

09242023 What one line prayer describes a righteous person?

' God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

What is the worst kind of confidence to have? Self Righteous confidence! What is a self righteous person? a self-righteous person thinks they know right from wrong all the time...and the have great self confidence that they know and choose right all the time! What self deception....

NLT [Jeremiah 17:9](#) "The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? We don't!

The Greatest enemy of human souls is the self righteous spirit which deceives them into believing their own perceptions are the measuring stick of Holiness Or even wholeness

Self righteousness is the trait of the self deceived... spiritually relationally, and of self. **Then and now Jesus has the most problems with Prideful self righteous people.. Listen what he says to the religious leaders:**

NLT 23:5 "Everything they do is for show. On their arms they wear extra wide prayer boxes with Scripture verses inside, and they wear robes with extra long tassels. ⁶ And they love to sit at the head table at banquets and in the seats of honor in the synagogues. ⁷ They love to receive respectful greetings as they walk in the marketplaces, and to be called 'Rabbi.

- **Jesus is telling this about the religious leaders...only the people who don't know you personally respect you...your show is convincing!!but I know you and I have no respect for you**

NLT Matt 23:25 "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence!

Here is a truth worth digesting...When people who don't know you personally, respect you the most, and those who do know you personally respect you the least ... You are self Righteous...putting on a show! And nobody knows you as well as Jesus!

- **This is the teaching Jesus gives those religious leaders who have been following him...who have a terribly misplaced confidence in themselves... there is much to learn here...**

Here is the teaching : *NLT LK 18:10* “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

- **Two Jewish men with two different professions. One highly respected one highly despised... went to the temple to pray.**
- **The good news Both realized their need to take themselves before God in prayer....that is where the good news ends for one of them**

******The Pharisee, we're told, “stood up by himself” Got to give him some credit...he had a flair for the dramatic! He stood with great self-confidence, and prayed loudly, proudly AND WITH authority. And prayed the theme song of the self righteous....I am not like other people!!**

- **He viewed himself as not like other people...therefore He is critical and judgmental of them.**
- Self righteous people... label people or behaviors without considering the context or even caring about the circumstances of that person' life.

- They possess a self righteous belief that a certain event would never happen to them, or by some chance it did happen to them they would handle the situation “much better.” Because they truly feel this is the case, they make no effort to understand or feel the other person’s distress leading to their choices
- **When someone little desire to understanding other people’s motivations, choices, traumas, adversities, leading them to where they are they feel no need to act in helpful ways.**
- **This inability to connect with others make it very difficult for Self Righteous maintain relationships...Because they lack the ability to make meaningful bonds. Sometimes, they’re not even aware this is happening.**
- ***Then he prays the list reminding God and everyone else of his accomplishments making him not like others..... I am not a cheater, sinner, adulterer. I’m certainly not a tax collector! 12 I fast twice a week, (one more than required) and I give you a tenth of my income.***
- He thanked God, for his incredible ability to not sin...
- Therefore no need to ask God for help just thank God for giving him the ability, to do it himself ...**He needs to change nothing, nor has anything to be forgiven for.. and his accurate observation of the faults of others... especially this tax collector.**
- **His confidence in his ability to know God correctly, see the way God sees correctly, judge himself correctly, live life correctly, judge others correctly, was a terribly misplaced confidence...for he is wrong on all accounts...**
- **The achilles heal of the narcissistic self righteous is their inability perhaps incapability to self reflect honestly, and their unwillingness to receive critique from others...**

So let me ask you a couple questions? Is this an example of prayer that Christ taught? To pray and give thanks for all the things we are not? to pray comparing ourselves to others? to pray with gusto that how better we are than others? then to pray listing all the things we do better than others?

Does this sound like the prayer of someone who is trying to bring people to God? Does this prayer sound like a prayer interceding for God to help others?

Is the prayer of zero empathy sprinkled with disgust for those who who can't stop sinning and struggle mightily pleasing to God?

- **The answers are so obvious as to be ludicrous ...but that is the deception of the self righteous...everyone sees who they are but themselves themselves...**
- This is can be a danger for religious Christians as well. a gap can develop in our minds: “good” (us)... “bad” (them)

To Understand the root of peoples problems we have to go to the root of the pain...Jesus is the master at this...

- The self Righteous focus on actions which can be seen... God focus's on the heart which can't be seen..the seay of our soul...our motivations, the place of our wounds...see....our hearts set apart for the Lord...
- ***To hunger for righteousness takes one to the next level...to get involved in the pain of others... to act toward alleviating the pain...is to be moved by Pain...is a God thing...***

*NLT Samuel 16:7 But **the** LORD said to Samuel, “Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. **The** LORD doesn't see things **the** way you see **them**. People judge by outward appearance, but **the** LORD looks at **the** heart.”*

NLT ISA 42:3 He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged...

*****This is exemplified as Jesus describes the countenance of the Tax collector prying....**

NLT LK 18:13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.'

- **He prayed the most powerful prayer in Scripture *God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.***
- His sin, his falling short of God's commands...and his inability to overcome these sins agonized him so much he literally beat himself up the things he was a sinner!
- **Two things about this man... 1) His courage ... So He sought out God at the Temple in the midst of his failure...a lesson for all of us...**
- **He went to the Temple...**even though he knew he would be despised because of his profession especially by **the religious leaders and there would be many of them for after all it was the Temple...** that is incredible courage, even though being a tax collector was not even a sin unless you cheated people!
- **2) He came with great humility ... he kept himself at a distance, would not even look up....he tried and failed over and over...**
- **Humility is the opposite of Self Righteousness...for Humility is self honesty about one's flaws and strengths** they know they are more righteous or sin less in some areas of their life than others and less righteous or sin more in areas of their life than others... so they don't compare themselves to others but judge themselves

according to God's standards.

- **Therefore They absolutely recognize they need God's mercy as much as anyone else...perhaps more!**
- **What was he going to the temple for...to pray to God who sits on the Mercy Seat!!!. That he may seek His mercy!**
- **So this tax collector.. does not look up...or look out ...he is only concerned about his condition! And Completely submitted to the One on the Mercy Seat...for his only hope was mercy!**
- **Mercy is an act of undeserved kindness, empathy, or favor." Mercy is a characteristic of the One True God. Though God does not sin...he has empathy or mercy toward us...**

Mercy encompasses three things: 1) **God has cognitive understanding of our condition**, he knows why we are in our condition... He thoroughly understand it 2) **God has emotional understanding of our condition ...** He *feels* our emotions in our condition and about our condition...he has emotions about them also 3) **God has Compassionate empathy about our condition...he is moved to do something to help**

And that is where the Old (first) Testament mercy seat comes in such importance...The mercy seat in the Old Testament was God's presence among his people,

ESV Exodus 25:8 "Have the people of Israel build me a holy sanctuary so I can live among them.

- God goes on to Give Moses the instruction on how to build his home among them...which would later be mimicked in the temple in Jerusalem**In verse 17 is where we get to the Mercy Seat on The Ark of the Covenant...the place where God sits...**

ESV Ex 25:17 “You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold. Two cubits and a half shall be its length, and a cubit and a half its breadth. ¹⁸ And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work shall you make them, on the two ends of the mercy seat. ¹⁹ Make one cherub on the one end, and one cherub on the other end. Of one piece with the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim on its two ends

²² There I will meet with you, and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are on the ark of the testimony, I will speak with you about all that I will give you in commandment for the people of Israel.

- The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the most sacred chamber of the Tabernacle and later the Temple, called the Holy of Holies.
- The High Priest was the only person permitted to enter, once a year. On Yom Kippur, he would intercede for the sins of the people. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for the mercy seat is “kaporet”, which has the same root as “kippur”. Which means atonement. Or cover
- On the Day of Atonement, there were a series of sacrifices made. Of these, one was a bull for the sin of the high priest and a second was a goat for the sin of the people. [Leviticus 16:11-17](#) describes the process
- The high priest would then sprinkle blood on the mercy seat as well as in front of it. [And in that way, he made atonement, \(their sin would be covered\) for his own sin and the sin of the people. Then they would they would be](#) cleansed, forgiven, receive mercy, and be reconciled to God.

**And that is exactly what Jesus said was given to this sinner...Mercy!
He was made right with God**

NLT Luke 18: 14 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

- **For those to whom Christ told this parable, we can imagine the shock at the sudden reversal; the audible stir of the audience.**
- **That the two prayers and the two men who offered them were so totally opposite, so too was the outcome. The sinner justified for he sought mercy and received it He was made right with God**
- **the Pharisee needed no mercy and sought no mercy ...so he left in the sin of self-righteous pride he came into the temple with....**

But what they did not comprehend ...but we do is that Jesus would bring a far greater Mercy!

NLT Hebrews 10:1 The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship.

⁴ For it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. ⁵ That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. ⁶ You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin.

¹⁰ For God’s will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. The MERCY SEAT

19 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.*

NLT Hebrews 4:14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours **understands our weaknesses**, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

- **Because of Jesus empathy toward us...we can come to him! Why because where Empathy is give Shame struggles to existtherefore we can come boldly to Jesus** ¹⁶ *So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. **There we will receive his mercy**, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.*

**His cross is the mercy seat he sits upon...where we receive mercy!
He did this because of his love for us!**

NLT John 3:16 “For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save (Heal) the world through him.

End

There were other sacrifices made over the course of a year, including the sin and guilt offerings,— it was payment of a penalty. But only the sacrifices on the Day of Atonement actually made atonement for sin

end

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- ¹⁹ And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. ²⁰ By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.
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- **His cross is the mercy seat he sits upon...where we receive mercy!**
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- End

end

It has been stated that the atonement is the axis on which all other doctrines revolve. This is because without what Christ did on the cross, there would be no need for any other doctrine.

And From that seat ...God would show mercy to the people give grace to help themBut we have something much better...

- the God who sits on the mercy seat!
- So He sought out God at the Temple in the midst of his failure...a lesson for all of us...
-
- A Humble person regards themselves as a fellow human being in need of help...so ho are they to judge the worthiness or lack there of about others...

Therefore they have empathy toward others...which means they are emotionally connected to the plight of others.....for they have their own plight also.

James sums it up well!

NLTJames 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

- **The result....**

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...He sought out God at the Temple in the midst of his failure...he would not be left alone but would be helped...I will never leave you nor forsake you... You cannot be blessed when you are unaware of the evil in your life. On the other hand, when you are aware of it - and feel grief on account of it - not only can you begin to appreciate His mercy in that He continues to love you and care for you in spite of these evils, you also put yourself in the position of being willing to receive His help.

And they would have a through understanding of the mercy seat in the temple...and its origin... so we need to look at that ...to understand the teaching...

When the people who really know you respect you, as much or more than those who don't know you you are a humble person!

God's mercy is reflected in the cross of Christ, which is a direct reflection of His love for us. Moved by love he gave His life for the condemned that we may live.

Mercy is an extension of and expression of love, "an act of kindness, compassion, or favor." Mercy is a characteristic of the One True God.

God's plan stems from His merciful love for His people. Knowing there was nothing we could do to earn our way into His presence, He made a way through the [crucifixion](#) of Christ. Defeating death, Jesus opened up access to God for us.

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. [Hebrews 4:16](#)

NLT 1 Peter 3:8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters.^[a] Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.

The mercy seat was the place of transference of sin for forgiveness, of reconciliation between God and His people. Although both relate to God's unlimited goodness, mercy and grace describe different aspects of just how loving and compassionate He is.

First off, let's recognize these words in Hebrew. Mercy is pronounced *rachamim*, which is very closely linked to compassion. Meanwhile Hebrew word for grace, which is *hesed*, sometimes gets translated into favor.

Already these synonyms clarify a lot. While mercy points to a loving forgiveness of wrongdoing, grace goes a step further. It is 'unmerited favor', as many are quick to point out. Which means, we experience the wondrous goodness of God that we absolutely do not deserve.

The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the most sacred chamber of the Temple, called the Holy of Holies. The High Priest was the only person permitted to enter, and only once a year. On [Yom Kippur](#), he would intercede for the sins of the people. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word for the mercy seat is "kaporet", which has the same root as "kippur". Which means atonement.

Are Mercy and Grace... a Person?

The one who became our atonement is Jesus – He became our covering and our shield.

Romans 3:25 says that Jesus is *“our mercy seat because of His death on the cross. We come to Him for mercy, for God has made a provision for us to be forgiven by faith in the sacred blood of Jesus.”*

How beautiful it is to contemplate on the fact that Jesus’ very blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, the throne of grace. He is making intercession for our sins before God! His flawless sacrifice made it possible for God’s presence to be in our midst.

Through the blood of the Messiah, God does not see our sins when He looks upon us. Jesus’ covering puts us in right standing before God, once and for all.

Heb 4:14 So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. ¹⁵ This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Joseph Prince puts it this way: *“As long as the blood was there on the mercy seat, He [God] saw only the blood and accepted the people.”*

Mercy and grace are the “true north,” so to speak, of God’s character. Both convey His heart towards His children in a way that wrath, though warranted, does not. God actually delights in showing mercy and grace, and He does so abundantly.

(Psalm 86:5 NLT) ⁵ O Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unending love for all who ask for your help.

⁶ Listen closely to my prayer, O LORD; hear my urgent cry.

(Ephesians 2:4-5 NLT) ⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)

(Titus 3:5 NLT) ⁴ But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

- **For we are all like other people...for we are all fallible human beings...and God can forgive and change people**

end

NLT James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up in honor.

end

- **He was wrong on all counts...**
As the rest of the story tells us

The tax collector, we're told, "wouldn't even look up." Body language tell a lot about the heart!

- One stood with great self confidence, the other, stood and cowered in a corner.

- the “tell” of a self righteous person
- He believed his perspective was the same as God’s perspective about himself and others...and he thanked God for thathe was wrong on both counts

Is this an example of prayer that Christ taught? To pray and give thanks for all the things we are not, comparing ourselves with others? That just because we are not obvious wrongdoers, we are somehow better than everyone else?

Does this sound like the prayer of someone who is meant to further the good of humanity? Does it sound like someone that is in the world, yet, not of the world?

This was the distinct attitude in prayer of someone who may have followed their calling with the greatest of intentions, yet, has become too caught up in their own righteousness.

He has withdrawn from the very world in which they expected they would make a difference; and worse, they’ve come to believe that the world is not good enough for them.

They have become like the doctor that looks with disdain at those who come to them for help; or the paramedic that looks on the injured patient as one that should have known better.

- This is also a big danger for established Christians. •• As we mature in our walk with the Lord, a gap can develop in our minds: “good” (us)... “bad” (them).

- **That was the mistake of the fasting tither, who said, “I thank you that I am not like other men.” For we are all like other men...for we are all fallible human beings...**

- **...he was wrong on all counts.....**

Know this...Jesus associates with sinners and outcasts, but he never preaches a message of "I accept you as you are – don't ever change." the fact that **Jesus tells his hearers to "repent" means that there is something wrong with them**, and that he does not hesitate to tell them that there is something wrong with them.

- Rather, he comes to them with a message that says, "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you" (John 5:14), and "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11).
- But Christ contrasts the prayer of the tax collector as Luke records: Luke 18:13. “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 When we walk with God, you walk with confidence in his sustaining love, and concern for your life...and you walk with a limp knowing full well your utter dependence on his grace to overcome your weaknesses and your continual need to lean on him for direction in life.

It doesn't make sense to confidently walk with a limp...but when you walk with God that is exactly how you ought to appear...a mix of humility and confidence, humble because we are greatly forgiven and confident because we are lavishly loved.

You learn to confidently walk with a limp... (Demonstrate...shoulders back and limp...)

I pray that we would learn to walk confidently but with a limp, confident in our Lord's sustaining love, and concern for your life...and in standing for him...and it would be with a limp humbly knowing full well your utter dependence on his grace to overcome your weaknesses and your continual need to lean on him for direction in life.

- For God knows how to finish a walk with him...in spite of our limping...walking with your shoulders up in confidence...Our God will complete all that he has started...

When we glimpse anew what the Bible says about God's work in us and His provision for us we can step into life's challenges with renewed confidence.

(Demonstrate...shoulders back and limp...)

LK 6:20 **Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.**

MT 11:28 **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."**

- **The only prerequisite for entering His Kingdom is a condition of weariness and burden leading one to come to Jesus...**
- ***Knowledge, education, possession power prestige or the lack thereof are not qualifiers nor disqualifiers...***
- **Acknowledgement of need is the qualifier....end**

- it is speaking of a personal condition.... **A conscious recognition of an inner condition**...Bless are those ...it is advantageous to those who acknowledge...they are in deep need...
- They are in a real sense losers...or perhaps lost..
- And will admit it...for they are in the proper mental and spiritual state to be found....
- The first law of his kingdom...is that you must recognize your poverty and this kingdoms poverty..
- **They are blessed, of course, not because they are poor and hungry and persecuted. No. They are blessed despite the fact that they are poor and meek and persecuted. But they are poor and meek and persecuted because they are disciples.**
- **They are “blessed” not because they’re “poor”; but because, even though they’re “poor”, they are loved.**
- **Matthew an eye witness says it this way in a little different order:**

MT 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- You see when we experience the lack of Righteousness...justice in us and the world we begin to hunger for it...this is what happens to a follower of Christ..
- Many of us interpret Jesus blessing upon those ‘who hunger and thirst for righteousness’, as a particular benediction for those of us who zealously seek ‘personal pioussness’.
- However, the word that we translate as ‘righteousness’, which Jesus uses in this blessing, indicates *he is commending those followers of his who fervently seek ‘social justice’ in this world, rather than ‘personal pioussness’ that is not of this world.*
- *Now we line up with the cause of Christ..*

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- This Pharisee considered himself righteous... he thought he was living in harmony with God and actually did not need God's help...he was amazingly holy by his own efforts!
 - The Pharisee prayed with great confidence in his ability to be righteous, and thanked God, for this great ability! And because of this greatness in his own strength and knowledge, there is no need to ask God for help or forgiveness for any sins, as he does all the do's and none of the don't's.... *Confident of their own righteousness*” — a terribly misplaced confidence
 - And he is zero empathy and is disgusted with those who are so weak they can't stop sinning and struggle mightily... How pathetic!
 - “*Confident of their own righteousness*” — a terribly misplaced confidence
- **We are warned about being both righteous *and* living with the belief that all others are unworthy. It's an easy trap to fall into and in this we have the sudden reversal.**

- **The misfortunes that befell the “some” that Jesus was speaking to, is what happened to the Pharisee as he prayed.**

Scripture sums up good religion this way...

JAS 1:26 ²⁶ If you claim to be **religious** but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your **religion** is worthless. ²⁷ Pure and genuine **religion** in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their **distress** and refusing to let the world **corrupt** you.

- **That our talk line up with our walk...verse 26**
- **Help those who live in distress (anguish of body and mind...living in a constant state of danger) ... (widows and orphans) verse 27**
- **Conformed to the world which misshapes us power, position, possessions....this pride pollutes people and this Pharisee was full of it**

Than our message of the saving power of Jesus Christ will have great effect...

You are on a Mission from God and the world is our overall objective, and your environment is your assignment...

The self Righteous focus on actions which can be seen... God focus's on the heart which can't be seen..the seay of our soul...our motivations, the place of our wounds...see....our hearts set apart for the Lord...

To hunger for righteousness takes one to the next level...to get involved in the pain of others... to act toward alleviating the pain...is to be moved by Pain...is a God thing...

NLT ISA 42:3 He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. He will bring justice to all who have been wronged. ⁴ He will not falter or lose heart until justice prevails throughout the earth. Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction.”

*A **bruised** reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ^{ISA 42:4} he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."*

...he is talking primarily to those who have already called and made a decision to follow him...it is not a salvation message but a kingdom message.

Luke 6:21...Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

- *one must be moved by pain to mourn whether our own or others.....*
- *it is a huge part of becoming whole..*
- *and mourning requires being in touch with feelings...it is a feeling thing...*
- *to feel what someone else feels is the door opener to comforting them...*
- *and comforting one in pain restores the ability to laugh*
- *bringing laughter...forlaughter is a healing thing...*
- This is the heart of God... and his people will have it also...to **feel** for others...
- To not feel is one of the tragic losses we suffer in this world due to the pain of brokenness and victimization...
- It is what a child of God is restored too...Feeling again
 - This is pleasing to God...and is a characteristic of God

As God's people, we are called to love the world as God does. And given the state of the world, all those who love the world as God does, will 'mourn' over the state of the world as God does.

- **It reminds us of another parable, in which Christ tells us that before we can help someone get a speck of dirt from their eye, we need to deal with the plank in our own.**

- Yet as we read his prayer, we can't argue with the Pharisee - he was doing all the right things. Living by the law, fasting not only once a week as was required, but twice.

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NLT LK 18: One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.

- Even before we hear the parable, the gospel writer fills us in on Jesus' purpose in telling this story.
 - **Two things he said to do...1). always pray and 2) to never give up**
 - **Whenever Jesus tells us something to do ...he says that because we will be tempted to not do those things...**

Jesus wants us to pray always. ...which implies we will be tempted to quit praying ... **“always” refers to in “all circumstances— Why? prayer connects the natural to the spiritual... it keeps us tethered to the eternal...which keeps the temporal in perspective... pray when we have good and bad days, peaceful and troubled moments”** pray when I worry, when things happen that make me fearful, pray when I hear bad news or good news, pray in tragedy and triumph!

So **Why do people stop praying?** There are many reasons, such as **the apparent lack of results for their effort.**

- We stop praying because no answer has come and we get tired of waiting... what's the point**
- we stop praying because we are disappointed by God's answers or what he allows....when he says no....or allows the unimaginable sometimes we don't pray because we are doing wrong, and we don't want to hear from God....

3. Some stop praying about other things because some things were not answered the way you wanted!

- **The prayer that God honors is when you pray knowing you must abandon how you think it ought to be answered and you embrace that God will answer your prayer, in his time and in the way it will accomplish what he wants to accomplish in the subject you prayed about. You must choose trust regardless of the answer either positive or not! But keep praying!!**
- **And when you pray put full confidence in God, hearing your prayer and the absolute truth he will answer...then he gives an example of a prayer that is terribly misplaced...**

LK 18:9 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.'

“*Confident of their own righteousness*” — a terribly misplaced confidence.

- they were two very different men. The Pharisee, we’re told, “stood up.” The tax collector, we’re told, “wouldn’t even look up.”
- The one man was a pillar of his profession while the other was reviled *because* of his profession.
- One stood with confidence, the other, stood and cowered in a corner. The one prayed about himself, congratulating himself before God, for *all the things he wasn’t*. The other, agonized and literally beat himself up for *the one thing that he was*.
- This Pharisee thought he was righteous... he thought he was living in harmony with God
- We are warned about being both righteous *and* living with the belief that all others are unworthy. It’s an easy trap to fall into and in this we have the sudden reversal.
- The misfortunes that befell the “some” that Jesus was speaking to, is what happened to the Pharisee as he prayed.

- His prayer was about how good he is... and his the confidence of his position in life and his outlook on life...he did life right saw life right judged life right...he was wrong on all counts
- He believed his view was the same as God's view...regarding himself and his take on others...he was wrong on both counts

Is this an example of prayer that Christ taught? To pray and give thanks for all the things we are not, comparing ourselves with others?

- That just because we are not obvious wrongdoers, we are somehow better than everyone else?
- **Does this sound like the prayer of someone who is meant to further the good of humanity? Does it sound like someone that is in the world, yet, not of the world? This was the distinct attitude in prayer of someone who may have followed their calling with the greatest of intentions, yet, has become too caught up in their own righteousness.**
- He has withdrawn from the very world in which they expected they would make a difference; and worse, they've come to believe that the world is not good enough for them.
- **They have become like the doctor that looks with disdain at those who come to them for help; or the paramedic that looks on the injured patient as one that should have known better.**
- **This is also a big danger for established Christians. •• As we mature in our walk with the Lord, a gap can develop in our minds: "good" (us)... "bad" (them).**

• That was the mistake of the fasting tither, who said, "I thank you that I am not like other men." For we are all like other men...for we are all human ...

Scripture sums up good religion this way...

JAS 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

- **That our talk line up with our walk...verse 26**
- **Help those who live in distress (anguish of body and mind...living in a constant state of danger) ... (widows and orphans) verse 27**
- **Conformed to the world or polluted or misshapen....dirtied by the things that pollute the world...pride pollutes people and this Pharisee was full of it**

Than our message of the saving power of Jesus Christ will have great effect...

You are on a Mission from God and the world is our overall objective, and your environment is your assignment...

others can see our attitudes and actions...which will point to what they can't see...our hearts set apart for the Lord...

To hunger for righteousness takes one to the next level...to get involved in the pain of others... to act toward alleviating the pain...is to be moved by Pain...is a God thing...

ISA 42:3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ISA 42:4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

...he is talking primarily to those who have already called and made a decision to follow him...it is not a salvation message but a kingdom message.

Luke 6:21...Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

- ***one must be moved by pain to mourn whether our own or others.....***
- ***it is a huge part of becoming whole..***
- ***and mourning requires being in touch with feelings...it is a feeling thing...***
- ***to feel what someone else feels is the door opener to comforting them...***
- ***and comforting one in pain restores the ability to laugh***
- ***bringing laughter... for laughter is a healing thing...***
- This is the heart of God... and his people will have it also...to **feel** for others...
- **To not feel** is one of the tragic losses we suffer in this world due to the pain of brokenness and victimization...
- **It is what a child of God is restored too...Feeling again for the pain of others**
 - This is pleasing to God...and is a characteristic of God

As God's people, we are called to love the world as God does. And given the state of the world, all those who love the world as God does, will 'mourn' over the state of the world as God does.

- It reminds us of another parable, in which Christ tells us that before we can help someone get a speck of dirt from their eye, we need to deal with the plank in our own.
- Yet as we read his prayer, we can't argue with the Pharisee - he was doing all the right things. Living by the law, fasting not only once a week as was required, but twice.
 - **these evils, you also put yourself in the position of being willing to receive His help.**

When we walk with God, you walk with confidence in his sustaining love, and concern for your life...and you walk with a limp knowing full well your utter dependence on his grace to overcome your weaknesses and your continual need to lean on him for direction in life. It doesn't make sense to confidently walk with a limp...but when you walk with God that is exactly how you ought to appear...a mix of humility and confidence, humble because we are greatly forgiven and confident because we are lavishly loved.

You learn to confidently walk with a limp... (Demonstrate...shoulders back and limp...)

I pray that we would learn to walk confidently but with a limp, confident in our Lord's sustaining love, and concern for your life...and in standing for him...and it would be with a limp humbly knowing full well your utter dependence on his grace to overcome your weaknesses and your continual need to lean on him for direction in life.

- For God knows how to finish a walk with him...in spite of our limping...walking with your shoulders up in confidence...Our God will complete all that he has started...

When we glimpse anew what the Bible says about God's work in us and His provision for us we can step into life's challenges with renewed confidence. (Demonstrate...shoulders back and limp...)

LK 6:20 **Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.**

MT 11:28 **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."**²⁹

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*³⁰ *For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

- The only prerequisite for entering His Kingdom is a condition of weariness and burden leading one to come to Jesus...
- Knowledge, education, possession power prestige or the lack there of are not qualifiers nor disqualifiers...
- Acknowledgement of need is the qualifier....end
- Rather it is speaking of a personal condition.... **A conscious recognition of an inner condition**...Bless are those ...it is advantageous to those who acknowledge...they are in deep need...
- They are in a real sense losers...or perhaps lost..
- And will admit it...for they are in the proper mental and spiritual state to be found....
- The first law of his kingdom...is that you must recognize your poverty and this kingdoms poverty..
- They are blessed, of course, not because they are poor and hungry and persecuted. No. They are blessed despite the fact that they are poor and meek and persecuted. But they are poor and meek and persecuted because they are disciples.
- They are "blessed" not because they're "poor"; but because, even though they're "poor", they are loved.
- **Matthew an eye witness says it this way in a little different order:**

MT 5:6 **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**

- You see when we experience the lack of Righteousness...justice in us and the world we begin to hunger for it...this is what happens to a follower of Christ..

- Many of us interpret Jesus blessing upon those ‘who hunger and thirst for righteousness’, as a particular benediction for those of us who zealously seek ‘personal pioussness’.
- However, the word that we translate as ‘righteousness’, which Jesus uses in this blessing, indicates *he is commending those followers of his who fervently seek ‘social justice’ in this world, rather than ‘personal pioussness’ that is not of this world.*
- *Now we line up with the cause of Christ..*
- **END**

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Maybe add a little of Paul

Christian saints usually get off to a stumbling starts

Paul the Apostle is the exception to this general principle...

1 Cor 1:26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

I want to teach us today how God forms a person... and we are all in formation...and Paul will be our example... he would later state ..that his call was true well before he knew it..

Gal 1:15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb and called me by his grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being.

- **God had set him apart from birth...which means he had made the decision before he was born.**
- **Which means his whole life was included in the call...amazing**
- **God knows Paul as the end product..and even on earth it is still not the end!!**
- **Not only that ...when he was called...he did not consult any man... The first thing God has to do with us is call us to personally respond to him....**
- **Paul or Saul was the ultimate people pleaser...he just pleased certain people...the religious...remember he was zealous for the traditions do the elders...whatever they said**

everyone has a story...and every story is unique... Paul's story is an upbringing steeped in Religious tradition, his was one of privilege and position...and one with power... and unbelievable arrogance and pride... and he also proves there is no one safe from the call of God!!...some of us have worked hard to avoid that...wont work!!

Paul in telling his testimony: he at one time thought he was the best of men and God was sure thankful to have him on his side... some insights from his own mouth

PHP 3: 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

GAL 1: 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. (wanted to please his elders...)

*AC 22:2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. Then Paul said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. Under **Gamaliel** I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. 4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council can testify.*

AC 22:28 Then the commander said, "I had to pay a big price for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.

AC 23:6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee.

Why Confident in Himself??

- **Right ethnicity...Jewish Pedigree...**
- **from the tribe of Benjamin Hebrew of Hebrew...pure bloodline traceable back to Abraham**
 - **Circumcised on the eight day according to the Mosaic law**
- **Right Religious Pedigree Faultless...by the book**
 - **a Pharisee born to a Pharisee**
 - **the strictest of the religious Jewish sects**
 - **A Pharisee...strict-strict-strict...did I say I was strict...obeyed all 613 religious laws... fanatically**
 - **And extremely obsessive about the traditions handed down by the religious fathers...not only law...but all the man made additions and commentaries**
- **Want to talk education...**
 - **Went to Jerusalem at a young age studied directly under the most recognized religious scholar of his day Gamalliel...**
 - **Advancing far beyond the rest of my classmates... he was brilliant!!!**
 - **Spoke fluently at least three languages...Hebrew, Greek and Aramiac**
 - **very ambitious and Definitely and up and comer...**
- **Want To talk National identity**
 - **Roman citizen...born into it...**
 - **This probably means his Jewish parents paid for the citizenship...very expensive!**
 - **He knew his rights and exercised them...politically savvy...**

- From Tarsus capital of Cilicia...located in modern day Turkey... built on the mouth of the Cydnus River...a major port and overland trade city.
- Also a university town the center of culture and famous for it's philosophy and psychology schools. Home of Stoicism... teaching of no personal God...
- Important commercial and political center
- God would use these influences later in Paul's ministry...nothing goes to waste in the economy of God.
- and he was a doer... He took being a Pharisee and member of the Snhedrin seriously...He was Jewish Terrorist and Christians were his target...
- first time mentioned in Scripture...approving the martyrdom of Stephen...as he would later have Luke record...
- killing those who disagreed with him...can't get more arrogant than that!!

Acts 7.58,8.1. We.. ⁵⁸ dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul... 8:1 And Saul approved of their killing him.—

- Paul recounting to Luke the writer of Acts years later could not get a couple of things off his mind from that experience...
- the image of Stephens angelic face ...
- *AC 6:15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*
- *nor would he forget Stephen's assessment of their Spiritual condition including Paul's.....*

Acts 7:51 "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit!

- Nor would he forget Stephen's logic in his arguments for Jesus... arguments he simply rejected it...and attempted to destroy...

AC 6: 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

Paul was hearing about Jesus but kept pushing him away.....

- **demonstrate...the hard rock representing the heart...and water being poured on it but not penetrating...**

in fact he became even more hard hearted ...and more convinced against the Lord...

AC 8:1 On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ² Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. ³ But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

AC 26: 9 "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to

force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

Acts 9:1 He went to the high priest² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in **Damascus**, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

Damascus was the capital of Syria...about a 6 day journey from Jerusalem

- **Why would the Jews in Jerusalem want to persecute Christians as far away as Damascus?**

- (1) to seize the Christians who had fled,
- (2) to prevent the spread of Christianity to other major cities,
- (3) to keep the Christians from causing any trouble with Rome,
- (4) to advance Saul's career and build his reputation as a true Pharisee, zealous for the law,
- (5) to unify the factions of Judaism by giving them a common enemy

This man was insane... lets get the picture here....The disciples are all scattered except the apostles...people are dying and fleeing...

That is what was going on in the earth...let me give you the scenario of what is going on in Heaven...

Jesus is up in Heavenspeaking to His Father... they agree time to go back down to earth we need to recruit a guy to help with the mission...we need a real doer...

These apostles are all still in Jerusalem...we need a guy not afraid to go for it! and get out of the city!!

His Father points down...there is the guy we have prepared..to take the message to the world.. he points down ...that guy going to Damascus

Acts 9:3 *As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.*

⁴ *He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"*

⁵ *"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked.*

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. ⁶ "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

⁷ *The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.*

¹⁰ *In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. ¹¹ The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on*

Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³ *“Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”*

- **This man by all counts was a piece of work...yet God had a plan for him...**
- **No one.. no how... no way... would have ever conceived that Paul... would be saved by Jesus...write 14 of the 27 new Testament books...**
- **Become the foremost theologian of the Christian faith**
- **All this to the Glory of God...showing his inconceivable methods**

¹⁵ *But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much **he must suffer** for my name.”*

- **Question ...why is h going to suffer for the name of Jesus?**
- **He is going to take the message to his own people ...who he has tried to please by attacking followers of Jesus...now he is going to preach Jesus to them...that is going to be a problem...**
- **He is going to preach and minister Jesus to Gentiles...he never even talked to Gentiles...he has absolutely nothing in common with them and has despised them...that will cause problems...**
- **He is going to witness to Kings...Roman authorities...as a good Jew he hated them...they occupied his country...were heathens...and persecutors of his people...**
- **Jesus gave him trouble...and he would love it!!**

¹⁷ *Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized,*

Crazy!!

then he received a mission...

Acts 9.....¹⁹ Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God. ²¹ All those who heard him were astonished and asked, “Isn’t he the man who raised havoc in Jerusalem among those who call on this name? And hasn’t he come here to take them as prisoners to the chief

priests?”²² Yet Saul grew *more and more* powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Messiah.

then he left...it is a process...that took over three years...

until he gained enough strength to endure his first trial...

²³ After many days (Three years) had gone by, there was a conspiracy among the Jews to kill him, ²⁴ but Saul learned of their plan. Day and night they kept close watch on the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵ But his followers took him by night and lowered him in a basket through an opening in the wall.

then he spent another 14 years in obscurity...Training

this is the doer..who is still growing...

Demonstrate with green sponge... soaks in water absorbs trouble...produces fruit...

this will go on for the rest of our lives...

^{2 Cor 12 :8} Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. ⁹ But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. ¹⁰ That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

- **let me demonstrate...**
- **show rock...God does what he needs to get to us**
- **show sponge...once gotten..we now become a sponge soaking up the Spirit and the word...we get a soft heart...**
- **but a soft sponge like heart is not strong...it cannot take to much burden...put brick on sponge... then little rocks..**
- **so God takes a season to input us... and teach us...same with Paul**
- **God's power in my life show through the hard things in my life...I am not good at this call...but you will make it work!**
- **cut green sponge ...put rocks in green sponge...place fruit on green sponge...**
- **No one.. no how... no way... would have ever conceived that Paul... would be saved by Jesus...write 14 of the 27 new Testament books...**
- **Become the foremost theologian of the Christian faith**
- **All this to the Glory of God...and the benefit of people...**

add junk and fruit to tree

and after thirty years Pauls say this...

Phil 3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Following Paul's Example

¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

why because someday ...all we will have is fruit...we will be the most beautiful pople ever... keep on keeping on...Green tree with nothing but fruit....

spirit filled fruit...

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control.

This is our destiny>>>>dosent mattter what your start is,,He makes beautiful thing out of us...

so the question to ask is ..What does God want to be for me now...that he Could not be for me at any other time? What is God producing in me that these

end

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- It makes good sense for Jesus to then turn to the topic of prayer. No doubt, there would be plenty of opportunities for Jesus' disciples to spend time in prayer after Jesus left them and

ascended to heaven. For prayer would take the place of face to face talks...it will become their primary way to speak to God...

- There would also be a temptation for them to quit praying if it seemed as though the Lord was not answering their prayers in the way and the time that they wanted. ... ***he is talking primarily to those who have already called and made a decision to follow him...it is not a salvation message but a kingdom message.***
- The notion that those who are doctors must be the healthiest among us, or that those in law enforcement never break the law, That people who drive for a living – truckers and bus drivers - are the safest drivers, or even the idea that members of the clergy are the most religious amongst all those in the church.

And maybe that's the way it's supposed to be. We might like to think that in all these professions we'd see people standing up as shining examples of all the right ways, yet from experience we know that's not always the case. Some of them might be very good at appearing to be all the things they represent, yet, We find out that the way we think *life ought to be*, is not always the way *life really is*.

Reminds me of the Alanis Morrisite song: ***You Learn***there is some wisdom here... “*I recommend getting your heart trampled on by any one...I recommend biting off more than you can chew to anyone...You live you learn, You love you learn, You cry you learn, You lose you learn, You bleed you learn, You scream you learn... \@@@*