

CONTRASTING CHARACTERS TWO SONS

Matthew 21:28-31, "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two of them did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.'"

Some of the greatest critics of Jesus were those who should have praised Him most—the chief priests and elders of the Jews. After all, these men were most familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament constantly prophesied of the coming Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus said of the Scriptures, "...these are they which testify of Me...if you do not believe his (Moses) writings, how will you believe My words?" (John 5:39,47).

Yet, when Jesus, the Messiah, came to earth as a man He was persecuted, ridiculed, rejected and crucified by the leading Jews. Why? Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, knew the answer. Matthew 27:18 says, "...he knew that they had handed him over because of envy." The leading Jews liked their power, prestige and popularity. Jesus, naturally, was a threat to their political position among the Jews. They should have accepted Him, but they rejected Him for selfish reasons. Strangely enough, the common sinners of the multitudes had the common sense to see Jesus as He was—Lord and Christ. Though from sinful, backslidden pasts they came to Jesus in droves and became the kinds of disciples you would expect from a tradition-rich, elite Jew.

It is these two groups—the chief priests and the sinners that are

contrasted in the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21. By contrasting these two characters, we might learn...

Both are called to work!

Both the "chief priests" and "chief sinners" were asked to get busy in God's kingdom. God does not care about your background. It does not matter if you were raised with a silver spoon or a plastic spork God has work for us all to do. Nobody is too good or too bad to go to work for the Lord. No one is exempt from His service.

There is a difference between lip-service and true service.

One son claims he is doing the father's work. Yet, he was not doing it at all. The other refused to do his father's bidding but changed his mind and did go do it. The chief priests were claiming to be the true servants of God, but their actions proved otherwise. The sinners had, at first, refused God's work but they later became the devoted servants of Jesus. God does not just want flattery, empty promises and false claims. God is smart enough to see through those smoke-screens. He does not want servants claiming to love and cherish Him while hypocritically disobeying His will. A hypocrite will do much more harm to the cause of Christ than the

raunchiest sinner who has turned from their sins to Jesus Christ.

It is okay to change! The tax collectors and harlots were guilty of horrible sins. But, that did not exclude them from God's service. All they needed to do was change their mind about rejecting God and get to work for Him. Nobody, not even these ex-hookers and con-artists, were too bad to be forgiven. God would rather have a penitent sinner than a hypocritical saint! So, if you are living in sin—quit it. Start living a life in obedience to Jesus Christ and an entrance into the kingdom of God can be yours. Will you change your ways to sincerely serve the Lord of ?

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