

# The Publican and Pharisee Part 2: The True Meaning Of the Law sermonaudio.com

*Justified*

By Albert N. Martin

**Bible Text:** Luke 18:10-14

**Preached on:** Sunday, January 3, 1971

## **Trinity Baptist Church**

160 Changebridge Road  
Montville, NJ 07045

**Website:** [www.trinitymontville.org](http://www.trinitymontville.org)

**Online Sermons:** <http://www.sermonaudio.com/tbcnj>

Would you turn with me in your own Bibles to the 18th chapter of the Gospel according to Luke. Luke 18 and I shall read verses 9 through 14.

9 And he [that is, of course, Jesus] spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought: 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 as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. 13 But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. 14 I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

We introduced the study of this passage last week by making the statement that perhaps the most fundamental religious question any man, any woman, any fellow or girl can ever ask is this: how can a sinful human being find acceptance and favor with a holy God? There is no more profound religious question than that. How can a sinful creature find acceptance and favor with a holy God? The heart of the Gospel of Christ is God's answer to that most profound and vital question. The passage before us is one of the most crucial in all of the word of God as far as giving us clear, unmistakable teaching concerning the answer of the Gospel to that vital question. Last week and I shall only spend about three or four minutes reviewing, we first of all looked at the historical occasion of this parable. Most of the parables grow out of circumstances which arose in the ministry of our Lord and so he conceived these parables in order to speak to those specific circumstances and here in verse 9, it is very clear what the circumstance was. Among some of his followers, our Lord began to detect a spirit of self-righteousness, a spirit of self-trust, a spirit in which people were looking to things within themselves as the ground of their acceptance before God and consequently, they began to show a spirit of disdain for others whose

attainments were not quite up to their own and it was that situation which provoked this parable.

Then we looked at the parable in a general way. We saw that the only things these two men had in common was that they were both concerned about the question, acceptance with God, both went to a place appointed for worship and both were engaged in the religious exercise of prayer but that's where the similarity stops. From that point on, everything is contrast and so we began to look at these two specimen men who are a picture of every single person who is concerned about the question: how shall I find acceptance with God? In the outworking of that question, every one of us becomes Pharisee or publican and so our concern is not simply to analyze and understand the passage but to see ourselves reflected in its teaching.

So we began to look at this Pharisee. We noted last week first of all, the position of his prayer. The Pharisee stood or better translated, he took a stand, the indication being that he put himself in some prominent place, indicating that his heart was far more occupied with the eyes of men than with the eye of God.

Then we spent some time looking at the terminal point of his prayer. The Holy Ghost is very emphatic here, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus toward himself." His prayer was not directed to God. Though God was in his language, God was not in his heart and he was concerned with the approbation of men and not the approbation and approval of God.

Then we closed our study by considering the essential elements of his prayer proper and they are these: "I thank thee I am not as other men. I fast and I give tithes." His prayer was basically an expression of self-congratulation in two areas: we was congratulating himself as to his character and secondly, as to his religious performance. He says as to his character, "I'm not a sinner like the rest of men. I'm not like the publican. He must stand and say be merciful to me the sinner but, Lord, I'm not like other men. My character is such that I think it will find acceptance before you but if there are any areas where I don't quite measure up then, Lord, look upon my religious performances. They will make up for the lack of it for, God, I go beyond even what you require." God required fasting once a year of the Jews. God required the tithe of their material increase. This man says, "I fast twice in the week," so if you multiply that by 52 weeks, that means he fasted 104 times, exactly 103 more times than God had required. Certainly, that must impress God. That's quite a percentile over what God required, is it not? If fasting twice was 100%, you mathematicians work this out. You talk about works of super-arrogation, this man had it. This man was doing far beyond what God required and he says, "That will make up for anything that lacks in my character and on that basis, I expect to find acceptance."

Well, so much for our review. Now we want to address ourselves tonight to the fourth aspect of the Pharisee and his prayer and it is this: having considered his position in which he prayed, the terminal point of his prayer, the substance of his prayer, now we consider, the reason why he prayed this way. Why did the Pharisee pray this way? The answer to that question I shall state in a general way and expound that for a few minutes and then we will go into three subdivisions of the general answer. So my purpose tonight,

I don't know if I'll get through. Again, it's hard to judge how long it will take to flesh these things out but this is where I propose to go but if we don't finish now, the Lord willing, we'll finish in our next study.

What would ever lead a man to pray this way? To come in apparently to the very presence of God and congratulate himself and tell God that what he is in his character and in his religious performances is adequate to gain acceptance with God? Well, I would state the reason in general terms in this way: he prayed this way because he actually believed that he would find acceptance before God on the basis of what he was and what he did. He says, "God, I think thee that I am not like other men and I do this and that," because he actually believed that these things would be adequate to gain acceptance with God. Now you ask: why did he believe that? He believed it because of his native spiritual ignorance increased by false religious instruction. Now, that's the heart of it. If you get that, you've got the heart of the answer. This man prayed the way he prayed because of his native spiritual ignorance augmented and increased by his false religious instruction. Jesus did not say, "A certain man went into the temple and prayed." If he had only said "a certain man prayed this way," the answer would be, "He prayed this way because of his native spiritual ignorance." But our Lord was careful to say that it was "a certain Pharisee," the man who was the epitome of all that religion stood for in that day. So we are warranted in assuming that he prayed this way not only because of his native spiritual ignorance, that which is common to all men, but a spiritual ignorance that had been augmented and increased by this false religious instruction.

Now, let me enlarge upon that general answer for a while before we break it down into its particulars. In the case of all men, the Scripture teaches that we are by nature in a state of spiritual ignorance and that ignorance is likened to darkness and to blindness. In the 26th chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles, our Lord is here recorded as commissioning his servant Paul. This is what he says to him, Acts 26:16, and with all the fans, can you folk in the back row hear me alright? Can you hear me clearly? You in the front, if I seem a little loud, it's because I do want to project for those folk as well. "But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee," now Paul, this is your task, "to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me." Now you see, assumed in this commission that wherever Paul would go, he was preaching to men who were already in total darkness. He says, "My purpose in sending you is that you may be an instrument to open their eyes. Their eyes are shut. Their eyes are blind. I'm sending you to be an instrument to turn them from darkness for they are already in the darkness and in the power of Satan and no man ever receives forgiveness of sins and the inheritance of believers until first of all, there is this miracle of the opening of his spiritual eyes, this mighty work of God turning him from the realm of darkness and this powerful work of God delivering him from the grip of the devil himself." So you see, it is assumed that wherever Paul went, both amongst Jews, verse 17, "delivering thee from the people," that is, the Jews, "and from the Gentiles." Even the Jew with all of his

knowledge of the Old Testament. Even the Jew with all of his awareness of his tremendous history as part of the covenant nation, he's in blindness; he's in darkness. "So Paul, whenever you go to preach, remember this: men are not simply a little bit twisted in their thinking and they just need a little reconstruction of their mental furniture, they are not simply turned a little bit out of the way and need a nudge on the shoulder, Paul, they are blind. Paul, they're in darkness. Paul, they're in bondage to the devil." That's what he's telling him and he says, "Your commission is to be an instrument in my hands to have eyes opened, darkness dispelled and bondage broken."

You find a similar teaching there in 2 Corinthians 4. All we're seeking to establish now is that the reason this Pharisee prayed the way he did was because of his native spiritual ignorance called in the Bible "spiritual blindness and darkness." 2 Corinthians 4, in this rich section concerning the Christian ministry. 2 Corinthians chapters 1 through 6 are tremendous chapters on the whole subject of the Christian ministry and in the midst of that, the Apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, "And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that perish: in whom the god of this world," speaking of the devil, "hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn [upon them]." He says, "When I preach my Gospel and it seems like such a veiled thing," he says, "it's not because I have veiled the Gospel. It's not because I have taken the Gospel and put it behind curtains and said now, only those who are the in people can come and take a peek. Only those who are the initiates can come and see." No, no, he says, "We proclaim Christ," verse 5, "we preach Christ Jesus as Lord." He had earlier said that, "Unlike Moses who had his face veiled because he had seen the glory of God and he was the only one in Israel who had seen it," he says, "now in the New Covenant, we all with open face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into that image so that every Christian becomes a living epistle of the work of the Spirit." He had just said that in chapter 3. But he says, "The fact is that a lot of men go on living as though the Gospel were a veiled thing. Why?" He says, "Because of their own blindness. The God of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not lest the light of his Gospel that we preach openly and freely, this glorious message, should break in upon their hearts." Paul realized that when he preached he was looking into the face of men who were blind to the glory of Christ, spiritual darkness. Hence conversion, the work of grace in calling sinners unto God is often likened to being brought out of the realm of darkness into the realm of light. Look at verse 6 in this same chapter, 2 Corinthians 4, "Seeing it is God, that said, Light shall shine out of darkness, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." He likens the work of conversion to that of creation. Genesis 1 says, "Darkness was upon the face of the deep." Nothing but darkness and then the Scripture says, "And God said let there be light and there was light." With nothing to work with but his own creative word, God brought light out of the midst of darkness and Paul says, "That's what he did to us. We were as darkened in our spirits as that primeval creation was dark." Darkness upon the face of the deep. Nothing but darkness. Hopeless and eternal darkness unless God would speak light. Then he said, "God spoke light." Colossians 1:13, "Delivered us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son." 1 Peter 2:9, "Show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light."

Now, what is the characteristic problem of a man or a woman in darkness? What happens to your kids when you go into the room when a light blows and all of a sudden everything becomes dark? Well, you get scared. Why? Because you can't see things as they are and there might be things there that you don't want to be there and you're afraid because you can't see them. That's the characteristic problem of darkness and I'm reminded of it every time I have to sleep somewhere where I'm not used to the surroundings and if I have to get up at all in the night and stub my toe and bang my head, I'm reminded of this principle. I know where everything is in my own house and I can go with eyes closed and black as midnight and it doesn't trouble me. But you see, the characteristic problem of a man or woman in darkness, you can't see things for what they really are. As a person just plain shortchanged as far as good looks is concerned but with all his heart or her heart, she or he just wants to think of himself as being quite attractive so the only recourse he or she has is to do what? Go in front of the mirror and turn the light out and now just dream and just think of, "Oh yes, as I look into that mirror," no lights of course, everything is pitch black and, "I see a beautifully shaped nose and face and long, full flowing hair," and all the rest. That person can go on in that kind of mental reverie until someone happens to come into the room and flips the light on and if they happen to be looking at the mirror, then suddenly they are jarred back to the ugly world of reality. You see, as long as they are in the dark, they can kid themselves about what they really are. Here's a woman who is a sloppy housekeeper. She's just plain lazy. Doesn't like to do the nitty-gritty of housework and so the only comfort she can have is to go out in the middle of the night when everything is dark and she finds a little space where she parts all the junk that's cluttering up the living room and she just dreams about how beautiful her house looks until her husband comes stumbling out of bed and flips the light on and says, "What in the world are you doing out here? Good night." Then suddenly she sees all the ugly symbols of her inefficiency as a housekeeper.

Now, do you see what I'm driving at? The characteristic problem of darkness is you can't see things for what they are. The Bible says, "All men by nature are in darkness and that darkness brings them to the condition that they don't see themselves for what they really are." That's why the Pharisee could say, "I thank thee I am not as other men." He was looking at the mirror in the dark. That's why he could say, "O God, my fasting, my tithing must be pleasing you." Why? He was looking at his religious performance in the dark and until the Holy Ghost flips the light switch and he sees what he is, he'll never be justified for the blessedness of that publican was the Holy Ghost had flipped the switch and he had seen what he was and he beats upon his breast and he has nothing to bring to God but his sinner-hood through and through and wonder of wonders, he goes down to his house justified. Jesus said, "Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled." And you'll go right on exalting your self unless God gives you light as to what you really are. All men by nature have minds darkened to their true condition and the first rays of saving light bring a shocking self-discovery and every person who is born of the Spirit knows what that shocking self-discovery is when God flipped the switch and you were jarred out of that dream world of thinking that you were beautiful and God showed you your ugliness in his own holy sight.

But now in the case of this Pharisee, this darkness common to all men was increased and intensified by false religious instruction because that's the second half of my general answer. You see, the Pharisees were the religionists par excellence in their day. They were Orthodox as far as orthodoxy in those days was concerned. They believed in the supernatural, the authority of the word of God but they had so overlaid the word of God with man-made tradition that they were in actuality nullifying the authority of that word. Turn to the 15th chapter of Matthew for the inspired commentary on the characteristic attitudes of a Pharisee for Jesus says in the parable, this was a "Pharisee who stood thus with himself and prayed." Matthew 15, beginning with verse 1, "Then there come to Jesus from Jerusalem Pharisees and scribes, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. And he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God said, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is given [to God]; he shall not honor his father. And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching [as their] doctrines the precepts of men." Then he calls the multitudes and speaks to them and then he comes to his disciples and then opens up to them some of the significance of what he said but now you notice verse 14, "Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit." Do you see what he's saying? Their spiritual blindness, the spiritual ignorance that is common to all men by nature had been intensified by their religious instruction which though it came within the apparent framework of the word of God, was in practice an actual negation of the word of God. Do you see it? Had these been the Sadducees, the liberals of their day, had they been the pagans, it would have been relatively easy to show the folly of their way but these were people who held all the apparent substance of the word of God but they held it in such a way that they negated and canceled its authority in their own lives and in the lives of their followers.

Now, what was the practical result of their teaching and their influence? Well, when you have time, you read through carefully the 23rd chapter of Matthew where Jesus issues seven woes upon them. Some of the outstanding characteristics of their influence was this: they were more concerned with the external than the internal. Jesus said, "You're like whitewashed sepulchers. You slap some whitewash on them and they look beautiful but open up the mouth of the sepulcher and look within and see the rotting flesh and the bleached bones." He says, "That's you Pharisees. You go around tithing every little bit of mint, anise and cummin but the great and weighty issues of the law you forget. You strain at gnats. You swallow camels. You bind burdens on people's backs, weary and heavy to be borne." Nothing is so damning and so delusive as native spiritual blindness joined to false religious teaching. May I repeat that? Nothing is so damning and so delusive as native spiritual blindness joined to false religious teaching. This is why Jesus said and I refer you to one text there in Matthew 23, verse 15, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him," what? "Twofold more a son of hell than yourselves." He says,

"When you get done with them, they are twice worthy of hell." Why? Native spiritual blindness which makes a man worthy of hell when it is now joined to false religious teaching makes him twofold more a son of hell. That's why Jesus could say as he did in the 21st chapter and the 31st verse, "Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." He said, "The kingdom of God is pressed into by men whose moral state is obviously wretched and debauched but you people who have your native blindness wedded to false spiritual teaching are much harder to reach than the moral profligates." Now, if that's true, some of us ought to be doing some pretty serious thinking tonight, ought to be doing some pretty honest heart searching, for this prayer of the Pharisee was prayed because the switch had never been flipped. He had never seen himself as he really was in the sight of God.

Now, having stated the thing in general, let me enlarge upon several aspects and tonight we'll touch on the first one, possibly the second, I doubt we'll get through three. I want to show three distinct now in particular ways in which this man's spiritual blindness resulted in this prayer. First of all, this Pharisee was ignorant of his own involvement in the fall of mankind. Look at his prayer, he says, "O God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men." That's not true. What he should have said was this, "O God, I thank thee that though by nature I am as other men, thou has rescued me and made a difference." That's a prayer that grace can teach us to pray but his spiritual blindness taught him to pray a prayer in which he shows his total ignorance of the fact that he was involved equally with all men in the apostasy of our first father, Adam. You see, there are three great levelers of all humanity right here tonight, the three common denominators that bring us all down to the same plane. We may have great difference in terms of our economics, sociological, educational backgrounds, things that may split us poles apart: temperament, national tendencies, all the rest. But there are three great levelers and here they are: the doctrine of creation; the doctrine of the fall; and the doctrine of redemption by Jesus Christ. Scripture tells us in Acts 17, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell upon the face of the earth." One blood. That's why racial pride is the most stupid, ignorant thing imaginable. The same blood that flows through the white man flows through the black man and through the yellow man and through every single race of mankind. Racial pride is the most stupid asinine thing imaginable. "He hath made of one blood." We are all image bearers by creation.

Then the Scripture teaches that we have all without exception fallen in Adam and it was this aspect that this poor Pharisee had never been brought to see. He was part of Israel's race, the covenant people of God and though stained and polluted blood flows through the veins of the Gentile dogs, not through the veins of the circumcised. "We be Abraham's seed, spiritual by virtue of our connection with Abraham's genes and chromosomes." That was their folly. Read about it in the eighth chapter of the Gospel of John. But what is the teaching of the word of God? Oh, listen to it. It's so clear that the youngest child here tonight can understand it. In Romans 5:12 we read, "Therefore, as through one man," Adam, "sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." When did all sin? All sinned in Adam. Proof? Death has come to all men, even to them, Paul says, that have not sinned after the

likeness of Adam's sin. Little babies who die were never placed on probation as was Adam and yet death touches infants. Death touches those in the farthest recesses of heathendom. Why? The universality of death is a living monument of the universality of the fall of man and though men sneer and scoff and some grind their teeth at the biblical doctrine that Adam stood for the entire human race and we all stood in the position of rising with him or falling in him, this doctrine is taught by the word of the living God, "As through one man sin entered and death came upon all."

1 Corinthians 15:21-22, the same teaching of the word of God, "For since by man [came] death, by man [came] also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die." All die in Adam. All who are reckoned as in Adam, vitally united to Adam, Adam as their federal representative and head. When he died through sin, we died in him. And what were the results of that death, that fall? Two profound results: all men now are born in a state of condemnation, that's their legal position; and all are born in a state of pollution, that's their moral condition. Look back to Romans 5:18, "So then as through one trespass [the judgment came] unto all men to condemnation." The results of the fall: all men are born in a state of condemnation. Secondly, all are born in a state of pollution. The 51st Psalm, David says in verse 6, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is why Paul can say in Ephesians 2, "We were by nature the children of wrath." What we were was deserving of wrath, made us liable to the wrath of God and this poor Pharisee was utterly ignorant of this. He had no light upon this and as long as he went on in his state of native ignorance aided by the false teaching of the false religion of the Pharisees, he'll go right on thinking his character is such as to commend him to God. He's not one of these defiled murderers or adulterers or unjust people, he's the separated one. His acts of religious devotion certainly must be pleasing to God. What was his problem? He did not see himself as under condemnation by virtue of being part of a race that fell in Adam. He did not see himself as a man who had a pollution that stemmed not from without but from within for you remember, that was our Lord's constant controversy with the Pharisees. They were concerned about external pollution so they washed themselves and they had all kinds of ablutions and washings and the bathings and purifications when the problem, Jesus said, is not external. He told his disciples, he said, "It's not that which comes from without and enters a man's body that defiles him but that which cometh in out of the heart." What kind of a heart? A heart that is natively corrupt and polluted and defiled, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

May I say by way of application: there are some of you who are going to go on being Pharisees and end up in the Pharisees' hell unless God is pleased to send light upon your soul as to what you really are. Let me press some questions upon your conscience. When? Where? In what circumstances? What angel? What observer of the moral conduct of men could stand tonight and bear witness to the truth of your response to my question? Where? In what place? At what time? Under what circumstances were you found alone with God owning your involvement in the sin of Adam? Where and when and with what words did you say before God, "O God, I acknowledge though I cannot understand the mystery of it, how one could act for all and all could act in one. I see it in the word and, O God, I embrace the justice of your ways. I acknowledge, O God, that I fail in Adam, that in Adam's sin the race went down under and, O God, I'm a part of that race under just



condemnation." I ask you, where? When? In what words? What were the circumstances when you owned what you saw when God flipped the light on? So that you can no longer pray or think, "I thank thee I am not as other men." You know that the only difference between you and any other person in terms of your moral experience is that if they have gone deeper into sin externally than you have, it's simply because they had better opportunities. But left to yourself, you have to say, "O God, if I am not as the worst extortioner tonight, if I am not as the worst unjust man, the worst adulterer, the worst publican, it is grace, grace, all of grace." Can you say that? Come on now, right down there as the kids say at the gut level, can you say it? What's your reaction when you see the morally profligate, those who have obviously abandoned themselves to sin? Is there disgust that causes you to breathe your little Pharisees' prayer or a timely, "I'm not as other men." Or is there a sigh that says, "O God, as a fallen member of Adam's race, I could have gone that way and much lower unless you restrained me, unless you rescued me."

What's the breathings of your heart? Come on now, be honest. Don't throw this off as preachers rhetoric. I'm pressing your conscience. Be honest in the presence of God. What is the language of your heart? Have you seen your involvement in the condemnation of Adam's race? Have you seen yourself in that state of pollution? Pollution that touches the deepest springs of your being? I ask you: have you seen yourself as God knows you to be? Has he put the light on? If he hasn't, oh I pray he will tonight and that's the mystery and the glory and the true lofty, pure romance of preaching. I say that reverently that God may be pleased tonight to do what I can't. I can proclaim to you what God says: that through one man sin entered, in Adam all died. I can proclaim to you what the word of God says: we are by nature the children of wrath. I can tell you what God says: in sin you were conceived. But only God can flip the switch and give you eyes to see and if you value your soul, you'd better pray that he show you what you really are or you'll go right on mouthing the self-congratulatory prayers of the Pharisee.

But in the second place, this poor Pharisee was not only ignorant of his involvement in the fall of mankind, he was ignorant in the second place of the spiritual demands of the law of God. Ignorant of the spiritual demands of the law of God. Look at his prayer again when he said, "I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners," that is, those who force money from people by unlawful means, "unjust, adulterers," those who take other people's wives or husbands and have illicit intercourse with them, "or even as this publican." When he said that, what did he show? He showed an abysmal ignorance of these spiritual demands of the law of God. You see, the Pharisee thought that the law of God only touched a man's external actions. That's all, so if there were no woman in Palestine that could point the finger at him and say, "That man took me into an illicit sexual relationship," he thought, "I have not broken the seventh commandment." If there were no man who could say, "Look, that guy did a job on my bank account over here and he put me under," as long as nobody could point the finger and take him to a court of law and convict him of the sin of extortion, he thought he was free from the commandment, "Thou shall not steal." Why did he think this way? Because he was ignorant of the spiritual demands of the law of God. When he said, "I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess." Why did he think those religious deeds would be acceptable to

God? Because he was ignorant of the extent of the demands of the law. He thought that all the law demanded in terms of worship was the performance of your hands. That's why Jesus had to say, "These people draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me."

They didn't realize that the law of God went far deeper than just the deeds in the moral realm and just the deeds in the religious realm. If we want an excellent biblical commentary on this kind of ignorance, look at the Apostle Paul for an example. We turn to Philippians 3, and here was a man who was a Pharisee and so we are warranted to use his example in the exposition of this parable. In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul says in verse 3, "For we are the true circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh: though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinketh to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless." Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, "If you regard my conduct in terms of the external demands of the law, nobody can lay the finger of blame at me, Saul of Tarsus. Everything a good Jew was supposed to do, I did it and even more. I outstripped my own peers."

So Paul for the early part of his life, could have taken this as his prayer book and found it very much to his liking. "I think thee I am not as other men. I fast. I tithe." Paul would have welcomed this as a written prayer that he could enter into heart, soul and spirit. Well, what in the world ever happened to him to change it? Well, turn back to Romans 7 and you'll see what happened. That very law that he thought was a stepping stone into the presence of God, he realized that he had never understood it. He looked upon the law as that which touched merely the externals until God turned the light on and now he tells us what happened. Verse 7 of Romans 7, having demonstrated that in our justification the law has no part in terms of the ground of our acceptance before God, he then anticipates an objection, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid." Now he's going to tell us what the right function of the law is, "Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law." Now wait a minute, a Pharisee who had not known sin? Wasn't that the basis of all his Pharisaic round of Pharisaic activity? To be clean from sin, isn't that why you were circumcised? To show that you weren't a part of the sinful nations of the Gentiles? You were part of the separated, holy people of Israel? Isn't this why you went up to the temple at the appointed times of sacrifice? Isn't this why there was a day of atonement? Paul was a diligent Jew who knew all the laws about sin offerings and all the rest and yet Paul said, "I had not really understood sin." Why? Because until you see sin in the light of the spiritual demands of the law, you don't see sin, you're still in a dark room looking in the mirror telling yourself you're beautiful.

Now, what happened to him? Well, let's read on. "I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet: but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting: for apart from the law sin [is] dead." "You see, sin is not a living principle, it's just a word and as a Pharisee, I had that word in my vocabulary and I had much activity that seemed

to relate to the problem of sin but sin was not a living issue." "And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which [was] unto life, this I found [to be] unto death: for sin, finding occasion, through the commandment beguiled me, and through it slew me. So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good. Did then that which is good become death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might be shown to be sin, by working death to me through that which is good; that through the commandment sin might become exceeding sinful."

What happened? The Holy Ghost began to show Paul the real meaning of the law and the commandment which is most spiritual in its very framing is the tenth commandment. You see, as long as you look at the first nine, No other gods before me, Paul could reason, "I never bowed down to a heathen idol. I check off fine on that." Don't make any idols and bow down and worship or serve them, Paul could say, "No, I worship at God's appointed place and the only accoutrements of worship that are there are the ones God ordained should be there by the revelation he gave through Moses. I check off positive there." Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, "No siree, I won't even mention Jehovah's name. No siree, I never even take his name upon my lips lest I should take it in vain and so I use the other name for God. I don't use his sacred name." Fourth commandment. You see, Paul could check out pretty good with all those because as he viewed them, they only touched what? His external conduct.

Now the Holy Ghost began to shed some light on that tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet," and so he begins to ask himself, "Now, with what do you covet? With your hands? No. With your feet? No." What do you covet with? Coveting is an attitude of the heart. You fix your affections upon objects that are either forbidden by God or not provided by God for you in your present circumstances. He says, "I saw that that commandment pulled the lid off my heart and for the first time I saw that God's law touches the heart and in my heart, there was this seething cauldron of what he calls concupiscence, evil desire."

Then what probably happened and if not it should have happened and certainly did later according to his teaching, he then got the key to all the other commandments. The tenth commandment is the key to the breadth of the spiritual demands of the other nine and Paul saw then that though he had never reached his hand in a man's pocket and taken his wallet, he had been a thief in that there had been a covetous desire after other men's possessions. He saw that though he thought he had never murdered, he later on says, "I was a murderer and a blasphemer." He saw that when he allowed his eyes to rest upon the form of a woman so as to provoke lust and desire for illicit sexual relations, he had broken the seventh commandment. And when as a little boy he had allowed a spirit of anger and resentment to rise up to the directions of his parents, he had broken the fifth commandment. And when he had come to Sabbath days with no delight in the God of the Sabbath but simply going through the round of Pharisaic Sabbath activity, he had broken the fourth commandment. And so down to the first. He says, "The law is spiritual and its demands are spiritual and its demands touch the heart."

Poor, poor Pharisee. He didn't have a clue of this. Not a clue because, my friend, when you begin to understand the law of God in its demands upon the heart, you'll never brag about your character being better than anybody else's. You will feel without any attempt of forcing the language that you indeed are the chiefest of sinners for that law will discover in your heart all forms of evil and you'll never think about bragging about your religious performances because you know that in your holiest performances, there is something of sin even as a believer. Who amongst us today would like to say, "God, I want the measure of my zeal in praise, the measure of my warmth in prayer, the measure of my holy enthusiasm in responding to your word to be the basis upon which you accept me into your presence"? Is that what you want? God have mercy on you. There is not a one of us who is truly born of the Spirit of God who does not say reflexively, "God forbid. I dare not trust my sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name."

What was wrong with this Pharisee? Why could he pray such a prayer? Because he was totally ignorant of the spiritual demands of the law of God and if I'm speaking tonight to anyone, man, woman, fellow or girl, who thinks that your character is sufficient with making up some of its lacks by your religious performance to find acceptance with God, I pray that God will flip the switch, show you your heart in order to comply with the directives of Scripture, that under God may be blessed to do that. Let me urge upon you a prayerful careful reading of the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus takes the Pharisaic limitations on the law and strips them away and shows that anger is breach of the commandment against murder; lust is breach against the commandment relative to adultery and so on down the line. What is he doing? Showing the Pharisee that the law of God touches the intents and the thoughts of the heart. If you think God is pleased with religious performances that do not flow from a heart that has owned its sin and its uncleanness, read the first chapter of Isaiah where God says to his people, "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices, your new moons, your feasts, your holy days? I am sick of them," God says. "I've had enough of them." He says, "Cease to do evil. Learn to do well." He said, "I'm concerned about the heart, not the external religious form."

Then I'll just give you the head that I hope to flesh out next week, the third thing that was the problem of this poor man: that he was ignorant of God's appointed way of accepting sinners. He was ignorant of God's appointed way of accepting sinners. His prayer is a plea for acceptance on the grounds of personal moral character and personal religious performances and on that basis, he condemns himself because the teaching of the word of God from Genesis to Revelation is that God has always had but one ground of accepting sinners and it's the righteousness which he performs and he imputes and it is received by faith and by faith alone. "The publican went down to his house justified." He had no time to build up anything in the bank of merit, all he had done was all in his place as a sinner. Look to God alone for mercy and Jesus said, "He went down to his house justified." He found God's way of accepting guilty sinners and that way is the way of pure grace, the way of faith alone, the way of the merit and righteousness of Christ alone. Oh, may God be pleased to turn the light on.

Why did this Pharisee pray the way he prayed? He prayed that way generally because of his native spiritual ignorance augmented and intensified by false religious teaching,

specifically he prayed that way because he was ignorant of the doctrine of the fall of man; ignorant of the spiritual demands of the law; ignorant of God's way of accepting sinners. Has this been a description of you tonight? If it has, I know that some of you have been in a state of intense spiritual pain just as real as if someone with a ham-hand had taken your wrist and given you a good Indian burn. You felt pain tonight because it's never pleasant to have God flip the light switch on and show the native deformity that you thought was beauty. This idea of people getting happy-fied to Jesus is downright foolishness and spiritual quackery. God will wound you before he ever heals you but thank God, he wounds you in order to heal you. He says through the prophet, "I am the Lord, I wound and I heal. I kill and I make alive." Paul said, "The law slew me." That's the same Paul that could say, "Nevertheless I live yet not I but Christ liveth in me." And you'll never be able to say, "Christ liveth in me," until you can say, "The law slew me and I died."

Oh, may God help some of you who have been tripping through evangelical professions of faith and evangelical forms, ceremonies and you've never seen your heart. I call upon you tonight to stop playing games with God. Plead with him for mercy. Cast yourself upon his grace. You who know what it is to have had the light go on, will you not pray that the remains of the Pharisee within may be driven. All of us have some of that yet within us and we look disgustingly upon certain segments of our society and say, don't we, "I thank thee I am not as they." Rather we should say, "Lord, I thank thee though I am as they, I am now what I am by the grace of God and by grace alone." May God then use this word in our lives as his people as well.

Let us pray together.