2 The Repentant Goes Home Justified

Who Goes Home Justified?

Jesus taught how one is justified in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Jesus uses the same word for justified as Paul used everywhere that Paul taught about justification. Jesus clearly ties justification to repentance from sin. Is there any way to square this with the idea that Jesus teaches justification by faith, let alone by faith alone? We will explore below the arguments that try to square it that way.

First let’s listen to Jesus alone.

(9) And he spake also this parable unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and set all others at nought:1 (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. (13) But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. (14) I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humb-

1. Luke is clearer: “To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else....” (Luke 18:9.)
**leteth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:9-14 ASV.)**

This parable is not hard to discern, particularly if you recognize that Jesus uses a Pharisee (not a Sadducee) as the religious ruler to contrast against a Publican.

Let’s put the comparisons and contrasts side-by-side in a table so the meaning is inescapable.

**TABLE 1. Jesus’ Doctrine of Justification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justified</th>
<th>Unjustified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“publican” (v. 10)</td>
<td>“Pharisee” (v. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“humbled himself” (v. 14)</td>
<td>“exalted himself” (v. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner”</td>
<td>“(11) God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven” (v. 13)</td>
<td>“trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (v. 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, the Publican **does something different** than the Pharisee. The difference is solely the Publican repents from sin. The Publican sees the Law which he has failed to obey and he confesses his wrong. Thus, he “humbles” himself, as Jesus puts it. The Pharisee does not act similarly. He fails to humble himself. He does not see how his conduct falls below the Law’s standards. Instead, he _exalts_ himself. He praises himself and his _two good deeds of fasting and tithing._

Is the Pharisee’s problem in the parable that he has sufficient good deeds and _no sin_? Is the Pharisees’ problem that he thinks he is justified by obedience, but that is a wrong salvation formula (even an heretical one)?

The Modern Faith-alone gospel asserts, as we discuss below, that the Pharisee’s flaw which causes lack of justification is _he in fact had no sin and was one-hundred percent obedient_, but he did not realize this is not enough to be saved. This way faith-alone advocates can maintain works of obedi-
Jesus’ Words On Salvation

Who Goes Home Justified?

ence supposedly do not justify. By contrast, the Publican was supposedly disobedient and because he had faith alone, the cheap grace proponents insist this is why he went home justified. This interpretation is shocking to say the least.

Before we give time to the Cheap Grace Gospel proponents to argue these two points, let’s do our own careful analysis.

First, what was Jesus’ really teaching was the flaw of the Pharisee?

Pharisees’ Flaw Was Failure To Repent of Sin

First and foremost, it is obvious Jesus wants us to understand that had the Pharisee repented from sin, he too would be justified. This was the missing piece in the Pharisee’s visit to the temple. It is the only behavior different between the two men. Jesus calls it here humbling yourself. The Pharisee instead exalted himself.

Yet, this simple truth would destroy ‘justification by faith alone’ doctrine if the truth of what Jesus taught were ever spread far and wide. Thus, this obvious reading is ignored. Or the passage is twisted, as we shall discuss.

Pharisees Are Jesus’ Example Of Shallow-Law Keepers, Not Perfectly Obedient Law-Keepers

Second, Jesus was not teaching justification was lacking because the Pharisee was perfectly obeying the Law. How do we know this?

Because Jesus did not single out the Sadducees who were true legalists. Josephus explained the Sadducees taught a rigid adherence to the Law but the Pharisees taught the Law was not as important as oral tradition.² This was one of the two main points of division between the Pharisees and Sadducees. Jesus skewers the Pharisees repeatedly for their shal-

2. See page 156.
low law-negating doctrines, relying on the oral law to make
the Law of ‘none effect.’ (Matt. 15:6; 23:23.) Jesus says noth-
ing comparable about the Sadducees’ truly legalistic doctrine.

Thus, here in this parable, Jesus is pointing precisely
at someone who does not keep the Law but merely thinks he
does so as he waters it down. The Pharisees replaced the writ-
ten Law with their oral traditions. Hence, the Pharisee’s doc-
trine were so off that as he stands in front of the temple he can
assure himself that he is obedient without realizing he was
not obedient to God’s Laws. He may have been faithful in
keeping the oral law which his compatriots invented. This
made him self-justified in shallow doctrines. But it did not
make him truly obedient to God’s Law and hence justified.

Thus, the Pharisee is a perfect example to use in an
illustration of a smugly religious person who does not repent
due to replacement theories. The Pharisees repackaged the
Law, cut out the parts they didn’t like, and reformulated sal-
vation by the most shallow obedience possible. They had a
replacement theory to justify this: the oral law was suppos-
edly secretly delivered by God to Moses, and was too impor-
tant to be written down. For this supposed reason, the oral
torah is more binding, and thus when necessary replaces the
literal sense of the Law which Moses wrote down. Trusting
this replacement theory, the Pharisee in the parable cites obe-
dience only to two commands as justifying himself — fasting
(the oral law) and tithing (the less weighty command from the
written Law). Jesus hated this oral-law and shallow-law pro-
gram. Jesus said the Pharisees used the oral torah to make of
none effect the written words of God. (Matt. 15:6.) And Jesus
said the Pharisees’ minimizing the Law given to Moses down
to just tithing was a travesty of Law-negation which marked
the Pharisees for hell itself (Matt. 23:23).

Hence, this parable is not saying one is lacking justifi-
cation if one obeys the Law perfectly. Cf. Isaiah 58:1-8 (only
“seem to delight to hear my laws” but you “make a show of
coming to me”; you are “living for yourselves...going through
the motions of penance... the fasting I want is [obedience.]”)

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Jesus Means Some Partial Obedience Is Not Enough

Then what is Jesus’ point in mentioning the Pharisee’s good deeds? Does this imply the Pharisee has sufficient righteousness to be justified despite his failure to humble himself? Why didn’t exaltation of his righteous deeds justify him before God?

To answer these questions, let’s restate the parable again. The Pharisee is able to cite in the parable that he does some good deeds. He fasts twice a week (which is not a command in the Law). He also pays his tithes (a command in the Law). Jesus said elsewhere the Pharisees were good about tithing but left undone the weightier matters of the Law. (Matt. 23:23.) Even as Jesus summarizes the Pharisee’s statements to God in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, we see the Oral Law (fasting twice a week) mixed in with the Lesser Written Law (tithing). Jesus excoriated the Pharisees for teaching tithing to the neglect of the more important written laws. (Matt. 23:23.) Jesus excoriated the Pharisees for making their oral law make of none effect the Law itself. (Matt. 15:6.)

In the parable itself, we see this mix of oral and written law raised by the Pharisee. It had corrupted the Pharisee’s ability to repent based on weightier matters of the written Law. The Pharisee instead comforted himself with his obedience to the oral law and one of the lesser laws from the Law. This self-made righteousness from the oral law and narrow focus on tithing caused the Pharisee to be a deluded sinner.

3. The Pharisees fasted twice a week — on Mondays and Thursdays. This is deducible from an early Second Century document — the Didache, sometimes called the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles. It instructs: “Be careful not to schedule your fasts at the times when the hypocrites fast. They fast on the second (Monday) and fifth (Thursday) day of the week, therefore make your fast on the fourth (Wednesday) day and the Preparation day (Friday, the day of preparation for the Sabbath-Saturday).” (Didache 8:1.)
Thus, obedience to more important written commands are lacking in the Pharisee. The Pharisees live in a kind of delusion that such partial shallow obedience to the Law and their own self-created righteousness (the Oral Law) satisfies God’s commands. But it was sin. It was shallow. It defied God. It could never justify.

The Sin Which The Pharisee Overlooked

Let’s move to another issue raised by the parable. The Pharisee in the parable also thanked God that he was not like those who were “extortioners, unjust, and adulterers” such as the Publicans. Yet, was this true? Jesus elsewhere said the Pharisees taught a distorted doctrine on adultery, permitting lust for a married woman if it did not end up in the act of adultery. By having a wrong view of the Law on adultery, this Pharisee’s self-examination ended up shallow and defective on the very issue this Pharisee was congratulating himself that he obeyed.

Thus, the danger for the Pharisee was two-fold. He thought obedience to the Oral Law pleased God when in fact it had the opposite effect.

Second, when the Pharisee in the parable prayed to God, he did not have an adequate and clear knowledge of the Law. He could not do a proper self-examination. Such knowledge of Scripture is crucial to repent in favor of obedience to obtain justification in God’s sight. (Deut. 6:25.) Otherwise, repentance with no knowledge of what you did wrong is merely a vague sorrow. It does not include a change in direction. It is not effective repentance.

The Pharisee’s mistake was thus two-fold: he trusted in obedience to the Oral Law would impress God. He was also smug in his knowledge of the Law, assuming incorrectly that he kept it perfectly. This led him to fail to repent, which was the correct action which differentiates the Pharisee and

4. See page 211 et seq.
the Publican. The Pharisee’s failure, and even inability to repent due to wrong doctrine on the nature of adultery, explains why the Pharisee could not go home justified. Only the Publican repented of all his sin and was justified as a result. The parable thus precisely matches the doctrine of justification in Ezekiel 18:24,27-28.

**Was The Pharisee Being Scolded On His Doctrine Of Justification By Jesus?**

Finally, the faith alone advocate, we shall see, is going to claim Jesus was scolding the Pharisee on his doctrine of justification. Allegedly, Jesus wants us to realize the Pharisee erroneously thought that he could maintain justification by works of obedience.

However, if Jesus taught that no one is justified by obeying the Law, Jesus would contradict numerous Scriptures, including provisions in the Law of Moses. (Deut. 6:25, discussed in the next section.) Jesus would therefore become a false prophet under Deuteronomy 13:1-5. This says anyone with signs and wonders who seduces us from following the Law is to be regarded as a false prophet even if their signs and wonders “come to pass.” But Jesus did not teach justification was without obedience to the Law. Only the Modern Gospel of Cheap Grace does so. It tries to impress such an anti-law heresy on top of Jesus’ parable. To do this, they must engage in a highly distorted reading.

Obviously, to answer this issue, we need to look at the Law and the Prophets, and what they teach on justification.

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**Justification In the Law of Moses**

Deuteronomy 6:25 states:

*And it shall be righteousness unto us, if we observe to do all this commandment before...*
Jehovah our God, as he hath commanded us.

(ASV).

This teaches that ongoing justification is from observing to do all the commandments God had given to Moses. Notice this is not explaining how justification initiates. This is talking about how justification is maintained.

The Lutheran scholars Keil & Delitzsch in their Commentary on the Old Testament agree on this meaning:

[O]ur righteousness will consist in the observance of the law; we shall be regarded and treated by God as righteous, if we are diligent in the observance of the law.

Plaut, a Jewish commentator, concurs. (See Footnote 10 on page 137.) Thus, God taught in Deuteronomy 6:25 that if we obey the law it will impute righteousness to us. The same is found in Leviticus 18:5.

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah. (Lev 18:5 ASV.)

5. Paul quotes this verse and understood this is as “righteousness of the law.” (Romans 10:5; Gal. 3:12.) Paul then appears to say after Christ, righteousness is no longer by obeying the Law, but now is by having pistis, typically translated as faith. Paul says “the Law is not of faith (pistis).” (Gal. 3:11-12.) However, unless Paul meant faithfulness by pistis, Paul would be contradicting Scripture. If so, Paul would be a false prophet. (Deut. 13:1-5; Isaiah 8:20.) Thus, if Paul meant to suggest that Leviticus 18:5 were ever superseded in the NT, this would nullify God’s word that these words given Moses were “eternal for all generations.” See Ex. 27:21; 30:21; Lev. 6:18; 7:36; 10:9; 17:7; 23:14, 21, 41; 24:3; Num. 10:8. Thus, either we have mistranslated or misunderstood Paul or, by the Bible’s very blunt and harsh rule, Paul is a false prophet. This is fully discussed in my prior book, Jesus’ Words Only (2007).
Justification In The Prophets

We will see the same principle again in this quote from Ezekiel:

But if a man be *just*, and do that which is lawful and right (Eze 18:5 ASV.)

.... [and] hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept mine ordinances, to deal truly; he is *just*, he shall surely live, saith the Lord Jehovah. (Eze 18:9 ASV.)

Thus, the obedient is *just* and he will *live*.

Likewise, the correct translation of Habbakuk 2:4 is that the “just shall *live* by his faithfulness.” In Hebrew, this means *obedient living*. The fact the Septuagint of 247 B.C. translated this passage with an ambiguous Greek word pistis, which can mean either *faithfulness* or *faith*, has led commentators to shallow out Habbakuk’s meaning of justification, opting for *faith*, not *faithfulness* in the common English translation. However, we cannot permit a translation like the Septuagint to change God’s word in Habbakuk 2:4. Nor would

6. In most English texts where Paul quotes Habbakuk in its Septuagint translation, pistis is rendered as *faith* rather than *faithfulness*. This would make it appear Paul was duped by the ambiguity in the Greek word pistis. However, no such ambiguity is present in the Hebrew original word emunah. The Hebrew word emunah in Habbakuk 2:4 is derived from aman, “to be firm, last.” When used as a personal attribute of man, it means fidelity in word and deed (Jer.7:28; Jer. 9:2; Psalm 37:3.) However, for doctrinal reasons, many English translations of Habbakuk 2:4 go back and alter the Hebrew translation to the impossible rendering of *faith*. Only a few evangelical translations of Habbakuk 2:4 are faithful to the original Hebrew text. For example, we read: “by his *steadfastness* liveth” (YLT); “faithfulness” (God’s Word); “faithful to God” (Good News Bible).

7. Professor Dunning, of Professor of Theology at Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, Tennessee, did a thorough analysis of the inappropriate ambiguity injected into Habbakuk 2:4 by the Septuagint Greek Translation. See Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 272-76.
that translation error — no matter what respected figure was duped by such a mistranslation8 — ever let us ignore Deuteronomy 6:25 and Ezekiel 18:5, 9, and a host of other passages.

What About Genesis 15:6?

There are no other passages in the Scripture that deal with justification. What about Genesis 15:6? It was another Septuagint mistranslation that misled respected NT figures to see that verse as dealing with justification. Genesis 15:6 had nothing to do with justification whatsoever in the original Hebrew text. An erroneous understanding was born solely due to a defect in the Septuagint Greek translation of 247 B.C. That translation alone created the possibility that justification of an individual was in view. However, in the original Hebrew, such a reading is missing.9

8. On the fact of this misleading translation and how it has impacted NT doctrine, including in how it advances a doctrine of justification at odds with Jesus, see my prior book, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 272-73, 297-98, 507-08.

9. See “Does Genesis 15:6 Support Paul’s Dispensing With Repentance?” on page 516 et seq. A brief synopsis is provided here: The meaning in Hebrew of Genesis 15:6 is unquestionable. When it says that “he believed the Lord, and [he] counted it to him for righteousness” (KJV), the second he is to be identified with the he in the first clause: Abram aka Abraham. Thus, it was Abraham counting it (i.e., the promise of 15:5 of children in old age) to Him (the Lord) as a righteous deed. But the Septuagint, which was used by Paul in interpreting the passage, gnarled terribly Genesis 15:6. It said, “and it was counted to him for righteousness.” What was being counted? And who was counting? The Septuagint opened up ambiguities that are simply not there in the Hebrew. The passage from beginning to end had nothing to do with the doctrine of justification. For further discussion, see Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 251-53, 272, 506-07 and xxix.
Hence, Jesus’ teaching of justification by repentance from sin is completely consistent with all prior scripture. Nothing refutes it. And nothing impels us to abandon Jesus’ lessons.

**TABLE 2. Justification In Ezekiel 18: Good Deeds Lose Value When You Sin. A Mirror Of The Parable Of The Publican And The Pharisee**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justified</th>
<th>Unjustified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(27) Again, when the wicked man <em>turneth away from his wickedness</em> that he hath committed, and <em>doeth that which is lawful and right</em>, he shall save his soul alive. (28) Because he considereth, and <em>turneth away from all his transgressions</em> that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Eze 18:27-28 ASV</td>
<td>But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committh iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? <em>None of his righteous deeds that he hath done shall be remembered</em>: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Eze 18:24 ASV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publican - turned from wickedness</td>
<td>Pharisee - recites obedience to lesser command of tithing and to oral law on fasting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publican - repented from sin</td>
<td>Pharisee - failed to repent from sin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**MacArthur’s Spin To Prove This Parable Teaches Justification By Faith Alone**

John MacArthur has adopted Jesus’ Gospel, but he insists that repentance from sin and obedience are not works. Thus, he claims he still believes in faith alone as the true doctrine of salvation.

Thus, when MacArthur discusses Jesus’ doctrine of justification in this passage, he claims it is compatible with faith alone doctrine. To accomplish this, MacArthur had to principally rely upon the common misconception of the Pha-
is sees’ error as supposedly being legalists. As proven in the chapter on the Pharisees, this is a false depiction of the Pharisees. The faith-alone interpretation of Jesus’ parable, such as MacArthur offers, collapses when we correct the wrong view of the Pharisees upon which his argument relies.

MacArthur begins:

But the one occasion where Jesus actually declared someone ‘justified’ provides the best insight into the doctrine as He taught it.

This is absolutely the case. The best source of the doctrine on justification should be Jesus. When Jesus declares someone justified, we need to find out why.

However, as we shall see, MacArthur will impress on top of Jesus’ words foreign ideas to make the foreign ideas palatable, and allegedly consistent with what Jesus teaches. Yet, those foreign ideas supplant and destroy Jesus’ message on justification.

To save belief-alone-for-justification, MacArthur commits two misrepresentations. He falsely depicts the publican (tax-gatherer) and the Pharisee. Yet, MacArthur initially summarizes this parable accurately.

He [Jesus] also told this parable to certain ones 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-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, “God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.” But the tax-gatherer,

10. See “Exceeding The Righteousness Of The Shallowly Righteous — Matthew 5:20.” on page 147 et seq.
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 down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

(Luke 18:9-14, emphasis added).

To this point, MacArthur is correctly summarizing the parable.

So why was the man who repented of sin justified but the man who refused to do so unjustified? The answer is blaring and obvious: repentance is key.

However, MacArthur will claim that the one who is unjustified is so because he had successfully engaged in complete obedience to the Law. And with that presupposition added to the parable, Jesus means supposedly to expose that perfect obedience cannot impute righteousness (justification) to you.

Then the justified Publican is supposedly justified — according to MacArthur — because he had been disobedient but now has faith, and hence is justified despite disobedience.

Therefore, MacArthur in the next two quotes wants us to believe (at least here) that faith alone is what Jesus is implying justified the Publican. First, MacArthur says:

That parable surely shocked Jesus’ listeners! They “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (v. 9) — the very definition of self-righteousness. Their theological heroes were

12. MacArthur previously had taught repentance-from-sin (not merely a change in one’s mind) is a key to salvation and compatible with faith alone. (John MacArthur, The Gospel According to Jesus (Zondervan: 1994) at 33.) Thus, it is likely here that MacArthur believes the Publican’s repentance is what justifies. However, in MacArthur’s unique worldview, he feels free to define repentance-from-sin as faith. Most evangelicals would disagree. They claim repentance-from-sin is a work. (See my prior book, Jesus’ Words Only (2007) at 399 fn. 23.)
the Pharisees, who held to the most rigid legalistic standards. They fasted, made a great show of praying and giving alms, and even went further in applying the ceremonial laws than Moses had actually prescribed.

Let’s stop there. MacArthur is saying that the Pharisees held to the “most rigid legalistic standards,” and they did not merely keep the Law perfectly, but “exceeded” the Law to the fullest extent possible. MacArthur is building a case that the Pharisees’ error was they thought their perfect obedience to the Law would justify them. MacArthur is never implying they were wrong that they had indeed perfectly obeyed the Law. Jesus is therefore supposedly telling us someone who perfectly obeys the Law is unjustified.

Incidentally, if Jesus indeed taught that as true, and I repeat, then Jesus would contradict Deuteronomy 6:25. Jesus would become a false prophet by virtue of Deuteronomy 13:1-5. That passage says any prophet who seduces you from following the Law’s teachings is a false prophet.

But Jesus is not teaching this — not even remotely. In the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, the contrast is between someone who broke the Law and confessed as opposed to someone who focused on the few good things they did like tithing, and proclaimed themselves righteous, but would not otherwise repent.

However, MacArthur — after he has firmly established the beach-head of his false premise — brings home his point. Jesus supposedly teaches justification by faith alone:

Now He [Jesus]... astounds His listeners with a parable that seems to place a detestable tax-gatherer in a better position spiritually than a praying Pharisee.

Jesus’ point is clear. He was teaching that justification is by faith alone. All the theology of

13.For further discussion on this, see page 33.
justification is there. But without delving into abstract theology, Jesus clearly painted the picture for us with a parable.

There is now a second slight of hand in the above quote. MacArthur injected one more false premise. MacArthur claims that the contrast Jesus was making was between a “detestable tax gather” and the spiritually flawless and obedient Pharisee.

Describing the publican and Pharisee in that way represents a slight of hand. It makes one think obedience does not justify and the disobedient are justified by faith alone.

Yet, in truth, the publican turned to obedience by his repentance while the Pharisee was a sinner following Oral law and the lesser Written law. The Pharisee had a shallow obedience, which thereby made the Pharisee a sinner. The Pharisee was smug in his self-made and shallow righteousness.

What should we conclude from MacArthur’s analysis?

It’s rather simple. MacArthur has set up a false contrast, misrepresenting both figures in the parable. MacArthur has described the Publican too narrowly — omitting his repentance activity. MacArthur also has falsely depicted the Pharisees as perfectly law-abiding people despite Jesus’
many contrary lessons about the Pharisees. This false re-construction of Jesus’ parable by MacArthur is clearly visible in Table 3 below.

**TABLE 3. Justification: Jesus’ Contrasts v. MacArthur Contrasts.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repentance Justifies (Jesus)</th>
<th>Faith Alone Justifies (MacArthur)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publican “beat his breast and not look up to heaven, praying, ‘Be Merciful to Me a sinner.’”</td>
<td>Publican “detestable tax-collector.” MacArthur does not factor into the analysis the repentance-from-sin characteristic of the publican.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharisee ‘pays his tithe’, ‘fasts twice a week,’ and ‘thanks God not an adulterer etc. like that Publican over there’</td>
<td>Pharisee kept Law flawlessly and even exceeded to admirable lengths.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

In this parable, Jesus is contrasting a *sinner who repents* — a notorious publican/tax-collector — with a Pharisee who is notorious for *thinking* wrongly that he is fully obedient to the Law who, in fact, has a *shallow* notion of the Law and hence disregards most of the Law. Jesus elsewhere clearly tells us the Pharisees negate the true Law in favor of their oral traditions. (Matt. 15:6.) They teach the less weighty matter of the Law — tithing — to the neglect of the weightier matters of the Law. (Matt. 23:23.)

Hence, contrary to what MacArthur implies, the Publican is not simply a “detestable tax-gather.” Jesus is not declaring justified the tax-gather on the mere fact he is detestable. Nor is Jesus declaring the Pharisee unjustified because the Pharisee is supposedly perfectly obedient but lacks the alleged ‘faith’ of the Publican.

Instead, Jesus is *squarely differentiating* the two based upon repentance from sin. This differentiation is resisted solely by the Cheap Grace Gospel because it means
Jesus taught justification by repentance from sin — when almost all Cheap Grace Gospel adherents would say such repentance is works-righteousness. Hence, they adamantly twist Jesus’ doctrine to conform to faith-alone doctrine.

However, the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee proves justification is by repentance from sin. It is not by faith alone. Jesus refutes that commonly heard notion.

There is no imputed righteousness from Christ absent your own personal repentance and obedience. The famous Charles Finney agrees.

As Charles Finney — the renown revivalist — explains below, when God says that personal repentance from sin (and consequent obedience) is what justifies, this excludes using Jesus’ atonement to justify you by imputed righteousness from faith alone. Jesus simply provided an obedience unto death that provides atonement, but atonement never imputes justification to an unrepentant sinner, just as we proved in the prior chapter.14 Thus, Charles G. Finney wrote in his sermon Justification by Faith (1837) as follows:

Under the gospel, sinners are not justified by having the obedience of Jesus Christ set down to their account, as if he had obeyed the law for them, or in their stead. It is not an uncommon mistake to suppose that when sinners are justified under the gospel they are accounted righteous in the eye of the law, by having the obedience or righteousness of Christ imputed to them....[T]his idea is absurd and impossible, for this reason, that Jesus Christ was bound to obey the law for himself, and could no more perform works of supererogation, or obey on our account, than any body else. Was it not his duty to love the Lord his God, with all his heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love his neighbor as himself?

14. See page 4 supra.
Certainly; and if he had not done so, it would have been sin. The only work of supererogation he could perform was to submit to sufferings that were not deserved. This is called his obedience unto death, and this is set down to our account. But if his obedience of the law is set down to our account, why are we called on to repent and obey the law ourselves? Does God exact double service, yes, triple service, first to have the law obeyed by the surety for us, then that he must suffer the penalty for us, and then that we must repent and obey ourselves? No such thing is demanded. It is not required that the obedience of another should be imputed to us. All we owe is perpetual obedience to the law of benevolence. And for this there can be no substitute. If we fail of this we must endure the penalty....

Thus, Finney explains the idea of Christ’s imputed righteousness to us personally could never be implied from atonement alone. Jesus obeyed unto death to provide atonement, but that is its limit. It is no substitute for your personal obedience. If it could be, why does Jesus teach justification instead is by repentance-from-sin in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee? Finney says God would be requiring supposedly what Jesus already provides.

Hence, it must be justification depends on your personal repentance-from-sin and obedience, and on no substitute for you. Atonement makes this possible, but it does not replace the personal duty you have to make this change.

So who will you trust in telling you the terms of your justification? The doctrine spoon-fed to you about faith alone and Christ’s supposed imputed righteousness for you? Or will you follow Jesus’ words in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican that teaches justification by repentance from sin?