

God Requires Honesty and Compassion - Part 3

by Zac Poonen

True prayer involves acknowledging our sinfulness and feeling a deep sense of humility, while self-deception involves praying to ourselves and avoiding accountability.

Duration: 9:07

Scripture: Psalm 130:3

Topics: "True Confession", "Sincere Prayer"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine confession to God rather than merely going through the motions of prayer. It delves into the concept of praying to oneself, highlighting the need for true humility and acknowledgment of sin before God. The message challenges listeners to examine their hearts and ensure that their prayers are sincere and not self-centered.

Transcript

We are confessing to God. We're not confessing to God at all. We're confessing to ourselves.

You know, like the Pharisee prayed. Do you think the Pharisee realized he was praying to himself? It says in Luke chapter 18. Look at that parable that Jesus spoke.

I don't know whether you've noticed this. The Pharisee and the Republican went into the temple to pray. And the Pharisee, you see, this is what Jesus said.

The Pharisee didn't think that. The Pharisee thought he was praying to God. Because he says Pharisee prays God.

Psalm 18 verse 11. I'm sorry, Luke 18 verse 11. The Pharisee prayed God.

He's praying to God, but Jesus said no, he's not praying to God. What do you read in that verse? He was praying to whom? To himself. Did you notice that? Is it possible for a person to pray to himself? Have you ever prayed to yourself? You say never and nobody can pray to himself, but the Pharisee said God and when you say God or when you say Heavenly Father, I'm sorry, I committed that sin.

You could be praying to yourself if you find it easy. Psalm 130, I think, verse 3. It says there's forgiveness with God that he may be feared. So when I come before God, I am coming before the strictest person in the whole universe.

The standards are the highest anyway. How can I come so glibly and say, oh, yeah, I slept up. I'll tell you how.

I think many of us are praying to ourselves. I want you to seriously consider this possibility that when you kneel down to pray, you're praying to yourself. That's why nothing happens.

And if I pray to myself and I claim in the name of Jesus something, nothing happens naturally. I'm praying to myself. I mean this, brothers and sisters.

Consider seriously that a lot of our prayers, we're just praying to ourselves. We may be prefacing it with God or Heavenly Father. That doesn't make a difference.

Jesus said this guy was praying to himself and one of the tests is this, you know, like I said earlier, if you say you love God, test whether you love your neighbor. Do you love your brother? Otherwise, don't fool yourself. And you say, well, I wouldn't confess it to God.

But what about confessing to the person whom you hurt? What about acknowledging your mistake before men, if they're involved in it? If not, I want to say in Jesus' name to you, you are praying to yourself. And imagine if I spend all my life praying to myself and I wake up in eternity and I wake up and stand before the Lord and the Lord says, you never prayed to me even once. Lord, what? I never prayed to you even once.

What do you mean? I prayed thousands of times. He said, yeah, thousands of times to yourself. When you pray, do you make contact with God? Do you tremble at the fact that you have violated his law? You've been dishonest.

You've pretended to be righteous or you know, Ananias didn't even open his mouth. Peter said, why did you sin against? Why did Satan fill your heart to tell a lie to the Holy Spirit? He could have said, I didn't even open my mouth. What do you mean? I told a lie to the Holy Spirit.

I can tell a lie to the Holy Spirit without opening my mouth. Satan can fill my heart to tell a lie to the Holy Spirit. You read Acts 5. That's what he told Ananias.

I'm sure Ananias prayed a lot of prayers to himself. Lord, how much money should I give? What is your leading? Yes, I think God has spoken to me. God's told me this.

Have you heard these people who say God's told me this and God's told me that? Who told them? Their own mind told them what was good for them selfishly. What would be maximum benefit for themselves and they put God's name there and say the Lord led me. It sounds so holy and so pious.

We had to be more honest, ruthlessly honest. I believe God speaks. The first chapter of Genesis is every day God said, God said, God said, God said.

But I'll tell you something. The vast majority of people who I hear saying God said to me this and God said to me that. I don't believe it one bit.

That is true. I mean, we're in a pretty serious situation. How do I know? That I have humbled myself and really confessed my sin to God.

The test for me is can I confess to a human being? I was wrong brother. That should be very frequent in our life. Yeah, that was my mistake.

And if that is not frequent in your life, I want to say to you if you think you're spiritual, you're just fooling yourself. You're so far from God that you can't even see anything wrong in yourself. You could be a million miles away from God.

You know what happened to Isaiah when he came near God? He said, oh, I'm such a filthy man. My lips are unclean. I mean, he got that when he came near God and saw him.

It's always what happens. He, before that he was aware of the faults of others, but suddenly he became aware of his own. See, that's the mark of a man who walks humbly.

The Bible says, what does God require of you? Walk humbly before God. Only acknowledge your iniquity. He prayed to himself.

He said, God, I thank you. I'm not like other people. When people pray to themselves, that is their spirit.

Oh, I don't I don't sort of think there's anything seriously wrong with me. I seem to be okay. And in contrast, Jesus said, there was this Republican or this tax collector who was known, who had a reputation, tax collectors had a reputation for being crooks and cheaters.

Verse 13, the tax collector was, he wouldn't even come close to the temple. He was standing far or distance away, unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven. He's beating his breast and saying, God, he also said God.

He made contact. Both of them said God. Here's one fellow saying God.

Here's another fellow saying God. This fellow, prayer doesn't even reach the roof. This fellow's prayer goes straight up to heaven.

Is it possible that two people could be praying here in this church and one person's prayer doesn't go anywhere? The other person's prayer goes straight up to heaven because he acknowledges his iniquity. God be merciful to me. The sinner.

I like the NASB translation. I find the NASB is very accurate in many places. More accurate than any other version that I have seen, including King James Version and all the other versions.

The sinner. That means he felt, Lord, it looks as if I'm the only sinner in the whole world. Have you ever felt like that? Or have you felt there are a lot of sinners around you? Have you, I'm not talking about every day, but have you ever once in your life felt, boy, Lord, it couldn't be anybody worse than me.

If you've never had that feeling even once, shall I tell you something? I would seriously question whether you're born again at all. I don't think we can bear it to face that every day, but at least once you should have felt like that.

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