

### **Jesus and the Pharisees: (part three of a twelve part study)**

More often than not, a self-righteous lifestyle results in a condescending superiority complex. No one in the Judaism of Jesus' day was as guilty of such arrogant pride as the Pharisees. Our Lord saw right through their pretense and revealed it in the parable about a certain Pharisee and tax collector in Luke 18:9-14, where we read the following –

**“And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ‘Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

Who can deny the existence of Pharisees throughout the history of the Church? They have either perverted the simplicity of God's plan of salvation through faith in Christ, or have imposed a legalistic system of works righteousness as the means to spiritual growth. In the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle Paul confronts this mindset in a manner that has helped many Christians escape the trap of self-righteousness ever since. Paul begins by warning about a different gospel in Galatians 1:6-10. He chides these new believers for being so foolish as to have departed from God's plan and purpose for their lives regarding spiritual growth, in Galatians 3:1-3. He reminds them of the impossibility of being justified by keeping the Law (3:10-14). Paul then describes their embrace of legalism as a major setback in their relationship with Christ (4:19-20; 5:1-10); and encourages them to resume a walk in the Spirit, in Galatians 5:16-26.

The Pharisees, with their self-righteous attitude, proved to be the primary nemesis of and hindrance to, the earthly ministry of our Savior. It is no different today. When self-righteousness gains a foothold within the body of Christ, it becomes a significant obstacle to the furtherance of the Christian faith in our lost and fallen world; a world filled with sinners, in desperate need of a Savior.