

Charles Krauth

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican



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The Parable of the Pharisee and The Publican

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The Parable of the Pharisee and The Publican

By Charles Porterfield Krauth

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Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

A giant of the faith and prominent American Lutheran scholar, **Charles Porterfield Krauth** (1823-1883) is perhaps best known for his masterful and essential volume, *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology As Represented in the Augsburg Confession and in the History and Literature of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. He served congregations in Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Virginia and in the Virgin Islands, and later edited the *Lutheran and Missionary* and *Evangelical Review* journals. Rev. Krauth was instrumental in the establishment of the General Council and the Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia, which he led. Dr. Krauth was professor of intellectual and moral philosophy and vice-provost at the University of Pennsylvania.

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The Parable Of The Pharisee And The Publican. Luke 18:9- 13.

THE DESIGN OF THIS PARABLE is made known by its great author, and therefore we can neither doubt its general import, nor neglect in its explanation, the guide which he has afforded us. It was spoken, according to our version, “unto certain which trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and despised others.” The purpose may be expressed, with some modification, by a closer adherence to the original, in the words: “concerning, or in reference to some who trusted,” etc. In the days of our Savior, there was a religious type, which, resulting from powerful tendencies of the human heart, has often reappeared, characterized by great self-complacency, and depreciation of others, an over estimate of self, and an under estimate of others.

No state of mind can be more objectionable, and none of worse portent, than this. It is guilty of a double wrong; it imposes upon itself, and it fails in charity to its fellow. Starting with no well founded pretensions to true holiness, it conjures them into existence, and testing men by a false standard, it condemns what God honors. It is not surprising, therefore, that our Lord directed his attention specially to its counteraction, and amongst the other methods adopted by him to effect a radical cure, invented and uttered the beautiful and instructive parable, whose title is derived from the actors who are introduced to illustrate his principles — the parable of the Pharisee and Publican.

The design of the Savior is, to show the difference between true and false religion, and in doing so, to expose the empty pretensions of those who, reposing confidence in themselves, discard those who repose

confidence in God. There is a true and a false worship of God, there are hopes which have, and there are hopes that have not a true foundation, and for us it is all important, to know what will sustain us in the hour of need, and what, at best, is but a broken reed. That we may be instructed on these points, and escape the shipwreck of Pharisaism, whilst we attain the haven of true godliness — let us turn our attention to the nature of true religion, as it is presented by an infallible teacher in the parable before us.

If we consider the parable a sacred drama, the persons of the drama being the pharisee and the publican, the first will perform the part, and so that no one can object to its completeness, of the false religionist, or will show, whilst performing before us, the true lineaments of an insufficient religion. The other, with equal perfection, will show how it is that human passions are affected, and how they display themselves in the mien and the deportment, when true piety has taken possession of the soul. Before the curtain drops, and just when the whole scene passes away from our eyes, we will discover the catastrophe in the condemnation of the one, and the acceptance of the other.

That it may be seen more particularly what is wrong and what is right in religion, we will point out the agreements and the differences of those worshippers, for worshippers they were, or appeared to be, and then we will see what was the result. In tracing the resemblance between them, it may be noticed, that they were both rational creatures of God, and consequently capable of ascertaining his existence, understanding his revelation, and rendering homage to him. Knowledge of the great author of all things, in whom we live, move, and have our being, is the prerogative of rational creatures, and cannot be predicated of animated existence, however perfect its physical organization, and wonderful its instincts, which is destitute of this divine light. This knowledge is our special prerogative, our greatest glory, that by which, in all our deterioration, we retain a resemblance to the greatest being in the universe, we should honor it in ourselves, and honor it in others, and whilst we regard it as matter for just pride, it ought to awaken sincerest gratitude to him whose gift it is, and it should ever be associated with a lively sense of our responsibility to him who, although he has dispensed it as a free gift, holds us accountable for the use we make of it. It involves a tremendous responsibility, and woe to him whose stewardship of this treasure is marked by unfaithfulness, in a land of gospel light; a double

woe awaits him who useth this gift for the glory of self, and not for the glory of God. How few reflect upon the solemnity of their endowments, and rightly appreciate the obligations which those endowments entail upon them.

These worshippers were alike the objects of the divine love. It is nothing more than finds the firmest warrant to regard human beings, all alike, whether viewed from the light of nature, or the clearer light of revelation, as embraced in that love, the expressions of which are arrangements and dealings adapted to promote happiness. Whatever differences there may be amongst men in their intellectual endowments, in their physical appearance and structure, in their external locality and condition, God who has made of one blood all the nations of the earth, regards them as his children, and his benefactions have respect to the entire race, as his special beneficiaries. This truth, so well ascertained, and which is so reasonable in itself, may be regarded as the best corrective of that dissatisfaction with our condition, and that tendency to murmur, which, unhappily, so often appear in our world. And though events may sometimes seem to militate against it, and our limited knowledge may be unable to discover the proper method of reconciling the one with the other, a properly regulated mind will always acquiesce and feel satisfied that mystery which human reason cannot solve, needs but to await the decision, in order to its perfect commencement. Worshippers throug the house of God, they come before Jehovah's throne of grace, they sit to receive the messages of his love, and though there may be, and there will be, a vast variety of shades of difference in minor matters, they are all identified in the welcome which is afforded them to the provisions for happiness which God's hand has made.

Alike too, were they, in their need of divine mercy. Both were transgressors of God's holy law; both had exposed themselves to God's curse; both were cut off from hope, save through the mercy of God. It is an undeniable truth, just as evident in the history of man, as it is in the revelation of God, that all men, as sinners, need God's mercy. Mercy, whose function it is to confer favors, spiritual blessings on the undeserving, whose employment consists in forgiveness and salvation, how necessary for man, how blind they who cannot see it, how wise they who know and respect it. In this one word is embraced all that we need, all that we should seek, and all that God can give. It was mercy that planned human redemption, that

spoke in the accents of the Savior, that pleads with us in the Gospel. It is mercy that protects us day by day. It is mercy that guides us in the right path. It is mercy that leads us to the heavenly Canaan. It should not, however, be forgotten, that the need, and the sense of the need, are not the same. Most true is it, that our necessities and our demands are not always parallel, and that which would be most profitable, is least desired. Often in the journey of life, is our thirst directed to unsatisfying fountains, whilst for refreshing and life-giving waters we have no appetite.

With these points of unity, these men agree in repairing to and treading God's earthly courts. They recognize in a greater or less degree, God's claims upon the reverence and homage of the children of men. Neither gives sanction by what he says or does, to the skepticism, or infidelity which doubts, or disbelieves, which asks, what is God that he should be worshipped, or what shall we have from praying to him?

In looking at the points of resemblance between these representatives of classes, we see a picture of our religious assemblies. The eye passes over the whole, from one to another; how much are they alike, and how natural the conclusion that as there are so many points of contact, face answering to face, so must heart to heart. Alas! that it should be otherwise, that with so many points of resemblance, there should be so great a difference. We proceed to point out the difference between these worshippers. The difference between them, notwithstanding the resemblance, was very great. Twins in their birthright and privileges, they were not so in their views and dispositions. Recognizing a common Father, and seeking a common destiny, they seem to travel together, but their routes are not the same. In indicating points of difference, it may be mentioned that they differed in regard to the attributes of the being whom they addressed in their prayer. Very unlike must have been their conceptions of the holiness and mercy of the great God. This is easily to be inferred, from the language they employed. 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. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Of the other it is said: "And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, crying, God be merciful to me a sinner." Both addressed God, but the difference was very great. The pharisee, in the usual posture of prayer, and confining his

utterance to himself, expresses his indebtedness to God for his exemption from odious vices, which he regards his fellow-men as practicing. He asserts his superiority, not only to them, but to the individual who, although not closely in contact with him, was nevertheless in his view. A stranger to him most probably, at any rate utterly incognizant of his spiritual condition, he claims to be his superior. He further develops his religious pretensions, by boasting of his fasts, and of his donations, extending to a tenth of his income. Although it is not affirmed that this man had any particular views of the attributes of him on whom he called, it is evident, that with such conceptions of his own moral excellence, such a reveling in his religious superiority, he could neither have known himself nor others, and must have had far from adequate knowledge of that God who, perfect in holiness, is rich in mercy.

It is undeniable, that just in proportion as we have enlarged ideas of the moral purity of God, of his aversion to sin, and his love of holiness, of the extent and spirituality of his law, will we be delivered from feelings of pride and self-sufficiency, be disposed to humble ourselves, and to regard with tenderness, those who are in the like condemnation with ourselves. It is when we think aright of our moral condition, that we are prepared to understand our wretchedness and misery, and to know that if any relief can be afforded, adequate to our wants, it must originate in a goodness combined with omniscience and omnipotence, on which we can have no claim. All that we can render, must fall so far short of what God is entitled to receive, that it cannot be made the foundation of further favors, but must leave dependent on the provisions of compassion.

No man could make such a prayer as that which is recorded of the pharisee, who knew God in his holiness and mercy, or if such attributes were regarded as pertaining to him, they must have been modified in his conceptions, into forms utterly irreconcilable with the truth. The holiness which can be satisfied with such purity as this self-sufficient worshipper paraded, would not pass muster in any respectable judicatory; it would scarcely attain a respectable heathen sanction, and the mercy which could respond to such mock pretensions, would be difficult to discriminate from perfect arbitrariness. No injustice can be done to the class whose spokesman is before us, when it is alleged concerning them, that they know not how holy is that God whom they pretend to worship, and how jealous of

his honor, and observant of the interests of his creatures, when he displays towards them his forgiving love.

Very different is the publican, the odious, odious to the Jew, on account of his employment of collecting the revenues, tax-gatherer. He stood afar off, neither occupying the place of the most favored, nor pressing into close contiguity to the most holy place, and in every movement, indicated his deep self-abasement, and the sincere repentance which was pervading his heart. His eyes were not lifted up to heaven, he felt his unworthiness to turn his look to the pure Jehovah, he shows the anguish of his heart in the smiting of his breast, and his sense of his perishing condition, in the entreaty, God be merciful to me a sinner. Thou, who canst be just and yet pardon, who hast revealed thyself as merciful, through a typified mediator, who, in the fulness of time, puts away sin by the sacrifice of himself, cast me not away from thy presence, and graciously remit my numerous and aggravated offenses. Is it not clear that this man had in his mind a Being of infinite holiness and boundless mercy, does not the anguish which he feels on account of his sins, reveal his sentiments of the holiness of the Most High, and his most importunate petition for mercy, show that this he regarded as most needed by him, and, at the same time, as the brightest jewel in the divine diadem? No forced inferences are made, when we claim these representations as true, and we may boldly give our sanction to the belief that a vast difference existed between these men, in regard to their views of the holiness and mercy of the great object of their homage. The views which they entertained concerning themselves, was another important point of difference, particularly in regard to their obligations and their fulfillment. That there was, in both, evidence that the claims of conscience were not unheeded, the extent to which it made demands of them, and the measure of their completion, were not by any means the same. The man who, with a depraved heart, and the constant manifestation of sinful desires and affections, whose life, though free from gross crime, is tarnished with incessant deviations from strict moral purity, can nevertheless pass in retrospect and comment upon his character, at the very moment when he is inviting the inspection of the searcher of hearts, with unmixed complacency, with no word of condemnation, with marked expressions of gratitude for exalted and unequalled virtue, cannot be regarded as very clear in the range of human obligations, or the homage which he has practically rendered to them. When such a man is compared with another, who with

unaffected humility, pours forth a wail overplus moral delinquencies, who writes bitter things against himself, because he considers himself all over unclean, whilst there may have been no difference, or an exceedingly slight one, and in God's impartial estimate, it could not have been great, we cannot but suppose that here duty is graduated on a different scale, and that convictions in regard to its performance, have other measurements.

In another respect did they differ in their feelings. Whether the feelings which they exercised centered in themselves or in God, they were very much unlike. The one is wrapped up in the highest feelings of self-satisfaction, his self-gratulation is extreme. His secret history, as it passes in review, makes his heart to throb with lively emotions of satisfaction, and he exults over himself as a model man. The great Creator has many rational beings enjoying the bounties of his providence, and receiving the ministrations of his grace, but he can find none who can enter the lists with him, and bear off the palm of a more perfect manhood. Reveling over his exalted virtues, he becomes so entranced by his excellencies, that he fancies he walks in a region unfrequented by his kind; he is not as other men, God be thanked, and far different from that specimen of humanity, which seemed to be entitled to some respect, because it appeared in the sanctuary, doing honor to its creator, the sin-sick and contrite publican. For God there were no feelings of homage. Any correct decision must pronounce that there was no reverence, godly fear, adoration or true praise. No sense of the excellency of God, which maketh his worshippers afraid. No filial confidence which reposes itself on the bosom of the Father. No humble submission, which speaks in the language, thy will be done. No docility which desires to be directed in the way in which it should go. The publican, in every movement, expresses emotion, and when it is analyzed, it is exceedingly diverse from the other. It speaks in regard to self, the language of self-condemnation in regard to God, the deepest abasement, the highest reverence and the most perfect trust. Life, in my case, has been distinguished by forgetfulness of God, by neglect of duty, and by many sins. Goodness and mercy have followed me, but insensibility has made it no proper return. Though surrounded with many and striking proofs of God's love, I have refused to hear his voice, and to escape the wrath to come. I am vile and hell-deserving. No wrath, not that which burns to the lowest hell, is too great for me. My heart is crushed by the weight of its crimes. Though my sins may have taken various directions, they have all centered in God;

against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done evil in thy sight. Anon, as the eye rests more immediately on God, it sees the Father, and the emotions of the beloved son gush forth from the soul. He has no pleasure in the death of the sinner, he is able and willing to save to the uttermost, all who come to him. He hath provided redemption in blood. He inviteth the weary and heavy-laden to come, and him that cometh he doth not cast out. Reverence and love, assurance and gratitude, combine to form the varied feelings which course through the heart, and utter the homage which the poor penitent renders to the majesty he adores.

The result of what they did, finally, claims our attention. It is expressed in the language, I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. Much as these worshippers differed in their views and feelings, there was no less diversity in the issue of what they did. The preference of the one to the other, of the publican to the pharisee, may appear to be expressed in language which indicates a slight difference. It is, however, not to be overlooked, that the design is not to express degrees of acceptance, not to trace shades of excellency where there was fundamental sameness, but to make known, unequivocally, the acceptance of the one, and the rejection of the other. If any philological difficulty should impede such a conclusion, the analogy of faith must interpose, and by its authoritative decision pronounce, that whilst in the pharisee there is a want of the prescribed conditions of salvation, in the publican they appear in their utmost fulness. We need not traverse the record very widely, to discover the principle which guides the decisions of heaven's chancery. Appended to the parable, we have the Savior's deduction, which throws, we think, all needed light upon the topic, for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. The one was justified, and not the other. The result is expressed in the word justification. The publican went down, descended from the elevated temple, to his humble home, a justified man. If we restrict the meaning of this word to the simple idea that his course was approved, and the other's condemned, that he was right, and the other wrong, it would, though not positively erroneous, restrict a term of large import to a very narrow sphere. That which had taken place was the forgiveness of his sins, and his gracious acceptance through a mediator. The mercy for which he put in his plea, was awarded him by God, the sentence of condemnation which rested upon him was removed, and he was pronounced acquitted. The injured law no longer demanded his punishment.

His doom was not an eternal hell. In the sight of God, he stood innocent and pure. Robed in a righteousness provided by God's mercy, he had a title to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. He went up with sorrow, he departed with joy. He went up trembling with apprehension, he went down disburdened of his care. He ascended with sorrowing countenance, he retraced his steps with peace beaming in his eye. His ascent was with slow steps, pressed down by grief, his return was speedy, and his steps were light. Great is the blessedness of God's justified ones: beauty has been given them for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Great is the blessedness of God's justified ones: they are new creatures, they have been created anew in Christ Jesus to new works, they rejoice in hope, they have peace with God, they travel as pilgrims to a city which hath foundations.

The pharisee went up without contrition, and he departed without peace. His worship prepared him to overrate himself and to despise others. It could do him no good. It could not advance his happiness. As he had been, so he remained, with a stronger tendency in the tortuous direction in which he was progressing. He was not prepared to acquire, or to distribute true blessings. Wretched are the children of pride, who cannot humble themselves under the hand of God, how can they learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart, how can they welcome his humbling religion, how can they glory in his cross? Their doom is written, if they repent not, they perish. Self-exaltation, pride, the sin of fallen angels, cannot be considered compatible with homage to God, it cannot approach God through the great mediator, and commune with him, it cannot be admitted into God's everlasting kingdom.

The publican's destiny how different. Happy in his gains, happy in his prospects, exalted on earth, there awaits him a higher exaltation on Christ's day. Before assembled men and angels, the great judge will ratify publicly the secret transactions of earth, and reveal to the universe the secrets of the heart. Such then is the result, and it is of much significance, and from it we may learn how God should be approached, and that it is most true, that his sacrifices are a broken and contrite heart, that a broken and contrite heart he will not despise.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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