

Maximus the Confessor – in defending the Orthodox Faith –
was challenged:

“Will you alone be saved and all others be lost?”

– His answer: –

“The three young men who did not adore the idol when all others adored it did not condemn anyone. They did not attend to what belonged to others but attended to this, that they not lapse from true worship. Likewise, Daniel, when thrown into the lions’ den, did not condemn anyone who did not pray to God in accordance with the decree of Darius, but attended to what was his own role, and he preferred to die and not offend God than to be afflicted by his conscience over the transgression of the law of nature. Thus it is with me as well; may God grant that I neither condemn anyone nor say that I alone am saved. But I prefer to die rather than to have on my conscience that I in any way at all have been deficient in what concerns **my faith in God.**”

OF PRAYER

Not only is prayer an activity of religion, but it is, because it regards God directly, the best act that man can perform. It is higher than an act of charity towards one’s neighbor because prayer is the expression of one’s charity towards God. Consequently any act – every act – performed prayerfully, whether related to one of the virtues or not, itself becomes an act of virtue. By “prayerfully” we do not mean a prayerful-looking act. Such acts are artificial, external, and not necessarily acceptable to God. Such were the acts that brought down the condemnation of our Lord upon the Pharisees when He labeled them “hypocrites!” The prayerfulness of the act must originate in the privacy and sincerity of one’s heart. This is essential! Only after one has obliterated the base hypocrisies that are lodged in one’s mind can one come to comprehend the loftiness of prayer. No one – not even God Himself – can bring about the destruction of one’s base hypocrisies, except the individual himself, with God’s help. Spiritual directors can only point out deficiencies. Then the individual, alone, with God’s help, can bring about effective change. No one can do it for him. No one can lead one away from that which one does not wish to be led away from!

Such base hypocrisies are the result of pride. Pride is the thief! As long as pride remains the thief, one will never step up into the heights of prayerful contemplation. Neither can one full of pride be led anywhere he doesn’t want to go – not even to the heights of contemplation. Such a one is like the famous Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray along with the poor publican. The Pharisee thought himself to be quite full of