



Luke 18:9-14 New Revised Standard Version

⁹He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ ¹³But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

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Back in the 1970s, Mac Davis wrote a popular country music song entitled “It’s Hard to be Humble.” While a fun little reflection on fame, fortune, and success, it does capture the attitude of some within our world

today. We live in times when people are seeking to make a name for themselves and will step over and then look down upon others. These individuals forget where they came from and are good at letting others know of their elevated status.

We use the word “pride” to describe this condition in others and, if we are honest, we do not care too much for those who know what they know or have achieved something and “let you know it.” Pride comes in all different forms and for various reasons, but the most dangerous is perhaps of the spiritual variety. Spiritual pride looks down upon others due to the faults and failures seen at work in their lives while ignoring those within one’s own life.

It was a problem for the Pharisee in today’s parable, but it can be seen at work even in our lives. We need not give the religious elite of Jesus’ day too hard of a time, because we see such an attitude amongst those claiming to follow Christ today. Jesus warns of its danger because it desensitizes us to the work of grace in our lives and those of others. Author C.S. Lewis has written of pride, “(It) is a spiritual cancer: it eats up the very possibility of love, or contentment, or even common sense.”

Spiritual pride often sets in as we forget who we are and who we once were. We try to forget our own past even as we try to rehash the sinful practices of others in the present. We express gratitude to God for what we no longer are or for the fact that we are different/better off than others. We cannot possibly mature in Christ when we are busy bolstering our ego or condemning others.

Thoughts to Consider:

1. So many people focus on making a name, even a spiritual one.
2. Spiritual pride looks at others as less than we are.
3. Spiritual pride creates a form of blindness in our lives.

Prayer Pebble: Lord, I am no better than anyone else in this life. I confess my need for your grace each day.