

Publican and Pharisee: Humility vs Self-Righteousness

This parable represents to us two chariots on the race course, each with two charioteers in it. In one of the chariots it places righteousness with pride, in the other sin and humility. You see the chariot of sin outstrip that of righteousness, not by its own strength but by the excellence of humility combined with it, but the other is defeated not by righteousness, but by the weight and swelling of pride.

For as humility by its own elasticity rises above the weight of pride, and leaping up reaches to God, so pride by its great weight easily depresses righteousness. Although therefore you are earnest and constant in well doing, yet think you may boast yourself, you are altogether devoid of the fruits of prayer. But you that bears a thousand loads of guilt on your conscience, and only

think this thing of yourself that you are the lowest of all men, shall gain much confidence before God.

And He then goes on to assign the reason of His sentence. For every one who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. The word humility has various meanings. There is the humility of virtue, as, a humble and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. There is also a humility arising from sorrows, as, He has humbled my life upon the earth. There is a humility derived from sin, and the pride and insatiability of riches. For can anything be more low and debased than those who grovel in riches and power, and count them great things?

Saint John Chrysostom

SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND PHARISEE



Icon of the Publican and Pharisee