

UNLEASH GOD'S POWER: PRAY WITH HUMILITY

FEBRUARY 4, 2024

WORSHIP

All Because (Free), Everlasting
God, Amazing Grace / My
Chains are Gone, More like
Jesus

WELCOME

When was the last time you
encountered a humble person?
How did their humility affect
you?

WORD

LUKE 18:9-14

⁹ And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ 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. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ 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 [f]merciful to me, the sinner!’ ¹⁴ 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.”

One of the greatest expressions of God's power that we don't easily recognize, is His grace. “Grace is the unmerited favor of God that saves us and gives us the desire and the power to do His will” (Dr. Peter Tan-chi). God's power expressed through His grace not only saves us from sin, it transforms us and enables us to do His will. Paul instructed believers in Christ to “work out” (not “work for”) our salvation (**Philippians 2:12-13**). It means to “show the conclusion decisively”, prove that we are true followers of Jesus by living out the inner transformation He made in us, with a proper view of God. When we pray, we should humble ourselves before our Heavenly Father. What can we learn from the parable that Jesus taught in **Luke 18:9-14**, and what does it have to do with praying with humility?

I. THE POISON OF PRIDE (vv. 9-12)

Pride is like poison that's slowly killing us even if we don't realize it. Jesus directed the parable to “some people who trusted in themselves” to be righteous before God and viewed others with contempt. Even true followers of Jesus can treat others this way; when we think that we're theologically superior to other Christians, refuse to ask for forgiveness, etc.

Jesus' audience probably already had formed their conclusion about the parable. People viewed the Pharisees as religious leaders, strict in knowing and following the Law, highly respected. If anyone knows prayer, it must be the Pharisee! Tax collectors worked for the Romans, collected more taxes than required, and traitors to fellow Jews. What would a tax collector know about prayer? The Pharisee “stood and was praying to himself...” implying that he was standing in a confident way. He probably didn't realize that he was praying to himself! God wasn't listening to him. His prayer was full of himself. He took pride that he wasn't like that “tax collector”.

It's pride when we pray mechanically and mindlessly, as if prayer were a chore, to earn points with God. When we expect answers because of the good things we've done, or complain about others' offenses without examining or confessing our own (discontentment, irritability, anger, etc.). It's also pride when we pray with wrong, selfish motives (**James 4:1-3**). The first impact of pride is a lack of prayer (**James 4:2**); we rely on our connections, position, etc. and only when they don't work do we turn to God.

There is an epidemic of loneliness today, people are disconnected from personal, meaningful relationships. Perhaps you pray for a spouse, someone who will “complete” you, take away the loneliness (selfish motive). When we have Jesus, we are complete; we may feel lonely but we will never be alone.

Isaiah 14:12-14 talks about the king of Babylon, but also is a reference to Satan who wanted to be like God. Eve was tempted the same way, to be like God. Until today, that's the sin problem we have ---- we want to be our own God. We are most like Jesus when we are humble, but we are most like Satan when we are proud. We need to pray with humility; come into God's Presence without your ego!

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II. THE POSTURE OF HUMILITY (v. 13)

What is genuine humility in God's eyes? We see an unexpected twist in the parable the tax collector was standing away from the others but for a different reason than the Pharisee (who didn't want to be with "sinners") (**Luke 18:13**). He was saying that he was at fault, the problem is my heart, so "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!". "Merciful" (hilaskomai) here means to "make propitiation for", to "satisfy divine wrath on sin". Only Jesus, the unblemished, perfect sacrifice for our sins can do that (**1 John 4:10**). The power of God's wrath against sin was heaped upon Jesus as He died on the cross. The tax collector knew that he was helpless, hopeless against sin and prayed with humility for God's mercy.

A woman reached out to touch Jesus' clothes believing she will be healed showed humility (**Mark 5:25-28, 33-34**). She did not even ask for Jesus to look at her or say anything to her but believed He was her only hope. Her prayer was a cry from the heart. Jesus said her faith has made her well ("soto"), root word for "soter", and soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). Jesus did not only heal her from physical disease, but also from her spiritual disease, she was forgiven! Praying with humility admits our total dependence on God. It's not only people in hopeless or lowly situations who can pray with humility. King Solomon asked God's help to rule His people as he admitted he can't do it on his own, he was lost without God (**1 Kings 3:7-13**) We need to pray with humility whatever our situation and our status in life may be. Pray for wisdom even in the most seemingly mundane situations.

III. THE POWER OF GRACE (v.14)

God is opposed to the proud--you don't want God to oppose you--it's scary (**James 4:6, 10**)! Let us humble ourselves before the Lord voluntarily, that He wouldn't have to humble us by circumstance. God gives a greater grace to the humble. Jesus said that the tax collector was "justified" rather than the Pharisee. Justified means declared by God as "not guilty" based on the perfect righteousness of Christ (not on anything we've done) imputed through faith in Him. Apart from Jesus, our spiritual bank account is zero balance. Until we put our faith in Christ, we will never be acceptable to God. But when we put our trust in Jesus, His perfect righteousness is put into our pitiful zero spiritual bank account. By His grace, we become acceptable to God because now He sees Jesus in us. God loves you, and He can save you, just come humbly before Him and He will do an amazing thing in your life!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. Self-Check.

What symptoms of pride do you realize you have? Confess these to the Lord and to your small group.

2. Setting It Right.

In what specific ways can you improve in the area of humility--especially when it comes to prayer?

3. Living It Out.

Who do you know that needs to hear about the grace of God, that has the power to save and transform? How and when will you tell them?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

Pray for people you know in all situations and status who do not yet recognize their need to humble themselves before God, or for their need of a Savior. Be an example of someone who recognizes their own need for God's forgiveness through Christ, serve others in humility and share the gospel of grace to them.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives.

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of public servants; repentance and salvation for government leaders and citizens for a Christ-centered Philippines.
- God's help and comfort, salvation for Israel, wisdom for their leaders in government, military and their soldiers as they defend themselves against terrorists' attacks. PRAISE GOD for the release of hostages so far! Continue to pray for the release of the remaining ones.
- War in Ukraine to end, loss of lives prevented; conflict in African, East Asian and Middle East countries to stop. Pray for Christians from different countries who have been persecuted, attacked and killed in recent weeks.

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples.
- Elders, pastors, deacons, and families (holy, humble, harmonious, happy, heart-working).
- Ministries and churches expansion worldwide.

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God.
- Righteous living.
- Salvation of family and friends.

MEMORY VERSE

JAMES 4:6,10

⁶ But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.