

Luke 18:9-14 I Would **Be** Changed

- Today we step into a new year, and as we do so I would like to share a burden that I have had on my heart
- Change and “newness” are not a unique thing in the course of time
 - We meet together consistently on the first day of a new week
 - Jeremiah declared to the LORD in lamentations that with the dawning of the new day God’s mercies were also new
 - And indeed we find that, in our hearts and minds
 - These “newnesses”
 - Though semi-arbitrary
 - Do indeed provide to our hearts and minds a sense of opportunity and freshness
 - So that with each new day
 - With each new week
 - And with each new year things can change if they need to
 - They can be different
 - There is a refreshing of opportunity
 - To do right
 - To make a difference
 - To take initiative
- And so the New Year becomes a time of change in our hearts and minds, and this is not a bad thing
 - But what has been on my heart much of late has to do
 - Not with what you or I might want to change in our hearts, minds, and lives
 - But rather with how that change comes about →

Luke 18:9-14 I Would **Be** Changed

- See, because the theme of New Years centers around concepts of a renewal, but that through determination and self-discipline
- And this is fine, to a degree
 - Determination and self-discipline are not by any means bad things
- But when it comes to the Spiritual, things are different
 - In ISAIAH 29:14 God promised that there was coming a day when the wisdom of the wise would perish
 - Quoted in 1 CORINTHIANS 1:19 when Paul says →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1 Corinthians 1:19

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

- READ
- God's way is not man's way
- God's methods are not man's methods
- And as it relates to God's design for the spiritual
 - The Bible tells us that spiritual things happen
 - NOT through material means
 - But by the Spirit of God
- So we READ →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1 Corinthians 2:11, 14-15

(11) For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God... (14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1 Corinthians 2:11, 14-15

are spiritually discerned. (15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

- READ
- The spirit of man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritual
- So that the spiritual man is able to discern that which the natural man cannot
 - The spiritual man is able to understand that which the natural man cannot
- And this same principle carries over into our actions
 - That if we want to live out spiritual principles, it must be by living out of the power of the Spirit of God
- And I want to apply this understanding of God's ways and man's ways to the concept of new years
- More specifically, to the concept of spiritual change
- And I want to do so by introducing two – sort of three – different ideas of spiritual change
- And I would like to do so through a familiar parable in LUKE 18
 - A parable which is often called “the parable of the publican and the sinner”
- So let's read the whole parable together
 - Then we'll break it up into our three ideas of spiritual change →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14

(9) And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14

as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (13) 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 a

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9-14

sinner. (14) I tell you, 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.

- READ
- So here we are given a parable
 - And remember, parables in the Bible have a single point – a single lesson – which is being taught
 - And everything within the parable exists to support this single lesson
 - Parables aren't allegories
 - Not everything in a parable needs to stand for something else
- And in this particular parable we are given good, clear information →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and **despised** others:

ἐξουθενέω – to esteem low, to despise

- And that information begins with Jesus' intended audience
 - He spoke unto certain listeners who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others
 - So we find that there are two distinct but interrelated issues that Jesus is addressing here
- FIRST, he is addressing the problem of self-righteousness
 - Men who trusted that they were righteous because of what they were DOING
 - Because of their personal efforts unto morality as they, their culture, and their religious system understood it
- And along with their self-righteousness came another problem
 - One which we would understand to be a distinct problem
 - But which is inevitably linked to the first
 - This SECOND problem is that they despised others
 - The idea of that word "despise" is not an emotional idea of anger or hatred per se
 - But rather it is an idea that we understand through a bevy of cultural metaphors
 - They "thought little" of others
 - They "turned their noses up" at others
 - They "looked down" on others
 - All of these idioms are intended to give the essence of one who looks at others and elevates themselves at their expense
- And though we'll find that these two ideas
 - That of self-righteousness and despising others
 - Go very much hand in hand →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:9

And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and **despised** others:

ἐξουθενέω – to esteem low, to despise

- There is also a manner of distinction between them that I would like to highlight
- So today we are going to talk about change
 - About things becoming new
 - About opportunities for growth and development
- And that specifically in the spiritual realm
 - So that we can know, if we want to be something that we are not spiritually
 - How to go about finding the power we need to change →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves

- And we begin by thinking about those who would change themselves
- Indeed, when we think of “change” this is what comes to mind
 - I’m going to get up earlier
 - I’m going to work harder
 - I’m going to be better
- And again, as it relates to temporal change
 - Losing weight
 - Getting stronger
 - Getting healthier
 - Gaining wealth
 - These sorts of things are not only essential
 - But they are, in themselves, enough to get the job done
- But when at once we move into the realm of the spiritual
 - While self discipline
 - While personal determination are still wonderful attributes
- We find they in themselves may suffice to make us more moral
 - They may suffice to make us feel better
 - But they can never, in themselves, make us more spiritual
- So we read of this first man
 - This man who changed himself →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves

(11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

- READ
- This Pharisee had changed himself
- He had exercised personal self-discipline, and through it he did not commit the external moral wickedness of other men
- And this moral standing was expressed both by negatives
 - Things which he DID NOT do
- And by positives
 - Things which he DID do
- On the INACTION side
 - He was not an extortioner
 - He was not unjust to others
 - He was not an adulterer
- On the ACTIVE side
 - He fasted twice per week
 - And tithed faithfully
- And this is the picture of a man who would change himself
 - He uses personal self-discipline
 - A likely large degree of socio-economic stability
 - In order to achieve his material and temporal moral goals
- He had built into his lifestyle through his own determination and his society's encouragement a manner of living which his society, as well as our own sensibilities, deemed morally acceptable and right before God →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

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- And there are perhaps some even under the sound of my voice who are at that same point and are entirely comfortable there
- You have read in the Bible the moral expectations that are reflective of the God of all flesh
 - And you have applied yourself to conforming to those expectations through personal self-discipline
 - And the encouragement of your church society
 - You are not an extortioner
 - You are not unjust
 - You are not an adulterer
 - You conform to the rituals of your religious system
- And in this you deem your actions to be sufficient and thus you to be godly
- For those who have grown up in the protected environment of the church and home
 - This is all you have ever known, and you agree with the superiority of the way
 - You know the system, you have been encouraged in the system, you benefit from the system
 - And such sacrifices have actually even been rather minimal
- But perhaps you have noticed at the same time some interesting side effects of your efforts to bring yourself into this place of moral standing

→

Understand Luke 18:9-14

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- And the first of those side-effects is pride
 - You in your heart and mind are exalted
 - You not only do good things, but you truly see yourself as a GOOD person
 - You stand aloft the society that is around you
 - You excel above your peers in zeal and personal moral righteousness
 - You know it, you like it, and you are very comfortable there
- And this pride manifests primarily, you will find, through comparison
 - That you find yourself measuring yourself against the words, actions, thoughts, and intents of others
 - Because, naturally, in order to elevate yourself, there must be others below you
 - If you had nothing below you, you could not possibly even know that you were elevated
- And so you look outward
 - Perhaps at the unbelieving world
 - Perhaps at other believers in other churches
 - Or for the particularly excellent among us
 - Even at the other believers in THIS church
- And you hold yourself in very high regard
 - And in very high standing
 - And you are content here
 - Because you have excelled above your peers
 - Therefore you have excelled before man and God
 - Therefore you are a Godly man →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves

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- And what you find as you begin to compare yourself among others
 - And what you find as you begin to elevate yourself above others
- Is that you will earn respect among those who also are also trying to change themselves, but have not found the personal self-discipline or do not have the socio-economic advantages to be successful in their endeavor
 - And most men who desire to change themselves will stay forever in this place
 - They will look to men who they deem greatly in moral aptitude and will aspire unto them
 - They will at time resent these men for having the self-discipline or socio-economic advantages to do what they cannot
 - They will at other times be very passionate in their desire to become more moral
 - Feverishly striving to change themselves and become more like what they believe they should be according to the moral precepts of the Bible
- But there are a few who will excel and become the models of this effort
- And you come to excel more and more in your work
 - And as you elevate yourself more and more above your peers
 - And as THEY elevate you above them
- You will find next another compulsion related to change
- NOT just a desire to change yourself
 - For indeed you have succeeded at this effort
 - But you will find yourself tempted to change others as well →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves
2. They that would change others

- And this is our second class of changers – they that would change others
- And as I have painted this picture, it has been of a man who has risen above his peer and so takes, or is given by those peers, the moral authority to be this agent of change
- But this category of changers is not exclusive to the excellent
- In fact it is common among all men who would change themselves to also be about the work of trying to change others
 - Of taking moral authority in areas where they excel
 - And judging others – the word used in our text today is “despising” others – for the lack of ability to do the same
- So these who would change others, regardless of their own failings
 - Are busy about the work of examining the failings of others in those areas of life and godliness where they personally excel
- And this determination to change others is rooted in the same confused belief that I can make myself a spiritual man
 - But it also diverts my attention from my own spiritual failings by judging others for theirs
- And so these men
 - They that would change themselves
 - And they that would change others
- Become, inevitably, those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others
- But there is another man
 - A man that falls into a 3rd category
 - So we read →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:13

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 a sinner.

- READ
- We are introduced to a man who is said to be a publican
 - As opposed to the Pharisee, who represented the height of moral and religious achievement in society
 - The Publican – a tax collector – was morally and religiously the worst that society had to offer
 - He worked for the occupying force of Rome to collect taxes and usuries against his brethren
 - If he wanted to make a living then he was dishonest and heavy-handed
 - Willing to sell his brethren into slavery for his own benefit
 - He had sacrificed everything his society taught of moral and religious worth in order to gain in this world
- But here we find this publican in a very different posture
 - He stood afar off in the temple
 - Because he did not feel worthy to draw near
 - He would not lift his eyes unto heaven
 - Because he did not feel worthy to look upon the abode of the Living God
- And this man was not considering his accomplishments
 - This man was not looking at the sins of others
- This man pointed to himself
 - And earnestly begged God to be merciful to him for the sinner he is →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:13

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 a sinner.

- And the man who would change himself
 - And the man who would change others
- Would say – well absolutely he's going to need it
 - That man had better be asking for mercy, because he is quite a sinner
 - And not only that, but he'd better get up and get busy changing so that he can look God in the eye and draw near in the temple like me
- But incidentally that isn't the lesson here
- Notice VERSE 14 →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Luke 18:14

I tell you, 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.

- READ
- VERSE 14 tells us only one of those men in that situation was righteous
 - Only one of those men was justified
 - Only one of those men was right before God
 - Only one of those men was spiritual
- And it was the man who KNEW full well the condition of his heart
- See, the moral of the parable is that, if that Pharisee had even an ounce of spiritual understanding
 - If that Pharisee has even a sliver of moral self-awareness
 - He would be far off, with his eyes toward the ground begging for mercy also
- He would be, as the Publican was
 - A man
 - Not eager to change himself – because he knows there is in himself no good thing
 - Not eager to change others – because he cannot even change himself
 - But desperately eager to be changed by the Holy One
- And where does this power to BE CHANGED come from?
 - Not from personal self-discipline
 - Not from socio-economic advantages
 - Not from pleasing those around me
 - Or exalting myself above those who are around me
- This power comes from humbling myself before the living God
 - So that God may lift me up

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves
2. They that would change others
3. They that would **be** changed

- And so we are introduced to the kind of man you and I should strive to be
- Not the one that would change yourself
 - For you cannot
- Not the one that would change others – that is neither your ability nor your right
- But the one that would, in humility before God, submit yourself to the LORD to be changed by His Spirit
- This is the essence of the Christian life
 - And this is the DIFFERENCE of the Christian life
- Anyone can exercise self-discipline to conform to external expectations
 - But only God can change the heart
- Anyone can stand in judgment over those who they deem to be under them and elevate themselves at the expense of others
 - But only the Spirit can minister to us in our own incapacity and make us into vessels pleasing to God and fit for his use
- Some ROMANS tells us →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Romans 8:3-4

(3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

- READ
- And again in ROMANS 8:12-14- →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Romans 8:12-14

(12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. (13) For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (14) For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

- READ
- And in GALATIANS 5 →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Galatians 5:16-25

(16) This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (18) But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Galatians 5:16-25

the law. (19) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, (20) Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, (21) Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Galatians 5:16-25

you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (22) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (23) Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (24) And they that are

- READ
- CONTINUE →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

Galatians 5:16-25

Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. (25) If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

- READ
- Only by humble submission to the Spirit of God
 - A recognition of my own personal incapacity to be anything OTHER than a sinner
 - Will invite the Spirit of God to do His great work in me
 - So that I might walk in the Spirit
 - And that Spirit can thus do His great work in me
 - Producing those fruits which become the man who is not just moral
 - Or just religious
 - But spiritual
- Living in the shadow of Peter's promise in 1 PETER 5:6 →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1 Peter 5:6

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

- READ
- So as we step into the New Year and you are evaluating your life
 - Your decisions
 - Where you are
 - Where you would like to be
 - And how you are going to get there
- There is a question that I would encourage you to ask first of all
- And that question is →

Understand Luke 18:9-14

1. They that would change themselves
2. They that would change others
3. They that would **be** changed

- Which man are you
 - Are you the one who would change yourself
 - Are you the one who would change others
 - Or are you the one who would BE changed
- And may I encourage you to be the men who would be changed
 - Who would, through humility and submission to the true and living God
 - Place your heart on the altar for God to do with it what He will
- Acknowledge that you cannot in yourself be what God would have you to be
 - And I'm not just talking to the man or woman who is still floundering in every imaginable moral evil
 - I am talking to the man or woman who has structured their life and disciplined themselves so that not a person in this church would imagine you to be anything other than a spiritual person
- And maybe you are
 - But that's only true if you understand is that those actions don't MAKE YOU a spiritual person
 - But rather that the spiritual person is the one who, through humility and obedience, has these virtues which we call the fruit of the spirit being produced in them while knowing full well of the sinfulness of their own condition apart from the Holy Spirit
- For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased
- And he that humbleth himself shall be exalted →

Luke 18:9-14 I Would **Be** Changed

- And as I have thought upon the events of this past year, this has been the phrase that has been coming to mind again and again
 - I would be changed
- Would that I would be humble enough in heart and mind to lower my eyes, beat my breast and pray “God be merciful to me a sinner”
- Because with that man
 - With that woman
 - With that child
- God can do truly great things