

Two Men Go to Pray

Luke 18:9-14

A beautiful temple glitters with gold in the sun. People walk in and out of its gates. They bring their offerings to the Lord and pray. Over there, two men enter the courtyard. They cross the marble floors and climb the wide stone steps. See them enter the court of prayer.

One man walks to the center of the courtyard. He raises his hands and prays aloud so everyone can hear. Listen to what he is saying. He is thanking God that he is so good. This man is a Pharisee. He tells the Lord that he does not do any of the bad

things that other people do. He does not think that he has any sin to confess. He only tells the Lord about the good things he has done.

The Pharisees liked to pray aloud so people could hear them. They



© 2017 Corine Postma

would pray very long prayers, and stand in the temple or on the corner of the street, so people could see how good they were. They thought that God would also see how good they were. But God looks in their hearts. He sees the sin they try to hide, and He knows that the good things they do are not done out of love and kindness. God does not like these kinds of prayers.

The other man also walks into the courtyard, but he finds a dim spot near the wall, where no one will see him. He bows his head; he does not dare to look up to heaven where God lives. God is high and holy and good. This man knows that he is sinful and has a bad heart.

This man is a tax-collector. Listen to him pray. Tears fill his voice as he cries to God to have mercy on him: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." See him beating his hands against his chest. He



© 2017 Corine Postma

knows what kind of heart he has inside. It is a sinful heart, and he prays for God to be kind and wash his sins away.

The Lord Jesus tells this story about the two men and their two prayers. At the end of the story, Jesus tells us whose prayer God heard: it was the tax-collector's. The Pharisee never asked God for anything, and he went home with the same sinful heart. The tax-collector asked God for mercy, and he went home with his sins forgiven and his heart washed clean.

1. We all do sins: things which God has told us not to do.

Which man was sorry for his sin?

2. The Pharisee thought he was good and that God was pleased with him. Why did he pray right in the middle of the temple?

3. Do you sometimes feel like a good boy or a good girl? Is it hard to see your own sin? Ask the Lord to show you your sin.

4. What did the tax-collector pray to God? Is this a good prayer for us to pray, too?

Need question with Bible reference