

Rod Parsley: Are You the Pharisee or the Tax Collector?

As with all virtues, humility has an opposite: pride. It should not surprise us that revival and restoration begins with humility, because all “falling away” begins with pride. Pride sent the archangel Lucifer plummeting from the heights of glorious splendor near the very throne of God to very depths of hell itself.

When that same devil, as a serpent, sought to draw and deceive the crowning jewel of creation, mankind, into treason and rebellion, the appeal was advanced directly to Eve’s pride. “You will be like God, knowing good and evil,” the vile deceiver whispered with venomous words (Gen. 3:5).

The Lord Jesus, the master storyteller, once shared a parable about a humble yet despised tax collector. He brilliantly contrasted this humble man with a pompous, prideful Pharisee. In Luke’s account Jesus says:

Two men went up to the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed these things about himself, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men: extortioners, unjust, adulterers or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I tithe of all that I earn.” But the tax collector, standing at a distance, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, but struck his chest, saying, “God, be merciful to me a sinner.” I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.—Luke 18:10-14

One man was thoroughly impressed with himself and boastful in his religiosity. The other was so secretly ashamed of his sin

he dared not even lift his eyes from the floor. One was drowning in a pool of self-righteousness. The other was utterly convinced that he was undeserving and in desperate need of God's mercy.

None of us wants to be that Pharisee. We see Jesus' approval and want to be the tax collector—the humble sinner whom Jesus exalts as justified. Of course, we would all tell ourselves we would choose humility over pride. But do we?

James 4:10 offers a lifeline of hope and encouragement to those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy: "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." The apostle Peter seconds this motion and echoes the immutable principle when he writes, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6).

Saved to Be Different

As God's children, redeemed by the spotless blood of Calvary's Lamb and granted eternal life, we are citizens and ambassadors of the kingdom of God. Yet we choose to live every day in another kingdom belonging to God's sworn enemy. Jesus Himself once called Satan "the prince of this world" (John 14:30, KJV). Though we are no longer of that kingdom, we remain in it. We must, therefore, at all times and in all ways, resist the temptation to devolve into the value system of that kingdom, where pride isn't vanquished as sin but is lionized as virtue. In that insolvent system, meekness is mocked as weakness. The aim is never to serve, but to be served. When pride sits upon the human heart, success means being envied by as many people as possible. What a hellish existence such a system of bankrupt values spawns.

The revenant believer, however, must remember that the principles and values of God's kingdom are diametrically opposed and mutually exclusive to those of the domain of darkness from which we were rescued. That's why the Word

enjoins us to be *in* the world but not *of* it. Jesus told His disciples, "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, since I chose you out of the world, the world therefore hates you" (John 15:19). How about that for a Sunday sermon series!

In stark, jarring contrast to the pride-driven principles of this world, kingdom principles often seem like a paradox. In the kingdom of our God the way up is down. We lead by serving. We increase by giving. We experience abundant life by dying to ourselves and our selfish desires. In His kingdom promotion is achieved by assuming a posture of humility—down on our knees, knelt at His altar, with our eyes gazing upon our own spiritual poverty and our hands uplifted in absolute surrender to our glorious King and holy God!

*The preceding is an excerpt from chapter 3 of **Rod Parsley's** Revival If ... (Charisma House, 2022).*

Rod Parsley is the author of more than seventy books, including his New York Times best seller, *Culturally Incorrect*, and his most recent, *The Finale: One World, One Ruler, One Reign*. He is an international speaker, a frequent guest on numerous media outlets, and the host of the daily television broadcast *Breakthrough With Rod Parsley*, viewed by millions worldwide. He is the founder and senior pastor of *World Harvest Church*, a thriving multi-campus church headquartered in Columbus, Ohio. He has founded and oversees various ministries, including *Valor Christian College*, *Bridge of Hope missions*, and *City Harvest Network*. The roles closest to his heart are those of husband to *Joni* and father to their adult children, *Ashton* and *Austin*.