

## CONSIDERING FAITH

During the course of your lifetime you will consider your faith many times. If you frame the character of your faith within the contextual meaning of the Gospels of Jesus Christ you will find yourself being less of an image of Christianity and more a person who abides in faith. What do I mean?

Consider Jesus' parable about the Pharisee and the publican praying before God (I will leave this as an exercise for you to look up where this parable appears). The Pharisee is quick to note to God (as if He were blind) how he gave his 10% to the temple and followed all the rituals of purification, meanwhile, the publican comes before God contrite and confesses he is a sinner – obviously the publican will gain God's ear and the Pharisee won't. Why?

Consider the truth, we all tend to forget when and how we have sinned. We love to compare ourselves like the Pharisee to others to justify ourselves, however, we are all imperfect, and God is not fooled by illogic that racks up meaningless acts of sacrifice but fails to admit before Him that they are a sinner – “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” – are we even acting in forgiveness if we are attempting to compare ourselves as less of a sinner because we do some right things? Obviously no.

There is a fine line between ego and vanity and spiritual blindness, in fact imperceptible because when we act or believe out of a stylized Christianity, it is a vanity. Read the Psalms carefully. Listen to the logic in them and you will understand why our Lord's parable on the two ways to pray is so important – just as He taught us we cannot serve God and mammon – these are not cross bearing activities these are real spiritual dilemmas we face throughout our lives in attempting to understand whether our faith is genuine or an act of imagination.

Vanity, after all, is imagination – it is our ego enhancing our self image in an inflated way that is void of any truth – obviously self love can blind us from faith and we live in a society that constantly directs the focus of its sales pitch to our vanity, thus the line between ego and spiritual blindness is very thin – i.e. we don't see unless we see it through the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ because we are constantly being programmed to be self-absorbed.

During this Lenten season if you contemplate the grueling death of Christ you will admit readily that any sacrifice whether it be a morsel of meat, a full fast, or the giving up of some treat, we fall woefully short of our Lord's sacrifice in dying on the cross for us and we should never be so vain as to think our prayers, our attendance to mass, or even being decent people can possibly compare as bearing a cross for our Lord!

I believe the first step to true faith is to realize how our minds and our vanity works against achieving a greater closeness to our Lord.

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