

Blind-Sided...by Blind-Spots  
Week 4---Blind-Sided By SELF-Reliance

## 1) The Blind-Side of the even the “Righteous” ...

### Isaiah 6:1-7

<sup>1</sup> It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty **throne**, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. <sup>2</sup> Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. <sup>3</sup> They were calling out to each other,

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven’s Armies! The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

<sup>4</sup> Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> Then I said,

“**It’s all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man.** I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the **King**, the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.”

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup> He touched my lips with it and said,

“See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is **removed**, and your sins are **forgiven.**”

### Isaiah’s BLINDSide...

#### - King Uzziah/People of Israel...

... was a successful and beloved King for over 50 years before being struck with leprosy and dying as a result of presuming himself worthy to stand in God’s presence and perform Temple rituals. His shame in doing so and subsequent death would have been a “**BLIND-Side**” to the country.

#### -GOD...

God is...(background research by Guzik)

A) ...seen on a **THRONE**. He’s not just on any seat, couch or recliner :0) He is on a **THRONE**. As such this demonstrates that although He remarkably refers to us as His children and friends, He maintains His intrinsic (because He is God and there is no other) role as JUDGE and LORD of all.

B) ...so extraordinary in His status as a ruler that the **TRAIN** of His robe fills the Temple. The length of the train of a Kings robe signified His status as a ruler. If a train was short it signified that the King would be in a lower status having to take care of day to day responsibilities. If a train was long it signified that he was of a higher status and had others surrounding him that would do these things so therefore he need not worry about a cumbersome train impeding His efforts.

C) ...clearly presented here with His **TRIUNE** nature in mind. Chanting “Holy” 3x’s would be a perfect fit for the Father, Son & Holy Spirit. Likewise, later in verse 8, the voice of God speaking to Isaiah uses the pronoun “us” when asking the question, “...Who will go for US?”.

-Isaiah...

...has been known as one of the greatest prophets of the entire OT era. Perhaps second only to Elijah (Moses and Abraham were not prophets per se, though they did speak for God on occasion). And yet, EVEN HE, in the presence of God exclaims..."I am doomed...I am a sinful man". Clearly, this vision of God "**BLIND-Sided**" his sense of himself.

## Our BLINDSide?...

**Matthew 7:21-23 (NIV/2010)**

<sup>21</sup> "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> **Many** will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not **prophesy** in your name and in your name **drive out demons** and in your name perform many **miracles**?' <sup>23</sup> Then I will tell them plainly, 'I **never** knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

**ROMANS 10:9-13**

<sup>9</sup> If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is **by believing in your heart that you are made right with God**, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. <sup>11</sup> As the Scriptures tell us, "**Anyone** who trusts in him will never be disgraced." <sup>12</sup> Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to **all** who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For "**Everyone** who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."

**PRAYER**

**Square 1...**

**HOW CAN I AVOID BEING BLIND-SIDED on that FINAL DAY?**

**\*A) Seek to stir up a Genuine Spiritual Hunger (Ps. 139, Ps. 32)**

**\*B) Surround yourself with Wise Counsel (Ps. 24:6, Ro. 15:14)**

**\*C) Submit to Accountability (Eph 5:21, James 5:16)**

**\*D) Saturate yourself with Fellowship (Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25 & Ecc 4:9-12)**

**\*JUST SO HAPPENS YOU CAN FIND ALL THE ABOVE IN ONE OF OUR LIFEGROUPS!!!!!!**

## DIVE DEEPER---

My thanks again to David Guzik of [enduringword.com](http://enduringword.com) for his gracious offering of some of the most spiritually insightful and academically comprehensive commentary I have yet to encounter throughout my 20 years of researching texts both in books and online.

ADDITIONAL TEXTS AND COMMENTARY RELATED TO TODAY'S TOPIC...

### II Corinthians 13:5

<sup>5</sup> Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

### Luke 18:9-14

<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: <sup>10</sup> *“Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’*

<sup>13</sup> *“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.’ <sup>14</sup> 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.”*

From David Guzik @ [enduringword.com](http://enduringword.com)...

## ISAIAH 6

A. The conviction of the prophet.

1. (1-2) What Isaiah saw.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.

a. **In the year that King Uzziah died:** King Uzziah of Judah had a long and distinguished reign, described in 2 Chronicles 26 and in 2 Kings 15:1-7 (**Uzziah** is called *Azariah* in 2 Kings 15).

i. Uzziah began his reign when he was only 16 years old, and he reigned 52 years. Overall, he was a good king, and 2 Kings 15:3 says, *he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done.* 2 Chronicles 28:5 says, *He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.*

ii. Uzziah also led Israel in military victories over the Philistines and other neighboring nations, and he was a strong king. Uzziah was an energetic builder, planner, and general. 2 Chronicles 26:8 says, *His fame spread as far as the entrance of Egypt, for he strengthened himself exceedingly.*

iii. But Uzziah's life ended tragically. 2 Chronicles 26:16 says, *But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense.* In response, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, and he was an isolated leper until his death.

iv. So, to say **in the year King Uzziah died** is to say a lot. It is to say, "In the year a great and wise king died." But it is also to say, "In the year a great and wise king who had a tragic end died." Isaiah had great reason to be discouraged and disillusioned at the death of King Uzziah, because a great king had passed away, and because his life ended tragically. Where was the LORD in all this?

b. **I saw the LORD sitting on a throne:** Where was the LORD in all this? The LORD was **sitting on a throne!** God was still enthroned in heaven, and was still in charge of all creation.

i. There is a throne in heaven, and the LORD God sits upon it as the sovereign ruler of the universe! This is central fact of heaven; that there is *an occupied throne* in heaven. God does not sit on a *chair* in heaven. Anyone might sit on a *chair*. But *sovereign kings* sit on thrones. *Judges* sit on thrones. Those with proper *authority and sovereignty* sit on thrones.

ii. Isaiah was not alone in seeing God's throne. Almost everyone in the Bible who had a vision of heaven, was taken to heaven, or wrote about heaven spoke of God's throne. The prophet Michaiah saw God's throne (1 Kings 22:19), Job saw God's throne (Job 26:9), David saw God's throne (Psalm 9:4 and 7, 11:4), the Sons of Korah saw God's throne (Psalm 45:6, 47:8), Ethan the Ezrahite saw God's throne (Psalm 89:14), Jeremiah saw God's throne (Lamentations 5:19), Ezekiel saw God's throne (Ezekiel 1:26, 10:1), Daniel saw God's throne (Daniel 7:9), and the Apostle John saw God's throne (Revelation 4:1-11). In fact, the book of Revelation may as well be called "the book of God's throne," because God's throne is specifically mentioned more than 35 times in that book!

iii. The bottom line of atheism or materialism is that they believe there *is no throne*; there is no seat of authority or power all the universe must answer to. The bottom of humanism is that there is a throne - but *man* sits upon it. But the Bible makes it clear that there *is a throne* in heaven, and *no fallen man* sits on the throne, but the *Lord GOD is enthroned in heaven*.

iv. Isaiah may have been depressed or discouraged because a great leader of Judah was no longer on the throne. God in heaven now shows Isaiah, "Don't worry about it, Isaiah. Uzziah may not be on his throne, but I am on My throne."

c. **High and lifted up:** The throne was exalted and majestic. The throne set its Occupant in a superior position.

d. **The train of His robe filled the temple:** Kings of that time would wear robes with long trains, because they were difficult to maneuver and work in. Wearing a long train meant, "I am important enough that I don't have to work. I am a person of honor and dignity. Others must serve me and wait upon me." Essentially, the same is said when a bride wears a dress with a long train today.

i. God is so honored, so important, so dignified, that **the train of His robe filled the temple**. That's a long train!

e. **Above it stood seraphim**: Surrounding the throne of God are angels known here as **seraphim**. In many other passages, these angels are known as *cherubim* (Psalm 80:1; Isaiah 37:16; Ezekiel 10:3) or as the *living creatures* of Revelation 4:6-11. This is the only chapter in the Bible where these creatures are named **seraphim**.

i. Some deny that *cherubim* and **seraphim** refer to the same beings. But the name **seraphim** means, "burning ones." Ezekiel 1:13 describes cherubim (see also Ezekiel 10:15) this way: *their appearance was like burning coals of fire, like the appearance of torches going back and forth among the living creatures. The fire was bright, and out of the fire went lightning*. That certainly seems to describe *burning ones*!

f. **Each one had six wings**: In Revelation 4:8, the Apostle John also mentions their **six wings**. They need the six wings, so each can cover **his face** (to show they are too lowly to look upon the LORD), so each can cover **his feet** (to hide this "humble" area of the body, so nothing even possibly deficient is seen in the LORD's presence), and so each can fly.

i. The LORD said to Moses, "*You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live*" (Exodus 33:20). Apparently the same is true even for angels, so the **seraphim** cover their faces.

ii. "The *two wings* with which the angels *fly* mean nothing else than their ready and cheerful performance of the commandments of God . . . The *two wings* with which they *cover their face* show plainly enough that even angels cannot endure God's brightness, and that they are dazzled by it in the same manner as when we attempt to gaze upon the radiance of the sun." (Calvin)

iii. "For the seraph remembers that even though sinless he is yet a creature, and therefore he conceals himself in token of his nothingness and unworthiness in the presence of the thrice Holy One." (Spurgeon)

g. The **seraphim** used four of their wings to express their humility, and used two of their wings to express their willingness and ability to serve God. This is the proper balance.

i. "Thus they have four wings for adoration and two for active energy; four to conceal themselves, and two with which to occupy themselves in service; and we may learn from them that we shall serve God best when we are most deeply reverend and humbled in his presence. Veneration must be in larger proportion than vigor, adoration must exceed activity. As Mary at Jesus' feet was preferred to Martha and her much serving, so must sacred reverence take the first place, and energetic service follow in due course." (Spurgeon)

## 2. (3-4) What Isaiah heard.

And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke.

a. **One cried to another and said**: The *seraphim* are not even directly addressing the LORD God here. They are proclaiming His glorious nature and character to one another, in the presence of the LORD.

b. **Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts**: Why do they repeat "**holy**" three times? Wasn't it enough to simply say that the LORD was "**holy**" once? It wasn't enough. They say it three times because there are Three Persons in the One God.

i. Calvin didn't think that this was the best verse to prove the Trinity, but he still saw the truth of the Trinity here. "The ancients quoted this passage when they wished to prove that there are three persons in one essence of the Godhead . . . I have no doubt that the angels here describe One God in Three Persons."

c. **Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts:** Why do they repeat "**holy**" three times? Wasn't it enough to simply say that the LORD was "**holy**" once? It wasn't enough. In the Hebrew language, intensity is communicated by *repetition*. To say the LORD is **holy** says something. To say the LORD is **holy, holy, holy**, says far more. To say, **holy, holy, holy is the LORD** is to declare His holiness in the highest possible degree.

i. What does it mean that God is **holy**, and **holy** in the highest possible sense? **Holiness**, at its root, has the idea of *apartness*. It describes someone, or something, which is *set apart* from other people or things. An object can be holy if it is set apart for sacred service. A person is holy if they are set apart for God's will and purpose.

ii. What is the LORD set apart from? He is set apart from *creation*, in that the Lord GOD is not a creature, and He exists outside of all creation. If all creation were to dissolve, the Lord GOD would remain. He is set apart from *humanity*, in that His "nature" or "essence" is *Divine*, not *human*. God is not a *super-man* or the *ultimate man*. God is not merely *smarter* than any man, *stronger* than any man, *older* than any man, or *better* than any man. You can't measure God on man's chart at all. He is *Divine*, and we are *human*.

iii. Yet, because we are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), humanity is *compatible* with Divinity. They are different, but they do not automatically *oppose* each other. This is how Jesus, the Second Person of the Trinity, could *add humanity to His deity* when He became a man. Unfallen humanity is not deity, but it is compatible with it.

iv. God's holiness is a part of everything He is and does. God's power is a *holy power*. God's love is a *holy love*. God's wisdom is a *holy wisdom*. Holiness is not an aspect of God's personality; it is one characteristic of His entire Being.

d. **The whole earth is full of His glory:** The *seraphim* surrounding the throne of God could see this probably more clearly than Isaiah could. We are often blind to the obvious glory of God all around us.

e. **The posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out:** The *seraphim* are majestic beings, and their voice carries *weight*. When they speak, the door posts of God's throne room shake! The idea may be that Isaiah was watching from the door way, and when the *seraphim* cried out, he could feel the door posts shake.

i. Yet these high, majestic beings - perhaps the highest beings in all of God's creation - have *one occupation*. Their existence is given over to the praise and worship and honor of the LORD God who is enthroned in heaven. What could we possibly do that is a higher calling than that?

ii. They sang so powerfully, the door posts were shaken! Shouldn't we sing with the same passion, the same heart, the same intensity? Do those angels have more to thank and praise God for than we do?

f. **The house was filled with smoke:** This **smoke** reminds us of the pillar of cloud that represented the presence of God (Exodus 13:21-22), the smoke on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18), and the cloud of God's Shekinah glory that filled

the temple (1 Kings 8:10-12). A cloud of glory often marks the presence of the LORD.

### 3. (5) What Isaiah felt.

So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

a. **Woe is me, for I am undone!** What made Isaiah feel like he was coming apart? Two things. First, the sight and sound of the *seraphim*. Second, the vision of the Lord GOD.

i. When Isaiah saw the angels, in all their holy humility, obedience, and praise to God, he realized not only that he was unlike the Lord GOD, he was also unlike the angels. They could cry out *Holy, holy, holy* and praise God so beautifully, but he could not because he was **a man of unclean lips**. "I am a man of unclean lips; I cannot say, Holy, holy, holy! which the seraphs exclaim. They are holy; I am not so: they see God and live; I have seen him, and must die, because I am unholy." (Clarke)

ii. When Isaiah saw the LORD, he knew what kind of man *he* was. As poorly as he compared to the *seraphim*, that was nothing in relation to how he compared to the LORD. This vision (or actual experience) of the throne of God did not immediately make Isaiah feel *good*. The more clearly he saw the LORD, the more clearly he saw how bad his state was.

iii. Isaiah's deep sense of depravity is consistent with the experience of other godly men in the presence of the LORD. Job (Job 42:5-6), Daniel (Daniel 10:15-17), Peter (Luke 5:8) and John (Revelation 1:7) each had similar experiences.

b. **I am undone** is not a bad place to be. "God will never do anything with us till he has first of all undone us." (Spurgeon)

c. **Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips:** Isaiah saw his sinfulness, and the sinfulness of his people, mainly in terms of *sinful speech*.

i. By nature, our lips are full of flattery and false intent: *With flattering lips and a double heart they speak* (Psalm 12:2). By nature, our lips lie and are proud: *Let the lying lips be put to silence, which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous* (Psalm 31:18). By nature, our lips deceive: *Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit* (Psalm 34:13). By nature, our lips are violent: *Swords are in their lips* (Psalm 59:7). By nature, our lips bring death to others: *The poison of asps is under their lips* (Psalm 140:3).

ii. Isaiah did not think for a moment that this was his *only* sin, but he saw that this was an example of the *great and incurable disease of sin* in him and his people.

d. **For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts:** Isaiah was a righteous, godly man by all outward appearance. Yet when he saw the enthroned **King**, the **LORD of hosts**, he saw how sinful he was in comparison.

i. Isaiah's life may have been as brilliant as a diamond. But when you lay a diamond against a perfectly black background, and have the right light upon it, you can see every flaw and imperfection - flaws that were invisible before. Even so, when Isaiah's righteous life lay against the background of God's perfection, it looked different.

## B. The cleansing of the prophet.

### 1. (6) A seraphim brings a coal from the altar.

Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar.

a. **One of the seraphim flew to me:** These angelic beings, surrounding the throne of God, ministered to Isaiah. One flew to Isaiah with **a live coal** - which means the **coal** was still hot and burning. It was so hot that even an angel had to use **the tongs from the altar**.

b. **The altar:** This must be heaven's version of the altar of incense that was set before the holy of holies in the tabernacle of God (Exodus 30:1-10). We know that the earthly tabernacle God instructed Moses to build was made after the pattern of a heavenly reality (Exodus 25:9).

i. The *throne* is for God; that is where He rules and reigns. **The altar** is for us; that is where we find cleansing and purging from sin. We should never confuse the two!

ii. “The fire was *taken from the altar*, to intimate that it was divine or heavenly; for the law forbade any *strange fire* to be brought to it, because in sacred things every human mixture is absolute profanation. By this figure, therefore, Isaiah was taught that all purity flows from God alone.” (Calvin)

## 2. (7) A coal from the altar cleanses Isaiah’s lips.

And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged.”

a. **And he touched my mouth with it:** This must have been painful; a burning hot coal applied to the lips, one of the more sensitive areas of the body. Yet, nothing is written that Isaiah reacted in pain. Either there was no pain, because of a special blessing by God, or the pain did not matter because of the majesty of the surroundings and the goodness of the cleansing.

i. Isaiah knew he did not serve the LORD like these *seraphim*, the *burning ones*. So God said, “I will light a fire in you, also!” That is why a burning coal was used to purify Isaiah. “Jehovah, who is a consuming fire, can only fitly be served by those who are on fire, whether they be angels or men.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Isaiah cried out, *Woe is me, for I am undone!* (Isaiah 6:5) We might think that a burning coal to the lips would be more painful than a vision of the holy God. But for Isaiah, it was more disturbing to see the holiness of God, and to see his lack of holiness, than it was have a burning coal applied to his lips.

b. **Your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged:** Isaiah’s sin had to be *burned* away; the fire of judgment was applied to his place of sin.

i. This was obviously a *spiritual* transaction. If one has a sinful mouth, it will do nothing to place a burning hot coal on their lips. That will not take away or purge their sin.

ii. Yet, the same principle works on our behalf in regard to Jesus’ work on Calvary. Our sin was placed upon Him, and He was burned with the fire of God’s judgment. Yet because He was holy and righteous Himself, the fire of God’s judgment did not harm Him; it only burned away the sin, our sin.

c. Once Isaiah had *met* with the LORD, been *convicted* of his sin, and *cleansed* from its guilt, then he was ready to serve God.

i. “The effect of that live coal will be to fire the lip with heavenly flame. ‘Oh,’ says one man, ‘a flaming coal will burn the lip so that the man cannot speak at all.’ That is just how God works with us; it is by consuming the fleshly power that he inspires the heavenly might. Oh let the lip be burnt, let the fleshly power of eloquence be destroyed, but oh for that live coal to make the tongue eloquent with heaven’s flame; the true divine power which urged the Apostles forward, and made them conquerors of the whole world.” (Spurgeon)

## C. The commission of the prophet.

### 1. (8) God calls, and Isaiah responds.

Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here *am* !! Send me.”

a. **Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?** God looked for someone to **send**. He wanted someone to **go**.

i. How strange it is for God to ask a question at all! What does God wonder about? What questions would He have? What does God not know? But God was asking for a *person*, because God wants to reach the world, and He wants to reach it through willing people. It isn’t that God doesn’t know who these people are. It is that God is waiting for ready hearts to reveal themselves.

ii. How strange it is that this God of majesty, sovereignty, and power *asks for volunteers!* He could easily *create* robots to do His work, or *command angels* to carry out His will. But God wants willing, surrendered servants. Have you been waiting for God to *force* you to serve Him? He looks for *volunteers!*

b. **Whom shall I send** means that the missionary, the Christian worker, the witness of Jesus Christ, is *sent*. This is a divine commission. **Who will go for Us** means that the missionary, the Christian worker, the witness of Jesus Christ, *has decided to go*. Here we see a cooperation of the divine *sent* and the human *will go*.

i. Here we see another subtle reference to the Trinity. Who is sending? **I** or **Us**? It seems to be the same Person speaking in both the singular and the plural. It is the same Person! "The change of the number, *I* and *us*, is very remarkable; and both being meant of one and the same Lord, do sufficiently intimate a plurality of the persons in the Godhead." (Poole)

c. **Here am I! Send me**: Isaiah *emphatically* answered God's call. He did not hesitate. *Isaiah wanted to be the answer to God's question.*

i. What created this kind of heart in Isaiah? First, he had a heart that had been in the presence of God. He had a heart that knew its own sinfulness. He had a heart that knew the need among the people, the need for God's word. He had a heart that had been touched by God's cleansing fire. And he had a heart that *heard* God's heart to reach the nations.

d. **Send me** meant Isaiah was submitted to the LORD in all his service. He didn't even say, "Here I am, I will go." Isaiah would not go at all unless he knew he was *sent* by the LORD. Many are quick to say, "Here I am, I will go" but never wait for the LORD to **send** them.

## **LUKE 18:9-14**

1. (9-14) A parable to rebuke the self righteous.

Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

a. **To some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others**: The connection between those who **trusted in themselves that they were righteous** and those who **despised others** is almost inevitable. If I credit myself for my "great, spiritual walk with God," then it is an easy thing to despise you for your "low, carnal walk with God."

b. **Two men went up to the temple to pray**: Both men prayed, but both men did not come to God the same way. The Pharisee and his prayer were entirely self-centered; he **prayed thus with himself**, and in his short prayer he repeats **I** five times.

- i. It is entirely possible to address your words to God, but actually be praying to yourself, because your focus is on yourself, not on God. Your passion is for your agenda, not God's. Your attitude is *mine will be done* not *Thy will be done*.
  - ii. **God, I thank You that I am not like other men:** How could the Pharisee have such a high opinion of himself? It isn't hard when you compare yourself to man (**even as this tax collector**). You can always find someone worse.
  - iii. **I fast twice a week:** In those days many Jews fasted on the second and fifth days of each week, because they believed that Moses went up on Mount Sinai to receive the law on the fifth day of the week, and that he came down with the law on the second day of the week.
  - iv. "What the Pharisee said about himself was true. His trouble was not that he was not far enough along the road, but that he was on the wrong road altogether." (Morris)
- c. We wonder how anyone could be so proud before God; but we really can be - though we cover it with a spiritual veneer. One Rabbi, Rabbi Simeon, the son of Jochai, exemplified this kind of Pharisaical pride when he said: "If there were only thirty righteous persons in the world, I and my son would make two of them; but if there were but twenty, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but *ten*, I and my son would be of the number; and if there were but *five*, I and my son would be of the five; and if there were but *two*, I and my son would be those two; and if there were but *one*, myself should be that *one*." (Clarke)
  - i. This is from an actual prayer of Rabbi Nehunia: "I give thanks to Thee, O Lord my God, that Thou has set my portion with those who sit in the House of Learning, and Thou hast not set my portion with those who sit in street corners, for I rise early and they rise early, but I rise early for words of Torah and they rise early for frivolous talk; I labor and they labor, but I labor and receive a reward and they labor and do not receive a reward; I run and they run, but I run to the life of the future world and they run to the pit of destruction." (Morris)
- d. **The tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"** The Pharisee relied on his own power and deeds before God, but the tax collector relied on the mercy and compassion of God. He recognized that he was a **sinner** who needed the mercy of God.
  - i. We can imagine the Pharisee praying with eloquent words and flowing, spiritual style; anyone who heard him pray would say that he was a spiritual man. And the tax collector would pray awkwardly, with halting phrases and fear; but his prayer pleased to God.
- e. Why would the tax collector **beat his breast**? The idea was that you were so aware of the sin and corruption of your heart that you would hit at your own heart as a punishment. The verb tense of **beat his breast** describes a continual action - he kept on doing it
  - i. The ancient Greek word for **be merciful** is *hilaskomai*; it is actually the word for an atoning sacrifice. The fullest sense of what the tax collector is saying is, "God, be merciful to me through Your atoning sacrifice for sins, because I am a sinner." The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Hebrews 2:17, where it is translated *propitiation*.
- f. **This man went down to his house justified rather than the other:** The justification of the tax collector was immediate. He humbly came to God on the basis of His atoning sacrifice, and was justified. He didn't earn his justification, he didn't have a probationary period; he was simply **justified**.
- g. Jesus applies the message of the parable: **everyone who exalts himself will be abased, and he who humbles himself will be exalted**. Essentially, the Pharisee saw prayer and his spiritual life as a way to be exalted, but the tax collector approached God in humility.
  - i. True humbleness is simply seeing things the way they *are*. The Pharisee saw himself as something great when he wasn't, and the tax collector saw himself as a sinner needing God's mercy, which he was.
  - ii. We gain nothing by coming to God in the lie of pride. The principle *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* is so important God repeats it three times in the Scriptures (Proverbs 3:34, James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5).

## MATTHEW 7:21-23

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”

a. **Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven:** Jesus spoke here of a proper verbal confession, where these ones called Jesus **Lord**. This is vital, but never enough by itself.

i. We must use the language of “Lord, Lord” – we cannot be saved if we do not. Though hypocrites may say it, we should not be ashamed to say it. Yet it alone is not enough.

ii. This warning of Jesus applies to people who speak or say things to Jesus or about Jesus, but don’t really mean it. It isn’t that they believe Jesus is a devil; they simply say the words very superficially. Their mind is elsewhere, but they believe there is value in the bare words and fulfilling some kind of religious duty with no heart, no soul, not spirit – only bare words and passing thoughts.

iii. This warning of Jesus applies to people who say “Lord, Lord” and yet their spiritual life has nothing to do with their daily life. They go to church, perhaps fulfill some daily religious duties, yet sin against God and man just as any other might. “There are that speak like angels, live like devils; that have Jacob’s smooth tongue, but Esau’s rough hands.” (Trapp)

b. **Who says to Me . . . will say to Me in that day:** It is staggering that Jesus freely claims *He* is the one people must stand before on that final day of judgment, and *He* is the one who is rightly called **Lord**. This obscure teacher in a backwater part of the world claimed to be the judge of all men **in that day**.

i. By saying “**in that day**” Jesus drew our attention to a coming day of judgment for all men. “What is the chief object of your life? Will you think as much of it “in that day” as you do now? Will you then count yourself wise to have so earnestly pursued it? You fancy that you can defend it now, but will you be able to defend it then, when all things of earth and time will have melted into nothingness?” (Spurgeon)

c. **Lord, Lord, have we not:** The people Jesus speaks of here had impressive spiritual accomplishments. They **prophesied, cast out demons**, and had **done many wonders**. These are wonderful things, but they meant nothing without true fellowship; true connection with Jesus.

i. Jesus did not seem to doubt their claims of doing the miraculous. He didn’t say, “You didn’t really prophesy or cast out demons or do miracles.” This leads us to understand that sometimes miracles are granted through pretended believers, reminding us that in the final analysis, miracles *prove* nothing.

ii. Significantly, they even did these things *in the name of Jesus*. Yet, they never really had a relationship of love and fellowship with Jesus. “Through my love to the souls of men, I blessed your preaching; but yourselves I could never esteem, because you were destitute of the spirit of my Gospel, unholy in your hearts, and unrighteous in your conduct.” (Clarke)

iii. “If preaching could save a man, Judas would not have been damned. If prophesying could save a man, Balaam would not have been a castaway.” (Spurgeon)

d. **I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!** In the end, there is one basis of salvation. It isn’t mere verbal confession, not “spiritual works,” but knowing Jesus and being known by Him. It our connection to Him – by the gift of faith that He gives to us – that secures our salvation. Connected to Jesus we are secure; without connection to Him all the miracles and great works prove nothing.

i. “What a terrible word! What a dreadful separation! Depart from ME! From the very Jesus whom you have proclaimed in *union* with whom alone eternal life is to be found. For, united to Christ, all is *heaven*; separated from him, all is *hell*.” (Clarke)

ii. In addition, these are not people who *lost* their salvation. Instead, they never truly had it (**I never knew you**).