

A Key Element of Prayer

Scripture

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise [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, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14 NKJV)

Commentary

God is not impressed with our morality. Yes we must practice holiness for without it no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14), but we don't earn our standing by good works. If we stand, we stand because of the blood of Christ and His righteousness for all our works are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6).

Neither should we believe that God will answer our prayers because we think we are better than other people. In fact, this attitude is almost guaranteed to get no response from the Lord.

I know the passage above speaks to salvation, but let's take this principle and apply it to our lives. The Pharisee's problem is stated in the first verse, "He spoke to some who trusted in themselves. . . ." When we question God's responses to our prayers, we are trusting in our own judgment. This is a lack of humility on our part which is a real problem when seeking answers to prayer. Remember God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).

Therefore, be sure you always practice thankfulness when you pray. That is a good way to stay humble and dependent. Now back to the context to finish.

Did you get your most important prayer right? When you came to God, did you come as that Pharisee or like the tax collector? The key element is humility. Did you humble yourself and cry out to God for mercy? That is the first step! Make sure you get it right.