

Pat Robertson: The Greatest Virtue a Servant of God Can Possess

We are told in the Bible that in the early days of creation, Almighty God created a powerful being known as Lucifer or “the light one.”

He was known as an anointed cherub who covered the very holiness of God. According to the prophet Ezekiel, he walked on the stones of fire in the most sacred part of God’s creation.

However, this extraordinarily privileged creation began to contemplate his own beauty, and he began to compare himself to his Creator. As he did, instead of being grateful for his extraordinarily privileged status, he began to be resentful against his Creator. We read that he was perfect in all his ways until iniquity was found in him.

What was his iniquity? He convinced himself that he could do a better job running the entire creation than the Creator Himself could run it, and that was the original sin. It was not eating forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. It is the deep-seated pride in fallen angels and fallen humanity that is reflected in the popular song, “I Did It My Way.”

Submitted to the Creator

If pride is the greatest sin, then love is not the reverse of pride. Instead, I would submit that the greatest virtue is not love, but rather humility, whereby the creature is totally submitted to the power and authority of the Creator.

There are many verses in the Bible which amplify this reasoning. For instance, “Humble yourselves under the mighty

hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:6). "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6b). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). "I am Jehovah, that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another" (Isa. 42:8).

I have taken from my own personal guide the Word that Jesus spoke to His disciples, "So you also, when you have done everything commanded you, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done our duty'" (Luke 17:10). I made a firm rule for myself. It was very simple. I gave the Lord the credit for all the good things that I was able to accomplish, and I personally took the blame for all the bad.

I remembered clearly a description of people who had come to John the Baptist, "They justified God being baptized by the baptism of John" (John 7:29). What exactly does that mean?

God looks at us and says we are sinners. In John the Baptist's day, the evidence that men and women received God's approval of their conduct was to submit to baptism as a symbol that their sins were being washed away.

By this act, they were upholding the justice of God and the righteousness of God. If they said, however, that they were not sinners, then they were saying that God was in error and they rejected His word. As we read in 1 John, "If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar" (v. 10).

Repenting Before the Lord

Here is how some of this played out in my own personal life.

After our first television station went on the air and CBN had begun to grow all across the nation, it was obvious to me that we had an exceptional staff. Our cameramen were good, our audio people were good and our directors were good. In short, the work that we were doing put us in a class ahead of most of

our peers in religious broadcasting.

Along with all of these realizations came a sickening pride. I brought this sin before the Lord and was given over to heartfelt contrition. The Lord very gently reminded me with these words, "There are many more able people than you in this land, but only you would heed My call. I will use you for My purposes because I have not time to train another."

I called our entire staff together and confessed the feeling of pride that had come into my heart, which I knew most of them shared. We did not merely say prayers. We got on our knees and cried to God to ask for His forgiveness because we realized that our attitude was an abomination in His sight. Together we asked the Lord to make our hearts right so we could move forward in a spirit of humility that would please Him.

I remember also the story of Nebuchadnezzar who, in his prime, was the most powerful ruler on the face of the earth. As Nebuchadnezzar was walking about in one of the fabulous Hanging Gardens in Babylon, he thought to himself, "Is this not Babylon that I have created in all of its splendor?" (see Dan. 4:30).

At that time, a watcher from heaven came down and said to him, "The God of heaven will teach you that by His power you have been exalted, and it is within His power to elevate one of the basest of men." At that very moment, Nebuchadnezzar was given the mind of an animal. He was forced to live outdoors in a field and eat grass like an ox until he humbled himself and recognized that God Almighty rules in the affairs of the nations, and He can put in charge of them whoever He deems fit.

As I look around our beautiful campus and lovely Georgian Colonial buildings, it would be so easy to have a sense of pride. If such a thing crosses my mind, I rebuke it as evil

and quickly turn my mind toward God's power, not the work of my hands. I don't dare let myself fall into the trap that broke King Nebuchadnezzar.

Face to the Ground

In the early days of CBN as we were putting together stations on the East Coast of America, my actions today may seem comical, but they were very real then. I made what I thought was an agreement with the Lord. If He would help me put this network together on the East Coast, every day I would put my face on the ground and humble myself before Him. I did that day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. God, in turn, fulfilled the desire of my heart.

It is clear that the safest posture for a human being is with his or her face to the ground because no one wants to take that position away from them. Only when a person is lifted up with honors will he or she come under the attack of those who are jealous or resentful.

The latest principles of executive management emphasize something called "servant leadership." The Bible says that although Jesus was God Himself, He did not feel that equality with the Father was something to be grasped. Instead, He took on the form of a man and became obedient unto death.

On the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples. After they had eaten, He laid aside His outer garments, wrapped a towel around Himself, took a basin of water and began to wash the feet of His disciples. He said to them, "You acknowledge that I am your Teacher and Lord, and that is true. If I have washed your feet, then you are to wash the feet of your fellow disciples."

Before that, when He found them arguing as to who was the greatest, He made it clear that the greatest was the one who was the servant of all. True leaders are those who are humble and who feel that their calling is to serve their fellow

workers, not dominate them.

The business landscape is littered with the hotshot know-it-alls who like to boss people around. The Bible tells us that "in the abundance of counselors, there is wisdom and there is safety." We read in the book of Proverbs that "pride comes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Paul's Thorn (And My Own)

I know that the law of greatness and the law of humility are fixed inexorably in God's pattern for human social and political arrangements. For this, I must confess that I am amazed at the political success of one or more of our national leaders who clearly and openly defy these basic biblical principles.

The apostle Paul wrote that because of the abundance of the revelations given to him, "Therefore, in order to keep me from being conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:7-10, NIV). So the Apostle went on to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong."

Many commentators have debated what precisely Paul's thorn in the flesh was. Some say it was a chronic eye disease because he had mentioned in one letter that the people loved him so much that they were glad to give their eyes for him.

Some have suggested that he may have had a disfiguring skin disease because he wrote in one case, "You did not despise my affliction in the flesh." Frankly, I prefer to take Paul at his word when he said his problem was "a messenger of Satan, to torment me."

In other words, there was a demon spirit who was constantly alongside to harass him. When he went into a town, there was

opposition stirred up against him. He was arrested, beaten, ill-clothed, had been repeatedly whipped, flogged with rods, shipwrecked, and spent a night and a day in the ocean waters. It doesn't take any genius to see him as an ill-clad tramp, horribly beaten, and abused.

I am certainly no apostle Paul, but our Lord made sure that I had an external source to ensure my continued humility.

The *Virginian-Pilot* newspaper had been owned by a Col. Samuel Slover. His nephew (whom I understand he adopted) was a man named Frank Batten who added to the *Virginian-Pilot* several other dailies and several ad-filled newspapers called Shoppers. His company was called Landmark Communications, and through it, Frank Batten became one of the wealthiest men in Virginia and certainly the wealthiest in our local area.

Among his honors, he was named president of the Associated Press. Despite his vast wealth, Frank Batten suffered a number of debilitating injuries, spent many days in and out of doctors' offices and hospitals and ultimately passed away.

Frank didn't hesitate to solicit me for a contribution to one of his favorite charities, but at the same time, he made no effort to rein in a staff that delighted in attacking me personally.

The managing editor of the *Virginian-Pilot* never lost an opportunity to run stories and photographs which were terribly hostile to me. They hired a so-called investigative reporter named April Witt who followed me on the campaign trail when I was running for president and wrote ongoing inaccurate stories about what I was doing.

But another so-called journalist, according to his brother who himself was a dedicated Christian, was a committed atheist who had set out as his goal to humiliate and embarrass a prominent Christian so that he, the journalist, would feel justified in his atheism.

Words fail me to describe the vicious reporting of this so-called journalist or the headlines that the managing editor permitted.

In retrospect, I have to be grateful for this “thorn in the flesh” because the more they humbled me, the more thoroughly God blessed me. The Bible tells us that “Now no discipline seems to be joyful at the time, but grievous. Yet afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness in those who have been trained by it” (Heb. 12:11, MEV).

As I write this, I am pleased to report that I have survived the passing of my nemesis and have been gratified to see his Christian son take the reins of a much-diminished newspaper which, from time to time, actually says some kind things about me.

I know it may seem absurd, but at this point in my life I am much more comfortable being attacked and insulted than I am being complimented. Trying to live up to fulsome praise is very demanding, whereas trying to respond to withering criticism takes little or no effort because then I have to rely on the Lord. {eoa}

Editor's Note: *This article was excerpted from Pat Robertson's new book, I Have Walked With the Living God (Charisma House 2020). A leader of the faith who brings the gospel of Jesus to the world via media, Robertson has spent decades living a life that continues to inspire generations. I Have Walked With the Living God vividly chronicles Robertson's incredible kingdom journey. Readers get an insider's view of Robertson's challenges, struggles and other accomplishments beyond the Christian Broadcasting Network, which he founded in 1966. Readers will also learn about Robertson's desire to start a center for Christian education now known as Regent University and Operation Blessing, the global humanitarian organization Robertson founded that provides hunger relief, safe water, orphan care, disaster relief, medical care and development to*

millions of people in every U.S. state and in dozens of countries.