

# Explore the Bible: March 21

*Worthy? • Luke 18:9-17*

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Corrie Ten Boom (1892-1983) was the Dutch Christian watchmaker who, along with members of her family, used their home to hide over 800 Jews from their Nazi persecutors during World War II. She was eventually exposed to the Gestapo and sent to a concentration camp, where she was held until Dec, 28, 1944.

After the war in Europe ended, she traveled the world telling her life story and sharing the Gospel in Africa, Europe, the Americas, Asia, the USSR, Cuba, and China. Her 1971 best-selling autobiography about her World War II exploits, *The Hiding Place*, was made into two movies that were released in 1975 and 2011. She died in California on her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday after suffering a third stroke.

Whenever I think about Corrie ten Boom, three descriptive words come to mind. She was known as a woman of **faith**. She was **humble**. She was a woman of **prayer**. Could this be said of you and me?

Today's lesson passage covers Luke 17:1 – Luke 18:30. Chapter 18 opens with the parable of the persistent widow. She had to overcome the obstacles of being a woman and not allowed into the temple court, and she was poor.

Here are three points to remember regarding prayer, taken from the book, *Be Courageous*, by Warren Wiersbe. First, when we don't pray, we grow faint, lose heart, and get discouraged. We are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). This is the key to not growing faint.

Secondly, note the contrast between the judge and God's elect. We receive directly from a loving Father who cares for His children. We have direct access through Christ, our Advocate (1 John 2:1), and High Priest (Heb. 2:17-18). We have His promises and the Holy Spirit. The judge had none of these qualities.

Lastly, the judge didn't want to deal with the widow because her persistence wore him down. Throughout Scripture, God invites us to come in prayer and humbly ask. "God answers prayer for His glory and our good, and He is not vexed when we come" (Wiersbe).

**Religious pride (Luke 18:9-12).** While the Pharisees and disciples were gathered and listening, Jesus shares another parable. Prayer is also addressed, but this time it's about the heart attitude of an individual. Don't miss the takeaway from this rich passage of truth that focuses on the doctrine of justification by faith.

Jesus "told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt (v. 9, ESV)." Many of the scribes and the Pharisees were known for their self-righteous arrogance. Human righteousness does not equate to God's perfect righteousness.

Looking down or treating others with contempt meant rejecting those who do not meet their standards of loftiness.

Two men arrive simultaneously at the temple to pray. This was either done at the public prayer times with the priest presiding at 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., or private prayer in the temple courtyards at any time. "They represented opposite ends

of the religious and social spectrums" (Lifeway).

One was a Pharisee, who were known for their adherence to the Old Testament and legalistic interpretations and applications of the law. The Pharisees put a burden on people and thought of themselves as spiritually superior.

The other man was a tax collector, called a publican in that day, despised by most Jews. The Pharisees considered publicans unclean and traitors, but remember that Jesus chose the tax collector Matthew as one of His twelve disciples (Matt. 9:9).

Let's look at the contrasts between the two individuals. First, the prideful Pharisee, "praying like this about himself" (CSB), makes the statement that he isn't like other people: he wasn't greedy (The Eighth Commandment), unrighteous, adulterous (The Seventh Commandment), and he certainly wasn't like the tax collector. He was pious and held a false sense of righteousness.

Comparing ourselves to others is a false standard. We're to compare ourselves to God's righteous standards.

**Godly humility. (Luke 18:13-14).** While the Pharisee was front and center, the tax collector stood far off with his eyes lowered, beating his chest and saying, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner." His posture was one of humility and even unworthiness (also see Ezra 9:6). His heart was filled with deep sorrow, repentance. His was a plea for mercy.

Verse 14 states this man went to his house justified (Rom. 3:24; 5:1,9; 8:30). "Justification is an instantaneous act in which God declares the repentant sinner forgiven and free from condemnation (see Rom. 5:1). The Savior who provided the basis for justification by faith for every believer declared the doctrine of justification by faith alone" (Lifeway).

"The one who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 14:11 has this same statement. Psalm 51:7 states, "The sacrifice

pleasing to God is a broken spirit... a broken and humbled heart."

**Childlike faith. (Luke 18:15-17).** The lesson ends with the story of differently-aged children brought to Jesus by parents who wanted Jesus to touch or bless them. The disciples rebuke the parents. The reason why they did that is not totally clear, but Jesus invites the little children to come. He reminds everyone that the children are coming to Him, humbly and with simple faith. This is the key. To receive the kingdom of God, we need childlike faith to enter it.

There is only one worthy. Jesus is His name! Through prayer, humbly come to Him with childlike faith.

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