

Approaching God – All or Nothing at All

a. Humility – the Only Way to the Holy One (18:9-17)

18:9-12 What part of our righteousness is ours? (1 Cor.4:1-13, esp. vv.6,7)

[1] [18:11] There is no prayer, even in form; he asks God for nothing, being thoroughly satisfied with his present condition. And only in form is this utterance a thanksgiving; it is self-congratulation. He glances at God, but contemplates himself. Indeed he almost pities God, who but for himself would be destitute of faithful servants. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p.417

[2] The Law provided for but one fast, that on the Day of Atonement, so his fasting *twice a week*, was a work of supererogation. The pious were in the habit of fasting more often than the Law required and fasting on Monday and Thursday is attested. ... The Pharisee also went beyond the Law's requirements in his tithing. The Law prescribed that certain crops be tithed (Dt. 14:22), but it was a Pharisaic practice to tithe even garden herbs (11:42). What this Pharisee said about himself was strictly true, but the spirit of his prayer was all wrong. There is no sense of sin nor of need nor of humble dependence on God. The Pharisee came short of congratulating God on the excellence of His servant, but only just. ... After his opening word he does not refer to God again, but he himself is never out of the picture. **Leon Morris** Luke p.265

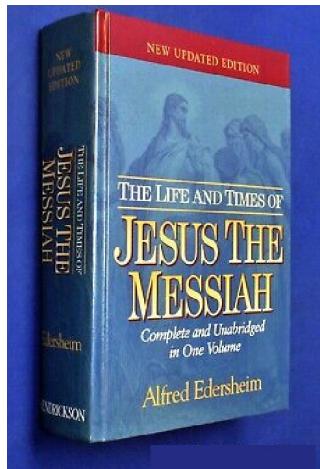
[3] Indeed, there is no limit to such extravagances. The world itself had been created on account of the merits of Israel, and is sustained by them, even as all nations only continue by reason of this (Shemot R.15,28; Bemidb. R. 2). A most extraordinary account is given in Bemidb. R.20 of the four merits for the sake of which Israel was delivered out of Egypt: they did not change their names; nor their language; nor reveal their secrets; nor were

dissolute. **A. Edersheim** *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol. 2 p. 290

18:13,14 Of what did the tax collector's righteousness consist? Who was the 'Christian' of these two? (Prov. 20:6)

[4] [18:13] Even as he looks for forgiveness he recognizes what he deserves. And he calls himself not 'a' but 'the' sinner. He, too, puts himself in a class of his own, but how differently from the Pharisee! **Leon Morris** Luke p.265

[5] [18:14] The one comes in the spirit of prayer, – self-humiliation; the other in the spirit of pride, – self-satisfaction. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p.420



18:15 What does this attitude perhaps reveal as to the disciples' 'religious' priorities?

[6] [18:15-17] After the long section from 9:51, in which there are practically no Marcan parallels, Luke now rejoins Mark. **Leon Morris** Luke p.266

18:16,17 What do these words reveal as to the Lord's priorities, and the qualities He prizes above all others? (i.e. what attributes that WE prize do children not excel in?)

[7] [18:16] It is not these children, nor all children, but those who are childlike in character, especially in humility and trustfulness, who are best fitted for the Kingdom. **Alfred Plummer** Luke p.421

b. Sacrifice – All or Nothing At All (18:18-34)

18:18,19 The point of this theological correction?

[8] [18:19] There is no instance in the whole Talmud of a Rabbi

Thankfulness – or boastfulness?

[9] [18:11,12] His prayer was uttered in a spirit of pride, but it seems that this kind of prayer was not unknown. For example, R. Nehunia used to pray, I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that hast set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha-Midrash (House of learning) and Thou has not set my portion with those who sit in (street) corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labour and they labour, but I labour and receive a reward and they labour and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction. **Leon Morris** Luke p.264

[10] Never, perhaps, were words of thanksgiving spoken in less thankfulness than these. For, thankfulness implies the acknowledgment of a gift; hence, a sense of not having had ourselves what we have received; in other words, then, a sense of our personal need, or humility. But the very first act of this Pharisee had been to separate himself from all the other worshippers, and notably from the Publican, whom, as his words show, he had noticed, and looked down upon. His thanksgiving referred not to what he had received, but to the sins of others by which they were separated from him, and to his own meritorious deeds by which he was separated from them. Thus, his words expressed what his attitude indicated; and both were the expression, not of thankfulness, but of boastfulness. **A. Edersheim** Life Vol. 2 p. 289

being addressed as "Good Master": the title was absolutely unknown among the Jews. This, therefore, was an extraordinary address, and perhaps a fulsome compliment. The Talmud says, "There is nothing else that is good but the Law." The explanation of some ancient and modern commentators, that Jesus is here speaking merely from the young man's standpoint, is not satisfactory. "You suppose Me to be a mere man, and you ought not to call any human being good. That title I cannot accept, unless I am recognized as God." The young ruler could not understand this; and the reply *must* have had some meaning for *him*. His defect was that he trusted too much in himself, too little in God. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.422

18:20,21 Who, according to this young man, is 'good'? (cf. Matt.5:43-48)

[11] What does it signify that we are more moral than "other men"? We are all vile and imperfect in the sight of God. "If we contend with Him, we cannot answer Him one in a thousand." (Job 9:3) Let us remember this. In all our self-examination let us not try ourselves by comparison with the standard of men. Let us look at nothing but the requirements of God. He that acts on this principle will never be a Pharisee. **J.C. Ryle** *Luke* Vol. 2 p. 261

18:22,23 The snare waiting for all 'good' people! With whom, inevitably, do they compare themselves?

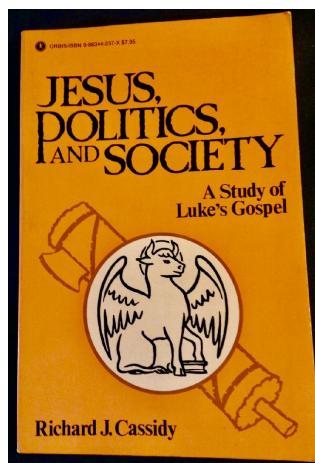
[12] [18:22] But the call to give everything away was more than simply a dramatic challenge: it showed that the man had not understood the commandments he professed to have kept. The first of them enjoins the worship of one God. But when he was faced with the choice he found that he could not serve God by parting with his money. It was not really God that had first place in his heart. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.268

18:24-27 Among the hardest of hard sayings for a child of Abraham! Were there negative AND positive aspects to Abraham's wealth? (Gen.13-14)

[13] [18:23-25] The affluent are always tempted to rely on things earthly and they do not find it easy to cast themselves on the mercy of God (contrast verse 13). The same is true, of course, of those whose riches are other than material, the intellectually outstanding, those rich in moral or artistic achievement and the like. Such

always find it difficult to rely on God rather than on their own efforts. **Leon Morris** *Luke* p.268

[14] As we have seen, Luke indicates that Jesus adopted an extremely strong position against surplus possessions. Jesus himself lived simply and sparingly and he praised others like Zaccheus when they took steps to do likewise. However, even more important (in terms of its disruptive effect) Jesus stringently criticized the rich for accumulating possessions that they did not need instead of sharing their goods with the poor and hungry. **Richard J. Cassidy** *Jesus, Politics & Society: A Study in Luke's Gospel* p.78



18:28-30 Who ONLY have assurance of blessing from the Lord? (James 1:2-8)

[15] [18:18-30] In all three narratives this section follows immediately upon the one about bringing children to Christ. This young ruler is humiliated by being told that there is still a great deal to be done before he is qualified for [eternal life]. Thus the lessons supplement one another. The children, like the publican, are nearer the Kingdom than they could suppose themselves to be; the rich young man, like the Pharisee, is farther from it than he supposed himself to be. Those who can be benefited by being abased (9,22) are abased; while those who cannot be harmed by being exalted (16), are exalted. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.421

18:31-34 This is the SEVENTH time the Lord has predicted His passion and exaltation! How can even those who have 'left all' be so benighted? (5:35; 9:22,43-45; 12:50; 13:31-33; 17:25)

[16] [18:31] ... this is the only place in which the phrase occurs in Lk., who says little to his Gentile readers about the fulfilment of prophecy. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.428

[17] [18:34] Their minds were too full of an earthly kingdom to be able to grasp the idea of a Messiah who was to suffer and to die: and without that they could not understand His rising again, and did not at first believe when they were told that He had risen. Their dulness was providential, and it became a security to the Church for the truth of the Resurrection. The theory that they believed, because they expected that He would rise again, is against all the evidence. **Alfred Plummer** *Luke* p.429

The Pharisee – Separated, but not to God

[18] If the Pharisee 'stood by himself,' apart from others, so did the Publican: 'standing afar off,' viz. from the Pharisee – quite far back, as became one who felt himself unworthy to mingle with God's people. In accordance with this: 'He would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven,' as men generally do in prayer, 'but smote his breast' – as the Jews still do in the most solemn part of their confession on the Day of Atonement – 'saying, God be merciful to me the sinner.' The definite article is used to indicate that he felt, as if he alone were a sinner – nay, *the sinner*. Not only, as has been well remarked, 'does he not think of any one else ... ', while the Pharisee had thought of every one else; but, as he had taken a position not in front of, but behind, every one else, so, in contrast to the Pharisee, who had regarded every one but himself as a sinner, the Publican regarded every one else as righteous compared with him 'the sinner.' And, while the Pharisee felt no need, and uttered no petition, the Publican felt only need, and uttered only petition. The one appealed to himself for justice, the other appealed to God for mercy. **A. Edersheim** *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* Vol. 2 p. 292