

The Parables of Jesus



By Pastor Mark Friedrich and Ken Chitwood

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Mountain View Lutheran Church
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Study 2

God Isn't Angry
Luke 18:9-14

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ken.chitwood@hotmail.com

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Preface

We are now half way through our study of some of Jesus' parables in the Gospel of Luke. We have re-discovered what it means to be a disciple, what it means to be a neighbor and what it means to be a good steward.

Over the next four weeks we will be examining some of Jesus' most powerful parables. Why are they powerful?

The parable of the Great Banquet, the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Two Lost Sons are poignant reminders of God's unending grace and overflowing mercy to humanity through the Kingdom of Christ.

Each week we will grow in our knowledge of Christ's mercy and our access to his bountiful grace in time of need. You will notice though that the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector is *out of place* in terms of chapter and verse within Luke's Gospel (it taking place after the other parables). This is not done without purpose. This parable, I believe, more than any other reveals the basis of the stories of the Great Banquet, the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Two Lost Sons where God is in search of humankind through Jesus Christ. In the words of Arthur A. Just Jr., "This parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, in which God shows mercy to a sinner who stands before him and acknowledges his own sinfulness, is linked with the parable of the prodigal son..."

So, to begin we will study the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector as recorded in Luke 18:9-14.

God Isn't Angry

In studying and discussing the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18:9-14 we cannot overlook Luke 18:1-8 and the parable of the Persistent Widow. It reads:

And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

Jesus always chooses fascinating characters and interesting situations to convey his teachings through parables. The example above is no different. Jesus has an un-godly and ruthless judge hearing the petitions of a weak, innocent and often oppressed widow character. This woman is without an advocate and powerless within her society and yet her persistence brings her justice. The point of the parable above is that if this woman can get her needs met how much more will we, God's chosen people, get their needs met - those who pray not to a harsh judge, but to a loving Father! We can be confident that our prayers are heard and that our needs are provided for, the LORD will act out of his divine justice and according to his overarching will. Even though it may seem that we are alone in this world and that God is far off we must not lose hope, for Christ is with us and hears our prayers for mercy and help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16). We must not lose faith, but remain persistent in prayer. This is why Jesus asks whether or not the Son of Man (Jesus) will find faith (v.8); he had just addressed the Pharisees who wanted to see signs of the Kingdom. Christ's kingdom does not necessarily manifest itself in visible glory here on earth (a theology of glory), instead the Kingdom of Christ is "revealed" in the hiddenness of God and the hiddenness of our lives in Christ and his cross (a theology of the cross). Suffering and longing may mark our lives, but we know that our true life and glory are hidden with Christ, and that is exactly where they should be (Colossians 3:3). As author Gene Edward

Veith Jr. relates, we live a life that is transformed by the spirituality of the cross where we understand the "glory" of our lives is hidden with Christ and that we are not empowered by earthly blessings, but spiritual ones given to us by God through his means of grace (Word and Sacrament). Through these means the Holy Spirit strengthens us to share in, and share with others, the Kingdom of Christ in our daily callings (vocations) as father, mother, husband, wife, sister, brother, uncle, aunt, electrician, retiree, sales clerk, pastor or housewife. This may not be "glorious" in terms of earthly standards, but it is glorious according to the Kingdom of Christ.

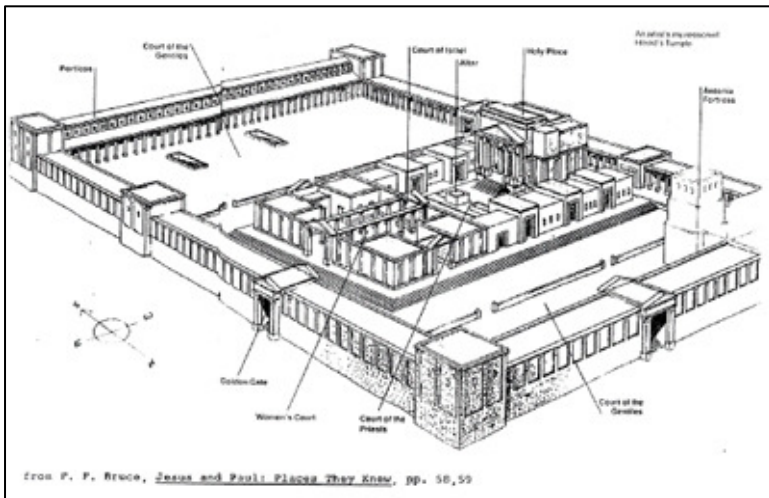
And the thrust of Jesus' message in the parable of the persistent widow is that when the events of life strip us of all confidence in heavenly glory he is there to listen, to console and to guide us in the midst of sorrow, pain and discomfort.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector immediately follows this story in the Lukan text. Thus, with that in mind we come to examine ***Luke 18:9-14***

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

To properly apperceive this parable it is important to take the time to get a clear picture of the setting. This parable is set with the temple as its backdrop. The temple was the focal point for the Hebrew religion of Jesus' day. This was the place where God dwelt with his people. It was the center of all their religious effort, thought and practice. It not only was a religious hub for the people, but it also served as a treasury and many believed it would also be where the throne of God would be when he sent his Messiah.

The temple of Jesus' day was Herod's temple and was being rebuilt to be grander and greater than King Solomon's original temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:1-38, 7:13-8:66). It was still being finished during Jesus' time, but was quite the accomplishment and very impressive in its grandeur and beauty (cf. Matthew 24:1). Unfortunately, all that is left of this temple today is its western wall, known popularly as the Wailing Wall.



A 3-D representation of Herod's Temple - the temple in the time of Jesus. See if you can identify the various courts and sections described in the paragraphs below.

The temple's layout and ritual are important for our understanding of this parable.

During Jesus' day a lamb was sacrificed in the temple at dawn for the sins of the people. A second sacrifice was offered up at around three in the afternoon. When the incense was burned after the sacrifice this was a time when the people could

come for private prayer because the sacrifice of the lamb had covered the sins of the people of Israel and the way to God was open. Beforehand, without the lamb's sacrifice, private prayer was not seen as appropriate because no propitiation had been presented.

Most likely the Pharisee and the tax collector were present for the morning or mid-afternoon sacrifice and the time for private prayer. Surely, there were other people there. When the tax collector refers to an "atonement" ("be merciful to me..." in v. 13 - more on this later) in his prayer it is all the more poignant because we understand that the men are there to pray immediately following the daily atoning sacrifice for the people's sin.

When the people came for prayer they could not walk freely or pray in any part of the temple. There were certain prescriptions for where different people could approach the presence of God in the heart of the temple.

In Appendix 1 there are several diagrams of the temple layout. Its basic layout copied that of the ancient Hebrew tabernacle (cf. Exodus 25:1-27:21) and Solomon's original temple. However, there were some differences.

Arthur A. Just Jr. shares that someone going to the temple first ascends Mt. Moriah (where the temple was located), the tallest point in Jerusalem at the time. This is made clear in v. 10 and v. 14 when both men "go up" (ανεβησαν) and then the tax collector "goes down justified" (κατεβη).

The temple in Jesus' time was built in such a way as to physically project the holiness of the physical presence of God on earth. At its center was the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was placed, the mercy seat was and the presence of God was believed to dwell. Only priests were allowed in this room and only one priest was allowed in on only one day of the year, the Feast of Atonement (there is a tradition that states a rope was tied to the leg of that priest, for if he died then another priest would not have to defile the Holy of Holies by entering in, but instead could drag the priest's body out with the rope). Separating the Most Holy Place from the rest of the temple grounds was a veil. In the next room, the Holy Place, was the table of incense and the menorah. Outside of these two rooms were the courts of the temple. The first court was the priest's court, where the sacrifices were performed and the faithful Israelites (i.e. Pharisees etc.) gathered for prayer. Beyond a wall was the outer court, or court of women. Beyond this was the outer wall of the temple and the technical end of the temple grounds. Beyond this wall gentiles and the *am-ha-aretz* could gaze upon the temple grounds, but not physically be inside them. It is in this court that Jesus most likely flipped some tables and drove the merchants out with a whip of his own making (John 2:13-22). Jewish historian Josephus (and the rabbinic sages of the Mishnah) relates that on the outer wall there was a sign that barred Gentiles from entering, on penalty of death. Although



This stone, placed in the outer wall of the temple, warned Gentiles not to enter the temple grounds on penalty of death.

these outer courts were not fully completed until A.D. 64, their basic layout and importance were present in Jesus' day.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt (18:9)

This verse introduces the parable and gives us an idea of its purpose. It is obvious that this parable is connected with the previous one as Luke begins by saying, "And (καί) he told this parable to some who..."

Luke tries to make it subtly clear who Jesus was telling this parable to. Although the "who" is not directly lucid, the "what sort" is certainly described. We can suppose that the "some" were those who, like the Pharisees, trusted in their own righteousness. We can also assume that the "others" are like tax collectors, people looked down upon in society and regarded as unrighteous (see notes on temple set-up with regard to the *haberim* or "associates" and the *am-ha-aretz* or "people of the land").

When Scripture tells us that there were "some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous" it says that there were people who relied upon, and were confident in, their own ability to uphold the laws of the Torah – the Law of God and of Moses – and therefore obtain righteousness (or right standing and innocence) before God Almighty.

As we heard when discussing the parable of the Good Samaritan we know that the Pharisees and other religious leaders of Jesus' time thought that righteousness was earned and eternal life was gained through keeping the words of the Torah perfectly. An anonymous rabbi once said, "Great is Torah, for it gives to them that practice it, life in this world and in the world to come."

The religion of Jesus' day was legalistic, and to them that word had a positive connotation. What else was there than to make the effort to be perfectly obedient before God, for that is what he demands! In Deuteronomy 12:28 Moses speaks on behalf of God and says, "Be careful to obey *all* these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God." God demands perfect obedience.

Jesus teaches this as well when he says, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

The New Testament Christian church, led by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, also proclaimed, "For whoever keeps the whole law, but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it." (James 2:10)

This is a tall order, to say the least.

Questions for Consideration:

-What do you believe sets you right with God? Is it your actions, both good and bad? How are you doing? Would you say you would be declared "innocent" before God? Why or why not?

-Beyond believing that your works earn your salvation, how else can you "trust" or be "reliant" upon your works for righteousness?

To seek to uphold God's Law without error is a fool's errand. Only in Christ can we ever hope to be declared innocent before God. We are covered in the righteousness of he who was obedient, even unto death through faith, which is counted to us as righteousness (Romans 4:5, 7; Philippians 2:8). Without Christ we are without hope for righteousness (Romans 3:10-18).

This point is underscored by the parable Jesus spoke to those "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous" and to those today who trust that they are righteous by their own piety.

Yet, it is also told to the "others," as we shall see.

Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. (18:10)

Two people, two men, head up to the temple to pray before God. What they pray, where they pray and how they pray are completely different. It is Jesus' intention for us to focus on the juxtaposition of these two men, their attitudes and their prayers. It is in that combination that the point of this parable is revealed.

The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' (18:11-12)

“This Pharisee illustrates the danger of pride for all who serve God with their sacrifices of praise.”

-Martyrius

Upon entering the temple the Pharisee “takes his stand by himself.” Less a sign of confidence and more a sign of self-awarded importance, the Pharisee comes to a place he sees fit for a man of his spiritual stature. He stands somewhere where people can see him and where he cannot come into contact with anyone “unclean” like the *am-ha-aretz*, or that tax collector he saw on his way in.

And although he stands alone he does not pray quietly to himself. Instead he prays aloud for all to hear. He is, in his own estimation, not only praying but teaching. He is standing and praying as an example to others.

Harry Wendt shares that “In Jewish piety, to pray was to thank and praise God for all his good gifts, and to pray for needs. The Pharisee does neither.” Instead, he extols the actions of his own righteousness and compares them with the sinful deeds of “others.”

He even has the audacity to thank God (ευχαριστω) that he is not like other people! The Pharisee honestly believes that God wants to hear his self-congratulation and is proud of, and responsible for, his high actions in comparison to other “lesser” people. There are few more detestable things than self-righteous judgment of others (Matthew 7:1).

In comparing himself to others he particularly focuses on the other character in the parable – the tax collector. The first two words in the Pharisees list could also be read as “thieves and rogues.” The tax collectors of the Roman empire were not only seen as traitors, but were also regarded as thieves and rogues, extortionists and swindlers. Although they were not necessarily accused of traditional adultery, they were believed to whore after other “gods” (i.e. the Roman empire and its power and money).

The Pharisee continues and congratulates himself for his own righteousness. He proclaims that he “fast[s] twice a week” and “give[s] tithes of all that [he] get[s].” The Torah stipulated that people should fast

on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 25:29; Numbers 39:7), but following the Pharisaical tradition of the day this man followed the voluntary fasts on Mondays and Thursdays (cf. 5:33; Matthew 6:16, 9:14; Mark 2:18; Acts 27:9). These fasts were not even required by God's Law, he subjected himself to this spiritual rigor on his own accord – how righteous is he?! (Almost as righteous as a Sunday School volunteer *wink*) Tithes (10% of money or goods) were levied on grain, wine and oil (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:27; Deuteronomy 12:17, 14:13). Pharisees took these tithes and went the extra mile. They not only tithed on grain, wine and oil but gave tithes on their garden herbs and vegetables, and all their donations and income (elsewhere Jesus condemns this as hypocrisy as they ignore the love of their neighbor...sound appropriate? cf. Luke 11:42). To judge is God's prerogative not ours, to judge without authority is to act in the ways of Satan (1 Corinthians 4:5).

By his own estimation this Pharisee was the “bee's knees” of the Jewish religious culture. He not only kept the Law of God but did the Law of God one better. HE WAS RIGHTEOUS in his own eyes, no doubt about it. It breaks my heart to hear his trust in himself, so foolish and yet in his own mind so wise.

Questions for Consideration:

-How easy is it to see our righteousness and ignore our own sin while simultaneously calling others out on their sin? How easy it to gossip about such things – especially in the church?

-What's the danger inherent in such thoughts, words and deeds?

-When was the last time you thought, “Well, at least I'm not like him/her”?

-Why do we so complacently compare our goodness against others?

-Why do we feel the need to be better than others?

-Why do we build these false little kingdoms of our self-built glory? Is that fitting with the way of Christ?

Wendt rightly declares, “In listing his own virtues and attacking others, the Pharisee shreds his own spirituality.” Additionally, Ephrem the Syrian writes, “In the case of that Pharisee who was praying, the things said

were true...It is more difficult to confess one's sins than one's righteousness."

The Pharisee comes to God and instead of pleading before God and asking for mercy, instead gives praise to himself. Unfortunately this was not uncharacteristic of the Pharisees. In the Talmud, *Berakot* 28b, "I give thanks to Thee, O LORD my God, that Thou hast set my portion with those who sit in the Beth ha Midrash...and...not...with those who sit in the street corners."

This Pharisee, like the teacher of the Law in the parable of the good Samaritan, sadly misses the point.

"Whoever offers to God sacrifices of praise...should be very alert for the ambushes of the evil one. Satan lies in ambush ready to catch you by surprise at the very time of thanksgiving....He makes you drunk on pride..."

-Martyrius

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' (18:13)

Juxtaposed to the Pharisee is our publican, or tax collector. This is the turning point of the parable – the punch line, as it were.

According to the temple prescriptions of his day the tax collector stands far off in the Court of the Gentiles, not worthy enough of closer access to God because of his apparent sin (who according to Hebrew writings "hates sin" [Proverbs 6:16], but notice the sins he hates; are they not the sins of the Pharisee? I digress).

He bows his head in disgrace and beats his breast in remorse over his sins. He cannot lift his eyes to God. In the Hebrew mind the eye was the source of a person's knowledge, and as we too believe, a window into a person's soul. The Hebrew word for eye, *ayin*, means both "eye" and "spring." Jesus picks up on this in Luke 11:34 when he says, "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness." People in Jesus'

day believed that light sprang forth from the body through the eye (cf. Job 17:7; Proverbs 22:9). This publican does not lift his eyes to God because he does not want the LORD to see the depths of his dark soul.

It also says he "beat his breast." The verb for "beat" (τυπτω) is in its durative imperfect form. That is to say the verb's form suggests the continuous beating of the chest ("he kept beating his chest"). People today in the Middle East still beat their chest to express extreme anguish, intense anger or great sorrow (think of funeral processions in Iraq or Iran). In twenty years of living in the Middle East, Kenneth Bailey reports seeing a man do this only *once*. And why beat his chest? An early Jewish Midrashic commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:2 states, "why do they beat upon their heart? As though to say, 'All is there.'" Where the eye was the spring of darkness, the heart was the source of evil longing. This man is in a continual state of torment over his sin and longing to do evil. Repentance never ends for this tax collector – nor should it for us who do what we hate to do (cf. Romans 7).

"The posture of his prayer shows his humility. He asks for mercy and receives absolution."

-Cyril of Alexandria

In distress he cries out, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" He addresses God and cries out that he (God) might be "propitiated" (ιλασθητι) toward him (the tax collector). The verb *hilaskomai* means to expiate, make atonement for or be merciful. In its permissive passive form here it may be translated as "let yourself be disposed of mercy."

To catch the full significance of the publican's prayer I believe Harry Wendt's words deserve quotation in full:

In his prayer, the tax collector uses a word that refers to the atonement sacrifice. He is not offering a general prayer for God's mercy, but yearns for the benefit of an atonement. He has watched priests perform a number of rituals in the name of the people, slaughter and cut up the sacrificial lamb, burn incense, pronounce a blessing with outstretched hands, and put God's name on the children of Israel. He has seen and heard the clash of cymbals, the blasts of the trumpets, the reading of the Psalms, the singing of the choir of Levites, and the final prostration of the people. He sees and

hears it all – and longs to be a part of it all. In deep remorse, he strikes his chest and cries out in repentance and hope, "O God, let it be for me!" Make an atonement for me, a sinner!" He desires that the great atonement sacrifice he has just witnessed might apply also to him.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. (18:14)

At the beginning of the parable we read that two men went up to the temple to pray to God. At the end of the parable these same two men go down from the temple following their prayer. One is justified, the other is not. One came before God in petition, the other came before God in Eucharistic thanks of their own good deeds.

Jesus says that the one man, the tax collector (the "other") goes home "justified." The Greek word *dedikaiomenos* (δεδικαιωμενος) is a theologically significant perfect passive (to be passive is to not be active in something). This tax collector is justified, but by no effort of his own, he is perfectly passive in his justification. Who then is active? It is God. The tax collector repents of his sins and is declared righteous by God alone.

Furthermore, in the so-called "principle of radical reversal" ("all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" see also Matthew 18:4; 23:12; Luke 14:11; 1 Peter 5:6) the verbs "humbled" and "exalted" are again theological passives.

We do not humble ourselves, nor do we exalt ourselves.¹ God does the humbling by and through the Law and he himself does the exalting in and through the Gospel of Christ. We receive this condemnation by his Word and through his Sacraments (drowning and dying in the waters of baptism and being crucified with Christ [Romans 6:1-11; Galatians 2:19-20]) and obtain his grace by and through the same Word and Sacrament.

¹ Watching the adaptation of C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* at the Herberger Theater in Phoenix, I guffawed at the part where Screwtape (a demon's "mentor" so to speak) encourages his demonic nephew to seize upon a young Christian's humility. He declares that a human's feigned humility can be one of the most deceiving forms of pride and a tool for Satan's temptations.

So what is said of the publican is also said of us. We who worship in church on Sunday are humbled in the sight and presence of God and are likewise justified. It is through the elements of worship in Word and Sacrament that we take part in the atonement of Christ (after all, the liturgy [derived from the word *liturgia*, meaning “service”] is an outline of God’s service *to us* [not our service to him] and our response to his grace). Thanks be to God!

Questions for Consideration:

-Have you ever thought of the magnitude and importance of the elements of our weekly worship?

-In light of this parable how deep is the grace of the confession and absolution, the reading of God’s Holy Word and the conference of his grace through Baptism and Holy Communion?

Conclusion: God Isn't Angry

In ancient times, many polytheists thought of their gods as unpredictable beings, liable to become angry with their worshippers over a trifle. When any misfortune occurred, it was believed that a god was angry and was therefore punishing his devotees. The remedy was to offer the god a sacrifice to appease his anger. The process was known as “propitiation.”

In 4,000 BC the forces that moved around humanity were assumed to have a very real affect on the lives of people. Over time, humanity began to erect names for these forces, or gods. The nature of these gods created a paradox. If our lives depended on the gods for rain, etc, then we had better appease them. Rituals were created by people who had supposedly figured out how to appease the gods. The common method was an offering of some sort. Some gods could be appeased by a grain offering. Others needed blood. Molech needed children. The problem became that humanity could never really figure out how to appease the gods and ended up giving more and more and more.

Theologian and teacher Rob Bell shares how the nature of the sacrificial system is a ritual to appease the conscience of man, and not something that pleases God (Psalm 51 16-17; Hosea 6:6; Matthew 9:13). Unfortunately the religious system of Jesus’ day had created an industry

out of the ritual (through sale of sacrifices etc.) and were distorting its purpose.

Instead of viewing God as one who needs to be appeased, “propitiation” focuses on the sacrifice of Jesus by death on the cross which brought the resilient peace between God and sinful humanity (Romans 3:25; Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; 4:10).

Whenever God’s children sin, they provoke his anger. Of course, his anger is not an irrational lack of self-control, as it so often is with humans. His anger is the settled opposition of His holy nature to everything that is evil. If God’s anger is real, then it must be taken into account in the way that sin, which caused that wrath, is dealt with. When the NT speaks of propitiation it means that Jesus’ death on the cross for the sins of humankind appeased God’s wrath against His people once and for all.

The Hebrew system of righteousness is predicated upon the thought that humankind is in search of God and that God is found and appeased through the keeping of statutes and principles. The way of Jesus stands opposed to any philosophy that is based on such a false philosophy. Instead, the way of Jesus is a way marked in his blood and a way that is open to all who by faith believe. The curtain is torn, the Holy of Holies is open to all who believe (Matthew 27:51). Due to Christ’s death and resurrection we are justified by grace through faith and it is not of our own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of our works so that none of us can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). Our lives are lives punctuated by the grace of God in Jesus Christ who made peace by the blood of the cross, an atoning sacrifice for our sin (Colossians 1:20). Because of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, our great high priest, we now have access to the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16).

God isn’t angry; far from it.

The offering of Jesus was a way to reform the old way of appeasing sacrifices (like our supposed good works, which are compared to filthy rags [Isaiah 64:6]) and do away with the need for a temple (hence its destruction in A.D. 70 at the hand of the Romans) since Christ himself was the tabernacle presence of God (John 1:14 - the word “dwelt” is the Greek **σκηνοω** and literally means to “build a tent”, “live” or “tabernacle”). Rob Bell shares about how much of our life is still about appeasing the

gods with our thoughts, words and deeds. That isn't the point, Christ, in the words of Bell, is the "culmination of all creation" and the one who has done away with the anger of God making peace by the blood of the cross (Colossians 1:15-20).

Because of Jesus, who was tempted in every way we are and yet lived without sin, God can sympathize (be affected with the same feeling as) with our weakness and instead of expecting perfection, sees the righteousness of Christ.

God isn't angry - he is full of joy (Hebrews 12:2) and is love (1 John 4:8). And better yet, he is at work within us writing a poem with our lives where we, through our given vocations reveal the glory of Christ to others in thought, word and deed (the word "workmanship" in Ephesians 2:10 is from the Greek word *poima* from which our English word "poem" is derived).

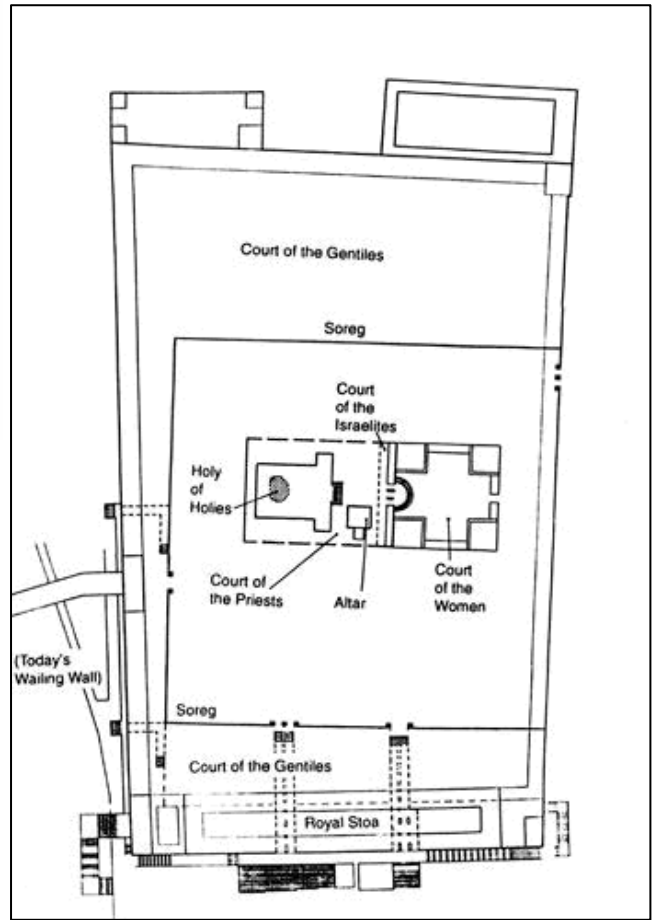
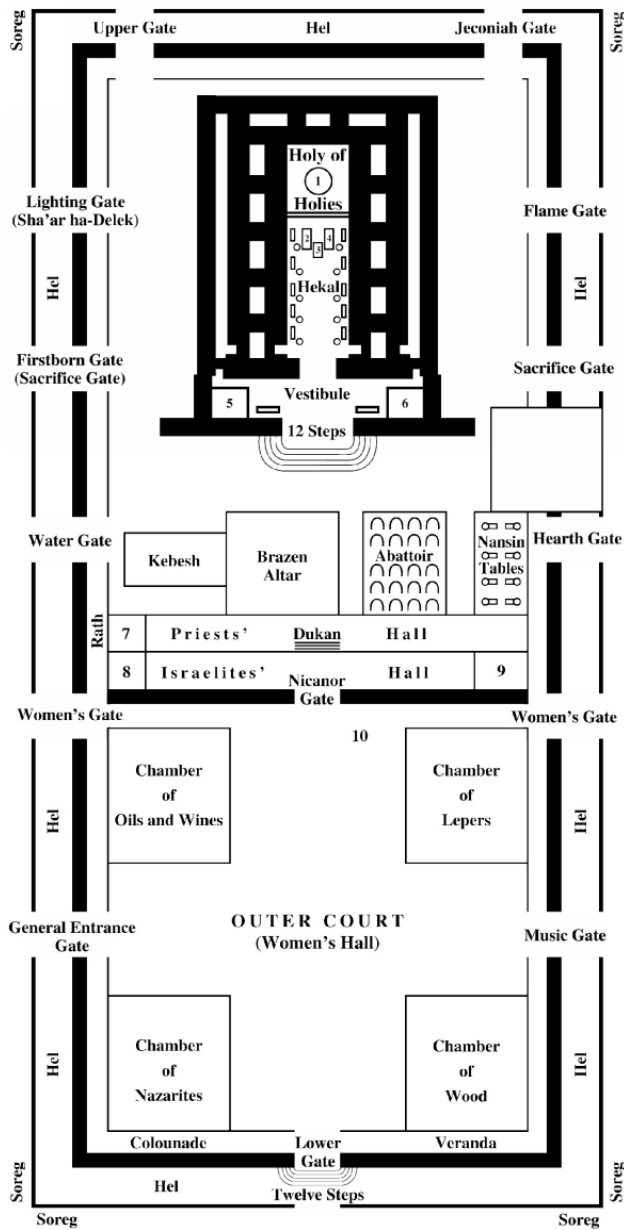
So may our lives be a poem of God's grace in Jesus Christ, may we hold fast our confession of justification by grace alone, by faith alone by God's Word alone and may we, like the tax collector, humbly come to the throne of grace to receive mercy to help in our times of need.

Amen. Soli Deo Gloria!

For Consideration:

-The way to God is open. Let your pride go, leave your self-righteousness behind, let the Word of God humble you and boldly approach the throne of grace to confess your sin and receive mercy from Christ in your time of need.

Appendix 1: Detailed Diagrams of Herod's Temple ca. A.D. 30-60



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