



# THE LORD'S FLOCK GROWTH DIGEST

## PASTORAL GROWTH SERIES

### **The Passion of the Amazing Servant (Part 3)**

#### **The Prayer God Hears**

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The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector was addressed to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. There were two men who went to the temple to pray but they had different angles of prayer (Lk 18:9-14). We have both of these men in all of us. Do we pray like the Pharisee - with a sense of obligation, pride in our accomplishments? Or, do we pray like the Tax Collector - with humility, asking for mercy for our sins? Which prayer does our Lord favor? Indeed, the Lord looks at our hearts, our inner motives when we pray.

#### **1. The Immediate Audience: ALL OF US**

- 1.1 There was a congregation who were also praying around them. There was a religious party called the Pharisees, who considered themselves so good, had a 'holier-than-thou' attitude, and looked down on others.
- 1.2 This spirit of "pharisaism" is still with us today. We have a tendency to exalt ourselves which leads us to the sin of self-worship.

#### **2. Characters: The Pharisee & The Tax Collector**

##### **2.1 The Pharisee**

- He appeared to be "prayerful", went through the motions of prayer, but was merely boasting about his religious attainment. "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).
- He had a conceited heart. "Do nothing with your vainglory, rather, humbly regard others a more important than yourselves" (Phil.2:3). "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Jas.4:6).
- There are Christians today who are earnest in their relationship with Jesus, and who are

- seemingly committed, until their schedules are disturbed, or their wallets are touched.

##### **2.2 The Tax Collector**

- He was a tough fellow who had turned against his own people and demanded taxes. But, when he prayed at the temple, he stood at a distance and he asked for mercy as a sinner. Jesus did not overlook this man's past, but He looked at him better because he humbled himself. Hence, He reminds us to hate the sin, not the sinner.
- Sometimes, our judgement can be so overwhelming when we condemn others or when we compare our spiritual growth to theirs.

##### **3. The Prayers of These Men**

- 3.1 Jesus had a problem with the Pharisee. He was just keeping his monologue, and raising himself (Mt 6:5-13). "Be careful not to practice your righteousness" (Mt 6:1-4).
- 3.2 The Tax Collector's prayer was God-centered: he made a confession, repented, and was willing to forsake his sinful lifestyle.
- 3.3 Part of our renewal should be generosity without boasting of it. It is the Holy Spirit who is going to teach us to pray (Jn 14:26).

##### **CONCLUSION**

- God listens to the prayer of the humble. The prayer that he hears is a complete earnestness of our unworthiness, and a recognition that everything is from the grace of God.

##### **Reflection:**

Can you resist the temptation to exult yourself?

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