

Are you like the self righteous religious leader,
or has God caused you to understand that you
can only be saved by asking God for mercy
based on His Son's sacrificial death for sinners
at Calvary?

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TWO MEN

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(editing by Kathy Boynton)

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Consider the following two men. One is a highly respected religious leader. The other is a thief and traitor who has conspired with dishonest leaders in the corrupt government to betray fellow citizens. Consequently, he is despised by almost everyone.

One day the respected religious leader was overheard praying. He first thanked God for blessing him by keeping him from committing sins like extortion and adultery. Then he thanked the Lord for positive actions God had caused him to perform such as fasting and tithing. As he glanced over at the despised thief, he thanked God for keeping him from being like that man. Those who stood by could not even imagine how pleased God must be with this holy man.

The thief and traitor, on the other hand, felt ashamed. Here he was in the presence of a holy man and a Holy God, and he could not thank God for keeping him from the sins mentioned by the religious leader. After all, he, himself, was

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The thief and traitor, on the other hand, felt ashamed. Here he was in the presence of a holy man and a Holy God, and he could not thank God for keeping him from the sins mentioned by the religious leader. After all, he, himself, was

an extortionist. Instead of giving tithes to God, he had stolen from his fellow man. He was so ashamed that he didn't even dare lift his eyes toward Heaven as he prayed. His prayer was simple and very short. He admitted that he was a vile sinner who deserved to be punished and then begged God for mercy. Those who stood by agreed with this vile man's evaluation of himself. They had all known, for a long time, that he was no good!

When both men had finished praying, Jesus made the following comment to his disciples about the notorious thief and traitor: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:14). Notice that Jesus had no word of encouragement for the respected religious leader. You see, that religious man didn't understand that he, too, was a vile sinner in need of God's mercy. Read this account for yourself in the Bible (Luke 18:9-14).

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