

a pursuit of the recognition and the exaltation of God, and a desire to glorify and please God in all things and by all things He has given." There is then **in humility, a self-denial** at its core that focuses on God, seeing Him in His proper place and therefore, seeing **everything in its proper place** in relation to God. When you see the world as being ruled by the Sovereign and in rebellion against Him, you begin to understand why it is in such a desperate plight as it is. Grace and mercy take on a whole new meaning when you realize that you deserve God's wrath forever in hell, but instead are the recipient of His loving mercy and eternal life that He has freely given to you because of Christ. And in order to follow Christ, one must take that initial step of **humble repentance at the cross, denying your own will** and exalting God's will above your own.

Mark 8:34-35 - 34 And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, **"If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross,** and follow Me. 35 "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. NASB

You must **lose your own life** to follow Christ. The first step is a humble one, a contrition that acknowledges its arrogant sinfulness toward God, and bowing low to seek God's mercy you lose your own life, your own selfish will, your own plan for your own life and your own glory. In this yielding and brokenness of losing your life, you actually find your life, and you come to realize that life is not centered in and around you, but it is God's world, His Kingdom, His glory and His plan that is central to all things. In this humility you find great **meaning and purpose in life** realizing that God gave you life to glorify Him by living a life of virtue, loving and serving God. No longer consumed with self, you are free to give yourself away in service and love to others, and to live your life as a fountain of blessing, and reaping from that a **healthy self-image**, filled with joy. As you grow in this **spiritual awareness**, wisdom and understanding about your relations and the world around you become more and more obvious, and you begin to realize how to impart grace to others, having been blessed by God's grace toward you. This fundamental change in spiritual awareness can only come by God's free grace in **regeneration**, it is not a human work, and there is nothing you can do to merit this spiritual vision. **God must open your eyes** before you even realize your great and desperate need to be saved, and He must give the gift of humble faith in order for you to believe.

John 3:3 - 3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**" NASB

Ephesians 2:4-6 - 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 **even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved), 6 and **raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places,** in Christ Jesus, NASB

Therefore **when we are saved** it is **entirely by grace**. Once you were blinded by the God of this world (2 Cor 4:4), and steeped in your our sinful and selfish lifestyle, you **viewed God with arrogance**, mocking His holiness and sovereignty by you sinful deeds. You **viewed others with contempt**, as a means to your own ends and existing for you and unto you, you saw your life as your own, and not as God's (the One who gave it to you!). But in mercy He opened your eyes to see your desperate sinfulness, and your great need to be saved, and He showed you that you needed a Savior to pay the great penalties for your crimes that you had amassed before Him. By grace you have been saved! In regeneration He granted you a **humble child-like faith** in order for you to receive Christ, broken over your sin, and mourning your great offenses against God and others.

Mark 10:15 - 15 "Truly I say to you, **whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.**" NASB

Coming as a child, you had **no righteousness of your own** to bring, only a life filled with sinful arrogance, so with God-given faith you looked to Christ and the cross as your only hope to be saved! Behold the **contrition, the yielding and submissive disposition** that receives Christ and His kingdom like a child. Thanks be to God that He started this humble work in your heart, and He will bring it to completion.

Philippians 1:6 - 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.** NASB

The **contrast** between **pride** and **humility** can be seen very clearly in the teaching of Jesus. Consider how he pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in Luke 18:9-14. Consider the **spiritual awareness** of the two subjects in the illustration.

Luke 18:9-14 - 9 And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. 11 "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, **'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. 12'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'** 13 "But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, **was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'** 14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." NASB

Consider the **disposition before God** of the two subjects in the illustration. The **Pharisee** is **proud** and has an inflated view of himself, and being **self-righteous** he thinks is better than others saying, *"God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer."* He views others with contempt, thinking they are worse sinners than he is, and not seeing his own hypocrisy. He has a **spiritual blindness**, an **inability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly its **relation to God and others**. He is **blind, not spiritually aware**. The thing to which he is blind the most is his own pride and arrogance. Being so charmed by his own inflated self-respect, he makes a wrong appraisal of himself, God and others. He is **self-exalting, self-willed, and self-reliant** thinking he has God's approval, worse yet that he himself has earned God's approval, when in fact God is not even hearing his arrogant prayer; *"The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself."* God is opposed to this man and does not even acknowledge his bankrupt and blind discourse about the glory of himself, and he was **NOT justified** before God, *"justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled."* Having exalted himself, he had cut himself off from the mercy of God who only **"gives grace to the humble."**

But notice the **tax-collector**, he is **mourning** and **broken** over his **sinfulness**. He is **humble** and **yielding** and submissive. He is so **contrite** that he is **fearful to even approach God**, whom he knows he has offended with his sin; *"standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"* He did not even consider himself worthy to look up toward God, he was **lowly** and **trembling before God**, even *"beating his breast"* and crying out to God for mercy, knowing that he desperately needed God's help and mercy and remedy for his terrible crimes against the Lord. He **sees so clearly** and has the **ability to discern** the true reality of **spiritual things**, including and most importantly his **relation to God and others**. His eyes see reality, he is **spiritually aware**. Being filled with **humble child-like faith**, He realizes his total dependence on God for grace and in his own **weakness** needs mercy from God, the One whom he has offended and the only One who can give mercy. Here Jesus demonstrates the disposition one must have to approach God, for God to hear his prayer, and to receive grace and mercy from God and be justified in his sight.