

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

The Pharisees were a group of men who were devoted to God and had pledged to fulfill his law. They knew the Scriptures forwards and backwards. But many times they prided themselves on their position.

Another group of men was the tax collectors who worked for the Roman government. They charged a much higher amount of taxes than what they should charge, and then they kept part of it for themselves. The Jewish people considered them traitors.

One day, a tax collector and a Pharisee went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I’m not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but he beat his chest, saying: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

No one was impressed by the tax collector’s prayer. Everyone wanted to be like the Pharisee, not like the tax collector.

But Jesus thought differently. To everyone’s surprise, Jesus said, “I tell you that this man (the tax collector), rather than the other (the Pharisee), went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

(This Bible story is found in Luke 18:9-14.)

