

Self-Righteousness: Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

Robert C. Newman



Introduction

- There has been much speculation over what the "unpardonable sin" or the "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" might be.
- The Bible does not give us an explicit identification of this, but here we will suggest a possible candidate:
 - The sin of self-righteousness.
- Jesus' strongest denunciations were directed at those who were self-righteous, rather than those who were self-acknowledged sinners.

Parable of the Pharisee & Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14 (NIV) To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 13 But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' 14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Parable of the Pharisee & Tax Collector

- Notice this parable is told to "those who were confident of their own righteousness."
- The Pharisee here thanks God he is not like other people.
- The tax collector, by contrast, cries out to God for mercy.
- It is the tax collector whom Jesus pronounces justified before God.

Jesus' Condemnation of the Scribes & Pharisees

- This is reported in Matthew 23, with parallels in Mark 14 and Luke 20.
- He says they:
 - Don't practice what they preach (vv 3-4)
 - Lay guilt trips on others (4)
 - Do good works for show (5-7)
 - Keep people away from God (13)
 - Devour widows' houses (14, Mk, Lk)
 - Evangelize for hell (15)

Jesus' Condemnation of the Scribes & Pharisees

- Jesus says they:
 - Reason perversely (16-22)
 - Major on the minors (23-24)
 - Emphasize externals (25-28)
 - Honor dead saints who would have condemned them (29-33)
 - Mistreat saints of their own times (34)
 - Will be condemned for all these things (35-36)

Self-Righteousness

- Keeps those who practice it from entering God's kingdom...
 - Because they can't admit their own sin and need of a savior.
- May be very evangelistic...
 - But their converts are headed for hell too.
- Keeps others from even coming to God...
 - Because they identify self-righteousness with godliness.

Self-Righteousness

- See Paul's remarks in Romans 2:17-24 regarding Jewish self-righteousness:
 - 17 (NIV) Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; 18 if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; 19 if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."
- Self-righteousness is by no means confined to ancient times or to non-Christian religions!

Recognizing Self-Righteousness

- We may detect it in ourselves and others by these items given in Luke 18, Matthew 23 and Romans 2:
 - Trusting in ourselves and viewing others with contempt (L9, R17-19)
 - Teaching as a substitute for doing (M3, R19-23)
 - Laying guilt-trips on others (M4)
 - Seeking approval of others (M5-7)
 - Emphasizing externals, outward reform (M5-7, 25-28)
 - Misusing funds raised by the great sacrifice of others (M14)

Recognizing Self-Righteousness

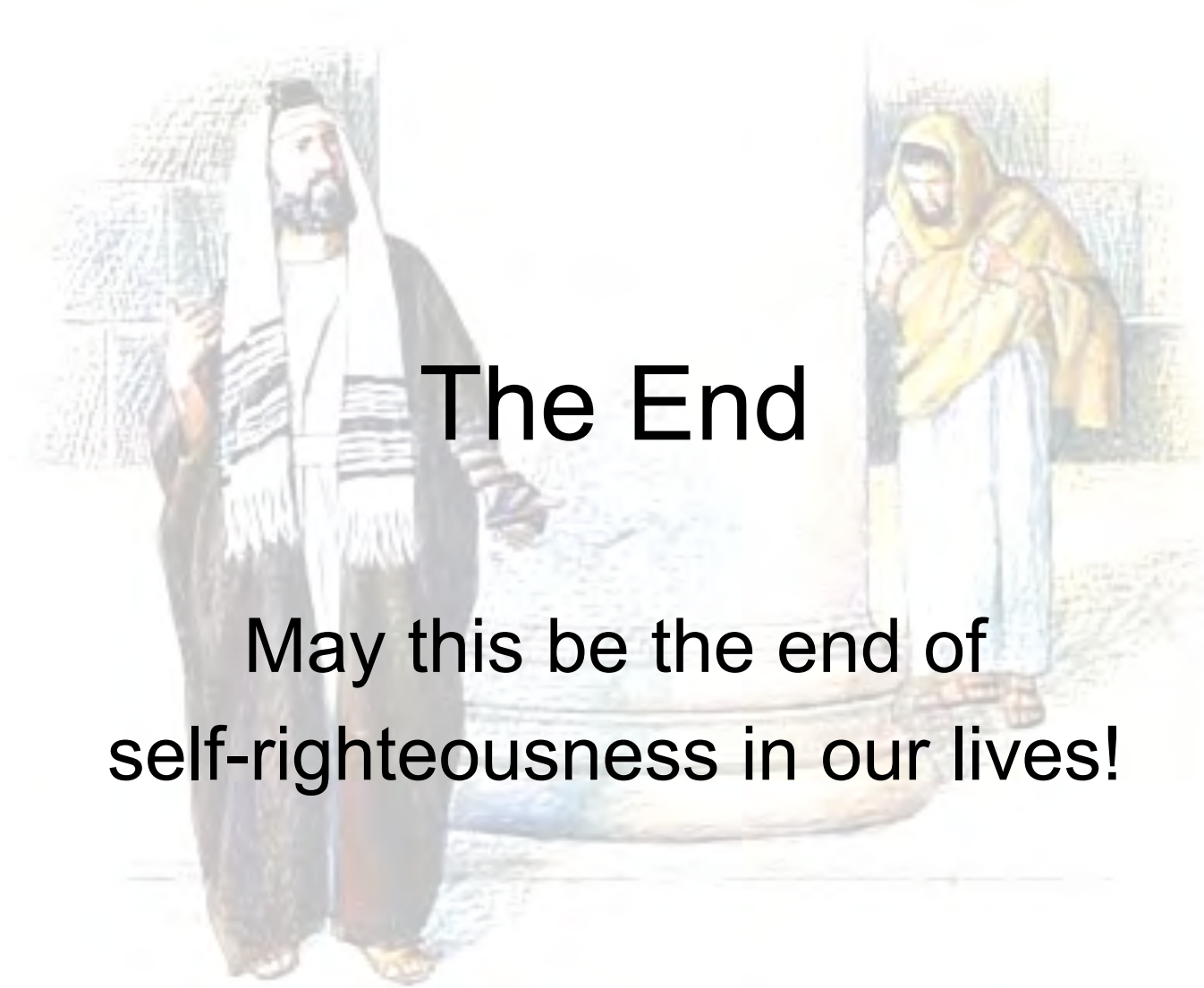
- In ourselves and others:
 - Evangelizing for reputation, scalp-hunting (M15)
 - Majoring on minors (M16-24)
 - Honoring past heroes (M29-33)
 - Mistreating current heroes (M34-35)
 - Leading people to blaspheme the truth because they confuse your position with God's (R23-24).

Conclusions

- To the extent we are self-righteous, we certainly blaspheme the Holy Spirit, for:
 - We deny we need Him;
 - We view his convicting activity as Satan's temptations;
 - We bring slander from unbelievers upon the name and cause of Christ.
- Let us examine our own hearts to see if any of this is springing up there.

Conclusions

- Let us pray that God may rescue us from self-righteousness.
- May God help us to be filled with his Spirit and inwardly empowered to live lives that truly honor Him.
- May we live as God instructed us thru Micah 6:8:
 - (NIV) He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.



The End

May this be the end of
self-righteousness in our lives!