

The Tale of Two Presidential Candidates

In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus told of two men who went down to **worship**. One was a publican and the other was a Pharisee.

The Pharisee was so proud of his religious heritage and his legalistic achievement that he looked up to Heaven and said to God (I am paraphrasing here):

“I thank you, Lord, that I am not like that sinner, for I have done this and I have done that and I have done the other thing and I really am a good guy.”

The publican came in, bowed his head in conviction over his sin, pounded his chest in repentance and said, “God have mercy on me, for I am a sinner.”

Jesus did not leave us guessing who was acceptable to God.

He said, in effect, that the repentant sinner went home justified before God, but not the Pharisee.

This is a very different conclusion from the one so many, even those who claim to be Christians, hold when it comes to people.

No wonder the Scripture emphasizes this distinguishing feature of the Christian faith in 1 John 1:8-9 when it says that, “if we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins.”

Why does the **Scripture** emphasize over and over again this whole idea of God loving repentant sinners?

First, because one of the pillars unique to the **Christian faith** is that we have all fallen short of God’s standard of

perfection. Therefore anyone who claims to be perfect is not telling the truth or being realistic about his/her condition.

Again, the Bible says that Jesus came from Heaven to save sinners—that is confessed sinners. Jesus also said that those who do not realize that they are sick do not think they need a doctor. Those who do not recognize their sin and their need for **forgiveness** do not see their need for a Savior. Only those who recognize their sin will be justified before God—forgiven and restored.

As far as the Christian faith is concerned, the ones who know how to repent are near and dear to the heart of God, but the ones who rationalize or gloss over their sin will never know true salvation.

We have a clear example of this in the lives of two kings in the Bible. King Saul was very good on paper and looked so good outwardly. And then there was King David who messed up royally. The difference is that King David repented with tears, and the Bible notes that King David was a man after God's own heart.

In a few months, our nation will be electing a whole slew of candidates for a variety of offices. Some conservatives are making judgments similar to the Pharisees by going for the picture-perfect, storybook, glossy outward façade. Be very careful and be sure when you pass judgment that you choose those who know how to repent and not those who are self-righteous.

Dr. Michael Youssef's expertise on the Islamic culture and the Middle East in today's post-modern world is actively sought by hundreds of thousands of followers around the globe. With a Ph.D. from Emory University in social anthropology, his Egyptian heritage gives him particular insight into the cultural and religious entanglements of international affairs. □It is estimated that over 10 million viewers/listeners around

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