

The Bible tells us that God is not willing that any should perish. *2 Peter 3:9*. The loving Father longs to see each sinner saved from sin and death. To prove this beyond doubt He gave His only-begotten Son, Jesus, to die for our salvation on the cross of Calvary. However, God will not force the sinner to accept cleansing and salvation. It is only when we as sinners recognize our true condition and come to God with a deep feeling of our own need that He is able to forgive and save us. Christ illustrated this truth beautifully in the story of the Pharisee and the publican. He said, "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon 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." *Luke 18:10-14*.

As far as society was concerned the Pharisee was an "ideal" citizen and the publican was far from what he should have been. The publican, however, recognized his need of a change and forgiveness. The Pharisee felt no need of God's help and therefore he received no forgiveness. He went down to his house unjustified, unforgiven. The publican, on the other hand, felt his great need and prayed to the loving heavenly Father, who readily forgave him for his past sins.

If you feel like the publican as you view your past mistakes and sins, if you recognize as you have studied this lesson that you have disobeyed God and lived contrary to His Word, why not acknowledge your sins and find forgiveness and freedom from sin by accepting God's offer to save you today?

Like the needy publican, I ask God to forgive me, a sinner. □

COMMENTS:

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What The Bible Says:

Lesson 17

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About the Problem of Sin

***Always pray before opening your Bible.
Find the text in your Bible and write the answer.***

Some time ago the newspapers carried a story of a little girl who had been playing in the garage of her home when she found a pop bottle full of what looked like soft drink that her mother at times gave her. She turned the bottle up and drank the fluid in it, even though it tasted strange. Soon she began to experience pains in her stomach. When she complained to her mother, she was rushed to the hospital for treatment. Sad to say, help came too late, and the little girl paid with her life for her experiment with that strange substance in the bottle. What she thought was pop actually was a weed killer, deadly to human beings.

Sin is as deadly to the soul as weed killer is to the body. Many people today do not realize that they are poisoned with sin and will die from this killer. We have seen in the study of a previous lesson how Satan works to deceive and destroy all God's children that he possibly can.

We may have had friends who died from cancer who could have been cured if the cancer had been detected sooner to permit early treatment. They didn't know what was wrong until it was too late. Just so, many who are diseased with sin do not recognize their plight. They congratulate themselves on their good works and may say, "Surely the Lord would not refuse to save a person as good as I am." The Lord is anxious to save all that He can, but He cannot save any one of us unless we recognize our sinfulness and come to Him for forgiveness and salvation.