phlegmatic? Most recently we had to take one work related. Now, I guess they have to make it more interesting: are you a parrot? Are you an owl? Are you an eagle? Are you a dove? Now, this is what's interesting because most of us when we take those personality tests, don't we already have an idea of who we think we are and don't we always think better of ourselves than what really the results show? Let's be honest. That's why those things, you try to answer but in the end it's going to make you appear to be in the best light because you've determined how you want to be.

But I dare say that if we would take a test even on this question, "Are you a Pharisee or are you the sinner?" how would you come out in the end result? Now, I dare say that most of us don't feel comfortable with either. We definitely don't want to be the Pharisee but then to say, "I'm the sinner," most people are going to try in their logical reasoning to figure out some middle ground. It's like I used to do when I didn't really know the answer to a question in school, it was a yes or no, true or false, but I would call the teacher over and say, "Now, if it's true it would be this," and the teacher says, "It's either true or false. Re-read the question. There is no middle ground." So I was a tough student. I have to admit it.

Because no one likes to think themselves as a Pharisee. I dare say if I asked you to take this test, being a Pharisee, the first thing you would think is, "Okay, that's not me. Let me come over here and take a look at the sinner." And yet I will tell you that in honesty before the Lord, this Pharisee is who we are by nature. There is none of us going to get out of here on this test without it pointing to us as the Pharisee because that's what we are by nature. This Pharisee expresses our thoughts even though perhaps we try to hide a lot in our outward actions, yet in thought, I believe every one of us would have to be on our face before the Lord and confess, "That Pharisee is who I am by nature but for the grace of God."

Now, the sinner, I will tell you that none but the Spirit of God can bring one to confess as this sinner did their sinnerhood. Notice he's not thinking about this sin or that. This Pharisee is going down through a list, isn't he? Isn't that how people do it? And I dare say he probably ordered it in the order of importance. People categorize sins today. There are certain sins that they consider to be worse than others and the fact that he says extortioner already tells me his mind was on this. This must have been some guy that had stopped

him on the road to collect taxes at one point because that was the Pharisee's cry, "Why should I have to pay taxes? I'm on my way to the temple." We have people like that today. They want their minister discount. You have a minister discount, you have a religious discount. I'm thinking, "Why would anybody have a religious discount?" But people play that card all the time. They think that somehow because they're in religion or somehow that they ought to get that discount. This Pharisee would have been the same way.

And thinking about this publican showing up at the temple, of all places. You see, that's that person that all of a sudden shows up and you think, "What are they doing here? I sure hope they don't come back. Of all people." You know, we say it all the time, sinners welcome, but then when the sinners start showing up, everybody's like, "Ew, I'm not sure about that sinner." And honestly, there are certain people that, you know, we're supposed to get along but you don't necessarily like them. And there may be some that you think, "Well, I'm glad they're not here today. At least I'll be at peace for this time." What kind of thinking is that other than putting yourself above other, you see?

So that's what we find here, but for this one, this sinner to be crying as he is, I dare say that nothing in our answers naturally would lend us to be this sinner in taking that test. We'd all come out just as the Pharisee.

I read years ago one of the old writers and it stopped me up short when I read it but it stuck with me where it said: sinners are a sacred thing, the Holy Spirit has made them so. You stop and think about it. This temple was full of worshipers and yet there was one there identified as "the sinner." And I'll tell you, on a test, you're not going to be that one. Neither would I. We would not be that one. We'd want to be just like the rest, but for the grace of God.

So are you ready for your test? Do you think I'm lying? Let's do the test. Listen to the questions. Have you ever or do you ever, that's how these questions go. Let's figure out what side we fall on here. Have you ever or do you ever trust in yourself that you are righteous? Now if you say never, you're lying because that is our number 1 issue is that somehow we think ourselves righteous in spite of all we know that our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. I will tell you the sin nature raises it's head and makes us believe that there is still something good in me. If not, I would be flat on my face every time like the sinner. But the fact that I'm not condemns me. It tells me then and I'll tell you, it's like I heard a preacher say one time: sin has slain it's thousands and self-righteousness it's ten-thousands.

Hell's fires are burning with self-righteous people and when I think about that, there are people actually in hell, if you stood them up next to me or you, they would probably be more moral in their thinking and the way they are, good neighbors, but their problem is they think themselves better because of it. That's our issue and that's what the Lord by his grace has to pierce through by his Spirit and lay us low. You know, I've had some question me, "How come you're always so hard on works religion and what-not?" It's because I lived for years in the darkness and blindness of it and never knew it, never

realized it. In my mind, I was on the steps of progressive sanctification and somehow dealing with this flesh getting better and better and it took a man asking me a pointed question that since the day you professed to have believed, do you see yourself as more holy? And I actually answered yes and there was a pause and he said, "If you're telling me the truth, then I know nothing of salvation." And this was a man I respected and I looked at him and I said, "What are you talking about?" And here's what he told me, he said, "The closer I get to the light, the more I see just how corruptible I am." And it was like the Spirit took and lit a light in my own heart at that point and caused me to wonder, "What is it about him because if what he's saying is true, then I must not know anything about salvation."

That was the beginnings and it didn't happen overnight. It took the Lord exercising his heart to lay me low. Don't you think that somebody that's had a dread disease and been delivered from it, that they're going to talk about it the rest of their life how grateful they are? Why would any accuse me, then, of being so hard against this blindness? It's not that I treat the people that are blind. I'm not beating on them but it's a delusion that until my dying breath, yes, I will point sinners to Christ away from any thought of self-righteousness, not just because of a past experience but because of what I continue to have to wrestle with every day in this flesh because it raises its head all the time. If you don't believe it, just tell yourself, "I'm gonna do something for somebody and I'm not gonna say anything, I'm just gonna do it and I hope they're blessed." And then a day or two goes by and you don't get a thank you, you don't get a note, nothing, and pretty soon you start thinking, "Well, how ungrateful can they be?" And what do I do? I'm going to go up to them and say, "Did you happen to see the soup or the card?" "Yeah, I saw it. I appreciate it. Thanks." What do you think? "Well, I'm never gonna do that again," because inside is that subtle thought of, "I want recognition for this thing." If just for that, desiring the recognition.

You see, this is what I say, most of what people are calling sin, they're categorizing, they're never thinking about the true nature of sin which is ingratitude. We're getting ready for Thanksgiving, I'll tell you, a lot of preparation goes into it and we go through the routine but if we were allowed to eat or had to be sent to our room for a true state of heart, we'd all be sent to our room. We wouldn't even touch the food because that's our nature. Complain. You know, who considers covetousness which the Scripture calls idolatry?

It's not just this sin and that, but when we begin to categorize in our minds and thinking, "Well, I'm doing alright on this sin," that's already showing that I'm the Pharisee, I'm not the sinner, because he said that, didn't he? He said, "I thank thee that I'm not as other men," when in reality whatever sin comes up and is exposed, think about all your sins that have never been exposed or mine, but there are some that the Lord causes to be exposed and, boy, when it hits the papers, everybody is thinking, "Wow!" And then you stop and think how many thoughts have I had, how much have I in myself been just as guilty? And yet it's not just this sin and that, it's just the whole, it's the sinnerhood, it's being. Do you realize being a sinner is a being, it's not a doing. It's a being, it's who I am.

So have you or do you ever trust in yourself that you're righteous? Well, number 2: have you ever despised others as worse than yourself? I dare say we all have. When was the last time you read something or heard something about someone and said, "I can't believe they did that. Do you believe that?" And then what? You joy spreading it. Most people don't talk about good news, they love to spread the gossip. "Did you hear about So-and-so?" And you might say, "Ah, I know that kind of person. They do that all the time. That didn't surprise me." Any kind of thinking like that is despising other. It's assuming somehow you're not in the pot with them when in reality if we learn of anything like that in other, it would be to say, "God, be merciful to me the sinner because if, Lord, you should mark iniquity, who could stand?"

But that's not the way works religion works. I remember growing up where we had to vote in times of discipline. I remember sitting through actually business meetings in a congregation where for this particular sin it was three months of discipline, for this particular sin it was six months, with this sin it was a year, and for this sin, well, it's total excommunication. We just can't have that in our congregation. Am I talking about an experience that I alone knew? That's the kind of religion I grew up with and all eyes were on everybody else and you minded your p's and q's because you didn't want to get called before the discipline committee. But there are people that reason this way. I've been asked before, "Do you believe in discipline?" and I always say the Gospel has disciplined many a person, myself included. The preaching of Christ and him crucified, by God's grace his Spirit lays us low and causes us to look unto him as the sinner.

But have you ever despised others or thought of them worse than yourself? Every one of us would have to say yes. Thirdly, during worship have you ever or do you ever look down on others around you? That's what this Pharisee was doing. So if you were honest and had to answer yes, guess what? Personality test, character test, whatever, it's putting you on the side of the Pharisee.

Number 4: have you ever or do you now even thank God that in your mind and heart you are not like others? "I'm sure glad that's not me." Even under the guise of grace thinking, "I'm sure God's preserved me. I'm thankful he's preserved me from that," when in reality anything you say here is what we are by nature. Aren't we extortioners? We rob God of his glory all the time. That's all it takes, taking credit ourselves for what belongs to God alone. Unjust. I love to be around people that love applying the laws as long as it's in their favor but when it comes against them, all of a sudden now it's self-justification, making excuses and saying, "Well, it doesn't really apply in this case." Really? Adulterers. Just the thought of lust is adultery. Adulterers whether physical or spiritual, just any thought other than Christ is adultery.

Or even as this publican, there is a pride of grace, there is a pride of face, there is a pride of place and this publican in the eyes of this Pharisee. Have you ever had anybody say to you, "Well, if you're a Christian, I don't know how you can work there or how you can do that"? I've had over the years. This publican was by virtue even of his employment, this Pharisee said to him, "You're not a child of God." He considered himself, themselves better even though they were just as much extortioners and unjust. When people showed

up, the Pharisees and the priests, when they showed up with their lamb, they automatically told them it wasn't going to be acceptable because they had a commerce going. They would take that lamb that they considered unacceptable and put it back here in the fold with the rest and then they'd bring out their lamb but, "Oh, by the way, you've got to pay for this one." That's the money changers in the temple. Talk about extortioners and unjust, but they didn't see themselves that way. They covered it all under the guise of religion. I dare say there's a lot of transgression committed in the name of God today in religion, works religion.

So how are we doing on this test? Have you ever or do you now think to influence God by your religious works? Here's that flesh again because as much as we know that it's by grace, we still in our minds think that somehow by doing any one of these commandments that somehow we're a little bit more favorable to God. That was the thought of this Pharisee when he brings up, "I fast twice in the week and I give tithes of all that I possess." Aren't we still in many ways under that bondage? "Oh, I haven't paid my tithe in a while."

That word "tithe" is not even a New Testament word. It had to do with supporting the Old Testament priesthood. The New Testament just simply says, "Let each one give as the Lord has prospered him through the grace of God in the heart." But we still have a tough time with that. We calculate. "I can give this but not this. I hope I give enough to where the Lord is satisfied." All of that mind gymnastics that comes from the heart is still legalism. It's still conditionalism.

We had a man that visited here for some time and before he left, he left the town, but he came up to me after and he said, "I've been sitting here for six months waiting for the other shoe to drop." And I said, "The other shoe to drop?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "This is the first place that I've ever attended where you have not specifically preached a message on giving or on tithing." And I said, "Well, the reason is because what we do is by the grace of God. We let needs be known but we're not going around checking to see who has given and who hasn't. I don't know." The Scripture says your right hand shouldn't even know what the left...but still in our minds, we still want people to know what we're giving and what we're doing. It's just that self-serving in all of it.

So have you ever or do you now think to influence God? If we're honest, that's really the subtle thought. "I'm influencing God." And yet in Christ, you cannot be any nearer to God than you already are if you're in him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased." And everything he did was on behalf of sinners such as we are so why would I think that the Father's thought would be on me when it's on his Son and what he accomplished for a sinner such as I am?

Alright, so how did we do on that test so far if we're all admitting? But let's get to the sinner because it's a Pharisee and the sinner and here in verse 13 we have both the problem and the solution. As I said, in the original, the cry of this sinner when it says here, "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me," go ahead and write it

there, "the sinner." Alright? That's the problem stated. He is confessing who he is. That word "sinner," there are a lot of different words used in Scripture for "sinner" and you can look this up yourself in the Strong's Concordance, but this particular word for "sinner" means "to be pre-eminently sinful" in contrast to what the Pharisee was thinking, "This sin and that sin. This sin and that sin."

"I am the sinner." It's like Paul said, "This is a faithful saying worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief." I truly believe that any in whom the Spirit of God has done his work of grace and begun it, that is all they can see of themselves is, "I am that sinner." And I've heard it said by one of you that if everybody else in the world had been righteous and me the only sinner, it would still have taken Christ coming to pay my debt. That's just how grave and grievous that sin is before God. It takes the same man to die for that sinner. But that's what this sinner was saying, pre-eminently sinful.

Here's another interpretation of it: devoted to sin. I hear people talking like, "Well, I used to live that way. I used to think that way. That's what I used to be but now, thank God, I'm..." Well, you're lying then. You're just like that Pharisee, "I thank God I'm not that anymore." What you're really saying, "I thank God I'm not like those others." And you listen to men's testimonies, that's what they're saying. You read, if you can get through it, it's hard to read some of these even a few lines without holding your nose and throwing up because people are on themselves, even in giving their testimonies, they're drawing attention to themselves. "What I was and now what I am."

But I truly believe if we're the Lord's and he's taught us, we'll never get over being the sinner. Ever. Again, the closer we get to the light, the more we see this corruption. I truly believe the more we grow in grace, the more we see and acknowledge our sinfulness. Do you realize that's what it is to grow in grace? I misunderstood that for years. I thought growing in grace meant sinning less and less but think about it: if you're growing in grace, where is grace needed? Grace that is greater than all my sin. It must be then that the Lord as he goes continues to show me just how sinful I am and if we ever get that little self-righteous thought that, "Hey, I'm improving," all the Lord has to do is open your eyes a little wider and think, "Whoa, wait a minute here."

I don't care how much you brush your teeth or use mouthwash, you're still going to get bad breath, right? That's on the physical side. Think about the stench of this old heart. It doesn't matter how much you treat it, it still sins. There is only one remedy. You see, this is the problem that we're looking at. Devoted to sin, it means exceedingly wicked. That's what he was saying. "I am the exceedingly wicked one."

Now, here's why I say that given a test, none of us is going to answer that way naturally. Have you ever or do you now see yourself as the exceedingly wicked one that is bent on nothing but sin? Now, I'll tell you, there are some moralists and legalists out there and even so-called grace people that will get all over you because you will say to them, "That's my testimony." And it was Paul's too, that in this flesh dwells no good thing, and they can't stand that. "You ought to be getting over that by now." I've heard people tell

me that. "You're stuck here. It's fine to preach the Gospel and grace and substitution and satisfaction and justification but you need to get on. What is it that you've got going on if you're stuck back here still saying, 'I am the sinner'?" I'll tell you what it is: it's a revelation of Jesus Christ in this heart and the more that light shines, the more he exposes who I am and the more glorious he becomes to the point where by his grace when he shows me... And that's the thing, you talk about if it were left up to me even to see how sinful I am, I would fail, but when he is pleased to open my heart and eyes and show me again that I am that sinner, at the same time the Spirit draw me to Christ to say, "Yes, even for that, Christ paid the debt." That's not an excuse, that's a comfort. That's a comfort.

So the problem is that, that we are sinners, but I will tell you, it's for such that Christ came to save and that's the glorious part of this. When he says, it says here, you can see, humble, stood afar off. Some say that in the temple all those were pressing toward...they wanted to get closest to the altar so that was the spot to be. That's where the Pharisees were. That's where they were standing. Standing room only up close because they presumed that they had the right to be there. Here was one, it says, "he stood afar off." Some say it was an indication he wasn't even in the inner, he was in the outer court.

Dared not even approach. Dared not even look heavenward. Talk about beating the breast. This was not just some religious activity, this was a true cry unto the Lord. Not just for this sin or that, but being merciful to me, the sinner. I'll tell you what, you won't even have a clue what I'm saying unless the Lord has been pleased to be your teacher. You'll walk out of here like with a deer in a headlight look, like, "What was he all emotional about today?" I'll tell you, it's not an emotion, it's an understanding of this flesh and who I am before a holy God. It's like what one of the old preachers said and had it written on his tombstone, "I am a great sinner but I have a great Savior."

That's only what the Lord can teach and I will tell you it was for such that Christ came to save. Let me just give you a couple of references here and then I'll be done. In Matthew 9:10, and these are all in this chapter in Matthew 9. It was a point of emphasis of our Lord to make it clear. You say, "How do I know that the Lord came to save me? How do I know I'm one of those for whom he paid the debt?" Well, can you take your place as this sinner? You can't do it without the Spirit of grace but I'll tell you, if you can identify with this publican's testimony there's hope.

Matthew 9:10, it says, "And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many," what? "Publicans and sinners," that's the same word, "came and sat down with him and his disciples." It wasn't the Lord that pushed them away, in fact, he was drawing them. You see, that's what the Pharisees didn't see. They were complaining about it but it was the Lord drawing them all along because he was letting them know, "These are the ones I came to save." I'll tell you, if you're drawn as a sinner to Christ, there's hope because you wouldn't come otherwise. But you don't come as a righteous, self-righteous, you come as a sinner.

Verse 11, the same thing, "And when the Pharisees saw it," you see this is that attitude, "What are they doing here?" "They said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" The same word as we have over here. "Why eateth your Master with those who are pre-eminently sinful?" Let the world say that's what I am. Devoted to sin, that's what I am. There are people today that are afraid to say it because they think if they do, then, "Oh no, that means on judgment day I've got some things I'm accountable for." Well, I'll tell you what, if that's your thought, there is no hope. Either Christ paid your debt or he didn't.

Look at verse 13. He told the Pharisees, "when Jesus heard that, he said unto them," verse 12, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." I'm the sick one. Try going to the oncology center down here and walk in there and ask people, "What on earth are you doing in here?" There's a reason they're there. They know they're sick. It's been exposed. They're looking for the remedy. We drive by it all the time and the reason we're not interested in pulling in is because we've never been told we have cancer. But I'll tell you what, all it takes is that diagnosis and all of a sudden that place becomes important and not only the place but the doctors. I want the best doctor there is. Can I get help? That's why these were there. Sick.

"But go ye and learn what that meaneth," here's this word, "I will have mercy." What hope there was for this publican standing there beating his breast saying, "God, be merciful," because God gives mercy in his Son, the Lord Jesus. He's not playing cat and mouse. I'll tell you what, if he shows you you're a sinner and draws you to Christ, it's because he already has saved you.

And this publican, think about it, standing there in the temple, what was there that was before him that he dare not even approach? It was the Mercy Seat. That was a picture of the sacrifice which the Lord Jesus Christ would accomplish. He stood afar off knowing that if there's mercy, it will be with the Lord. It will be in that sacrifice.

That's where his eyes were and that's what the Lord said here, "go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." I'm not expecting this to come from you. Quit your fasting, quit your tithing. Quit thinking it's something in you. Mercy.

"For I am not come to call the righteous," that is the self-righteous, "but sinners to repentance." In crying unto the Lord, "Be merciful," that's what he was doing. He was looking to that Mercy Seat who is Christ. He is that Mercy Seat.

So if we ask questions, I'd have to ask this in conclusion: have you ever or do you ever see yourself as so sinful that you're not even worthy of his mercy and grace? I dare say that a lot of people that use grace on their lips but still deep inside they think that somehow God wouldn't send them to hell. But if you put an x-ray and expose their thoughts they were thinking, "No, God wouldn't do that to me." That shows then you still have not seen yourself as you are because any that do, there really is only one hope and that's the mercy of God in Christ Jesus. And I pray that that be where the Lord keep our

eyes on him. He is that Advocate for sinners and I'm thankful it is so. The Lord is merciful in him.