SERMON XXXIV.

The Pharisee and Publican.


I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: For every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.

THOUGH there be some who dare to deny the Lord Jesus, and disbelieve the revelation he has been pleased to give us, and thereby bring upon themselves swift destruction; yet I would charitably hope there are but few if any such among you, to whom I am now to preach the kingdom of God. Was I to ask you, how you expect to be justified in the sight of an offended God? I suppose you would answer, only for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, was I to come more home to your consciences, I fear that most would make the Lord Jesus but in part their Saviour, and go about, as it were, to establish a righteousness of their own. And this is not thinking contrary to the rules of christian charity: for we are all self-righteous by nature; it is as natural for us to turn to a covenant of works, as for the sparks to fly upwards. We have had so many legal and so few free-grace preachers, for these many years, that most professors now seem to be settled upon their lees, and rather deserve the title of Pharisees than christians.

Thus it was with the generality of the people during the time of our Lord's public ministration: and therefore, in almost all his discourses, he preached the gospel to poor sinners, and denounced terrible woes against proud self-justiciaries. The parable, to which the words of the text belong, looks
both these ways: For the evangelist informs us (ver. 9.) that our Lord "spake it unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." And a notable parable it is; a parable worthy of your most serious attention.

"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear," what Jesus Christ speaks to all wise professors in it.

Ver. 10. "Two men went up to the temple to pray (and never two men of more opposite characters) the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican." The Pharisees were the strictest sect among the Jews. "I was of the strictest sect, of the Pharisees," says Paul. They prayed often; not only so, but they made long prayers; and, that they might appear extraordinary devout, they would pray at the corners of the street, where two ways met, that people going or coming, both ways, might see them. "They made broad (as our Lord informs us) the borders of their phylacteries," they had pieces of parchment fown to their long robes, on which some parts of the Scripture were written, that people might from thence infer, that they were lovers of the law of God. They were so very punctual and exact in outward purifications, that they washed at their going out and coming in. They held the washing of pots, brazen vessels and tables, and many other such-like things they did. They were very zealous for the traditions of the fathers, and for the observation of the rites and ceremonies of the church, notwithstanding they frequently made void the law of God by their traditions. And they were so exceedingly exact in the outward observation of the sabbath, that they condemned our Lord for making a little clay with his spittle; and called him a sinner, and said, he was not of God, because he had given sight to a man born blind, on the sabbath-day. For these reasons they were had in high veneration among the people, who were sadly misled by these blind guides: they had the uppermost places in the synagogues, and greetings in the market-places (which they loved dearly) and were called of men, Rabbi; in short, they had such a reputation for piety, that it became a proverb among the Jews, that, if there were but two men saved, the one of them must be a Pharisee.

As for the Publicans, it was not so with them. It seems they were sometimes Jews, or at least proselytes of the gate;
for we find one here coming up to the temple; but for the
generality, I am apt to think they were Gentiles; for they were
gatherers of the Roman taxes, and used to amass much wealth
(as appears by the confession of Zaccheus, one of the chief of
them) by wronging men with false accusations. They were
so universally infamous, that our Lord himself tells his disci-
pies, "the excommunicated man should be to them as a hea-
then man, or a Publican." And the Pharisees thought it a
sufficient impeachment of our Lord's character, that he was
a friend to Publicans and sinners, and went to fit down with
them at meat.

But, however they disagreed in other things, they agreed in
this, that public worship is a duty incumbent upon all: for
they both came up to the temple. The very heathens were
observers of temple-worship. We have very early notice of
men sacrificing to, and calling upon the name of the Lord,
in the Old Testament; and I find it no where contradicted in
the New. Our Lord, and his apostles, went up to the tem-
ple; and we are commanded by the apostle, "not to forsfake
the assembling ourselves together," as the manner of too many
is in our days; and such too, as would have us think well of
them, though they seldom or never tread the courts of the
Lord's house. But, though our devotions begin in our closets,
they must not end there. And, if people never shew their de-
votions abroad, I must suspect they have little or none at home.
"Two men went up to the temple." And what went they
thither for? Not (as multitudes amongst us do) to make the
house of God a house of merchandize, or turn it into a den of
thieves; much less to ridicule the preacher, or disturb the con-
gregation; no, they came to the temple, says our Lord, "to
pray." Thither should the tribes of God's spiritual Israel go
up, to talk with, and pour out their hearts before the mighty
God of Jacob.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray." I fear one of
them forgot his errand. I have often been at a loss what to
call the Pharisee's address; it certainly does not deserve the
name of a prayer: he may rather be said to come to the temple
to beg, than to pray; for I do not find one word of confesi-
on of his original guilt; not one single petition for pardon of
his past actual sins, or for grace to help and assist him for the
time
time to come: he only brings to God, as it were, a reckoning of his performances; and does that, which no flesh can justly do, I mean, glory in his presence.

Ver. 11. "The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this Publican."

Our Lord first takes notice of his posture; "the Pharisee stood," he is not to be condemned for that; for standing, as well as kneeling, is a proper posture for prayer. "When you stand praying," says our Lord; though sometimes our Lord kneeled, nay, lay flat on his face upon the ground; his apostles also kneeled, as we read in the Acts, which has made me wonder at some, who are so bigotted to standing in family, as well as public prayer, that they will not kneel, notwithstanding all kneel that are around them. I fear there is something of the Pharisee in this conduct. Kneeling and standing are indifferent, if the knee of the soul be bent, and the heart upright towards God. We should study not to be particular in indifferent things, lest we offend weak minds. What the Pharisee is remarked for, is his "standing by himself:" for the words may be rendered, he stood by himself, upon some eminent place, at the upper part of the temple, near the Holy of holies, that the congregation might see what a devout man he was: or it may be understood as we read it, he prayed by himself, or of himself, out of his own heart; he did not pray by form; it was an extemporaneous prayer: for there are many Pharisees that pray and preach too, extemporaneously. I do not see why these may not be acquired, as well as other arts and sciences.

A man, with a good elocution, ready turn of thought, and good memory, may repeat his own or other men's sermons, and, by the help of a Wilkins or Henry, may pray seemingly excellently well, and yet not have the least grain of true grace in his heart; I speak this, not to cry down extemporaneous prayer, or to discourage those dear souls who really pray by the spirit; I only would hereby give a word of reproof to those who are so bigotted to extemporaneous prayer, that they condemn, at least judge, all that use forms, as though not so holy and heavenly, as others who pray without them. Alas! this is wrong. Not every one that prays extemporaneously is a spiritual, nor every one that prays with a form, a formal man. Let us not judge one another; let not him that uses a form, judge him that
that prays extempore, on that account; and let not him that prays extempore, despise him who uses a form.

"The Pharisee stood, and prayed thus by himself." Which may signify also praying inwardly in his heart; for there is a way (and that an excellent one too) of praying when we cannot speak; thus Anna prayed, when she spake not aloud, only her lips moved. Thus God says to Moses, "Why criest thou?" when, it is plain, he did not speak a word. This is what the apostle means by the "spirit making intercession (for believers) with groanings which cannot be uttered." For there are times when the soul is too big to speak; when God fills it as it were, and overshadows it with his presence, so that it can only fall down, worship, adore, and lie in the dust before the Lord. Again, there is a time when the soul is benumbed, barren and dry, and the believer has not a word to say to his heavenly Father; and then the heart only can speak. And I mention this for the encouragement of weak christians, who think they never are accepted but when they have a flow of words, and fancy they do not please God at the bottom, for no other reason but because they do not please themselves. Such would do well to consider, that God knows the language of the heart, and the mind of the spirit; and that we make use of words, not to inform God, but to affect ourselves. Whenever therefore any of you find yourselves in such a frame, be not discouraged: offer yourselves up in silence before God, as clay in the hands of the potter, for him to write and stamp his own divine image upon your souls. But I believe the Pharisee knew nothing of this way of prayer: he was self-righteous, a stranger to the divine life; and therefore either of the former explanations may be best put upon these words.

"He stood, and prayed thus with himself; God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioner, unjust, adulterer, or even as this Publican." Here is some appearance of devotion, but it is only in appearance. To thank God that we are not extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and as wicked in our practices as other men are, is certainly meet, right, and our bounden duty: for whatever degrees of goodness there may be in us, more than in others, it is owing to God's restraining, preventing, and assisting grace. We are all equally conceived and born in sin; all are fallen short of the glory of God, and liable
liable to all the curses and maledictions of the law; so that
"he who glorieth, must glory only in the \textit{Lord.}\) For none
of us have any thing which we did not receive; and whatever
we have received, we did not in the least merit it, nor could
we lay the least claim to it on any account whatever: we are
wholly indebted to free grace for all. Had the Pharisee thought
thus, when he said, "\textit{God, I thank thee that I am not as
other men are,}" it would have been an excellent introduction
to his prayer: but he was a free-willer, as well as self-righteous
(for he that is one must be the other) and thought by his own
power and strength, he had kept himself from these vices. And
yet I do not see what reason he had to trust in himself that he
was righteous, merely because he was not an extortioner, un-
just, adulterer, for all this while he might be, as he certainly
was (as is also every self-righteous person) as proud as the
devil. But he not only boasts, but lies before \textit{God} (as all
self-justiciaries will be found liars here or hereafter.) He thanks
\textit{God} that he was not unjust: but is it not an act of the highest
injustice to rob \textit{God} of his prerogative? is it not an act of in-
justice to judge our neighbour? and yet of both these crimes
this self-righteous vaunter is guilty. "\textit{Even as this Public-
ian!}" He seems to speak with the utmost disdain; this Pub-
lician! Perhaps he pointed at the poor man, that others might
treat him with the like contempt. Thou proud, confident
boaster, what hast thou to do with that poor Publican? sup-
pposing other Publicans were unjust, and extortioners, did it
therefore follow that he must be so? or, if he had been such
a sinner, how knowest thou but he has repented of those sins?
His coming up to the temple to pray, is one good sign of a re-
formation at least. Thou art therefore inexcusable, \textit{O Phar-
isee, who thus judgest the Publican: for thou that judgest
him to be unjust, art, in the very act of judging, unjust thy-
selv: thy sacrifice is only the sacrifice of a fool.}

We have seen what the Pharisee's negative goodness comes
to; I think, nothing at all. Let us see how far his positive
goodness extends; for, if we are truly religious, we shall not
only eschew evil, but also do good: "\textit{I fast twice in the week,
I give tithes of all that I possess.}"}

The Pharisee is not here condemned for his fasting, for fast-
ing is a christian duty; "\textit{when you fast," says our \textit{Lord,}
thereby
thereby taking it for granted that his disciples would fast. And "when the bridegroom shall be taken away, then shall they fast in those days." "In fasting often," says the apostle. And all that would not be cast-aways, will take care, as their privilege, without legal constraint, to "keep their bodies under, and bring them into subjection." The Pharisee is only condemned for making a righteousness of his fasting, and thinking that God would accept him, or that he was any better than his neighbours, merely on account of his fasting: this is what he was blamed for. The Pharisee was not to be discommended for fasting twice in a week; I wish some christians would imitate him more in this: but to depend on fasting in the least, for his justification in the sight of God, was really abominable. "I give tithes of all that I posses." He might as well have said, I pay tithes. But self-righteous people (whatever they may say to the contrary) think they give something to God. "I give tithes of all that I posses:" I make conscience of giving tithes, not only of all that the law requires, but of my mint, annise, and cummin, of all things whatsoever I posses; this was well; but to boast of such things, or of fasting, is pharisaical and devilish. Now then let us sum up all the righteousness of this boasting Pharisee, and see what little reason he had to trust in himself, that he was righteous, or to despise others. He is not unjust (but we have only his bare word for that, I think I have proved the contrary;) he is no adulterer, no extortioner; he faiths twice in the week, and gives tithes of all that he posses; and all this he might do, and a great deal more, and yet be a child of the devil: for here is no mention made of his loving the Lord his God with all his heart, which was the "first and great commandment of the law;" here is not a single syllable of inward religion; and he was not a true Jew, who was only one outwardly. It is only an outside piety at the best; inwardly he is full of pride, self-justification, free-will and great uncharitableness.

Were not the Pharisees, do you think, highly offended at this character? for they might easily know it was spoken against them. And though, perhaps, some of you may be offended at me, yet, out of love, I must tell you, I fear this parable is spoken against many of you: for are there not many of
of you, who go up to the temple to pray, with no better spirit than this Pharisee did? And because you fall, it may be in the Lent, or every Friday, and because you do no body any harm, receive the sacrament, pay tithes, and give an alms now and then; you think that you are safe, and trust in yourselves that you are righteous, and inwardly despise those, who do not come up to you in these outward duties? this, I am persuaded, is the case of many of you, though, alas! it is a desperate one, as I shall endeavour to shew at the close of this discourse.

Let us now take a view of the Publican, ver. 13. "And the Publican standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

"The Publican standing afar off:" Perhaps in the outward court of the temple, conscious to himself that he was not worthy to approach the Holy of holies; so conscious and so weighed down with a sense of his own unworthiness, that he would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven, which he knew was God's throne. Poor heart! what did he feel at this time! none but returning Publicans, like himself, can tell. Me-thinks I see him standing afar off, penive, oppressed, and even overwhelmed with sorrow; sometimes he attempts to look up; but then, thinks he, the heavens are unclean in God's sight, and the very angels are charged with folly; how then shall such a wretch as I dare to lift up my guilty head! And to shew that his heart was full of holy self-repentance, and that he sorrowed after a godly sort, he smote upon his breast; the word in the original implies, that he struck hard upon his breast: he will lay the blame upon none but his own wicked heart. He will not, like unhumbled Adam, tacitly lay the fault of his vileness upon God, and say, The passions which thou gavest me, they deceived me, and I sinned: he is too penitent thus to reproach his Maker; he imites upon his breast, his treacherous, ungrateful, desperately wicked breast; a breast now ready to burst: and at length, out of the abundance of his heart, I doubt not, with many tears, he at last cries out, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Not, God be merciful to yonder proud Pharisee: he found enough in himself to vent his resentment against, without looking abroad upon others. Not, God be merciful to me a saint; for he knew
knew “all his righteousnesses were but filthy rags.” Not, God be merciful to such or such a one; but, God be merciful to me, even to me a sinner, a sinner by birth, a sinner in thought, word, and deed; a sinner as to my person, a sinner as to all my performances; a sinner in whom is no health, in whom dwelleth no good thing; a sinner, poor, miserable, blind and naked, from the crown of the head to the sole of the feet, full of wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores; a self-accused, self-condemned sinner. What think you? would this Publican have been offended if any minister had told him that he deferved to be damned? would he have been angry, if any one had told him, that by nature he was half a devil and half a beast? No: he would have confessed a thousand hells to have been his due, and that he was an earthly, devilish sinner. He felt now what a dreadful thing it was to depart from the living God: he felt that he was inexcusable every way; that he could in nowise, upon account of any thing in himself, be justified in the sight of God; and therefore lays himself at the feet of sovereign mercy, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

Here is no confidence in the flesh, no plea fetched from fasting, paying tithes, or the performance of any other duty; here is no boasting that he was not an extortioner, unjust, or an adulterer. Perhaps he had been guilty of all these crimes, at least he knew he would have been guilty of all these, had he been left to follow the devices and desires of his own heart; and therefore, with a broken and contrite spirit, he cries out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.”

This man came up to the temple to pray, and he prayed indeed. And a broken and contrite heart God will not despise. “I tell you,” says our Lord, I who lay in the bottom of the Father from all eternity; I who am God, and therefore know all things; I who can neither deceive, nor be deceived, whose judgment is according to right; I tell you, whatever you may think of it, or think of me for telling you so, “this man,” this Publican, this despised, sinful, but broken-hearted man, “went down to his house justified (acquitted, and looked upon as righteous in the sight of God) rather than the other.”

Let Pharisees take heed that they do not pervert this text: for when it is said, “This man went down to his house justified
tified rather than the other," our Lord does not mean that both were justified, and that the Publican had rather more justification than the Pharisee; but it implies, either that the Publican was actually justified, but the Pharisee was not; or, that the Publican was in a better way to receive justification, than the Pharisee; according to our Lord's saying, "The Publicans and Harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven before you." That the Pharisee was not justified is certain, for "God resifieth the proud;" and that the Publican was adually justified (and perhaps went home with a sense of it in his heart) we have great reason to infer from the latter part of the text, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The parable therefore now speaks to all who hear me this day: for that our Lord intended it for our learning, is evident, from his making such a general application; "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

The parable of the Publican and Pharisee, is but as it were a glass, wherein we may see the different disposition of all mankind; for all mankind may be divided into two general classes. Either they trust wholly in themselves, or in part, that they are righteous, and then they are Pharisees; or they have no confidence in the flesh, are self-condemned sinners, and then they come under the character of the Publican just now described. And we may add also, that the different reception these men met with, points out to us in lively colours, the different treatment the self-justiciary and self-condemned criminal will meet with at the terrible day of judgment: "Every one that exalts himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

"Every one," without exception, young or old, high or low, rich or poor (for God is no respecter of persons) "every one," whosoever he be, that exalteth himself, and not free-grace; every one that trusteth in himself that he is righteous, that refts in his duties, or thinks to join them with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for justification in the sight of God, though he be no adulterer, no extortioner, though he be not outwardly unjust, nay, though he fast twice in the week,
week, and gives tithes of all that he possesseth; yet shall he be 
abased in the sight of all good men who know him here, and 
before men and angels, and God himself, when Jesus Christ 
comes to appear in judgment hereafter. How low, none but 
the almighty God can tell. He shall be abased to live with 
devils, and make his abode in the lowest hell for evermore. 

Hear this, all ye self-justiciaries, tremble, and behold your 
doom! a dreadful doom, more dreadful than words can ex-
press, or thought conceive! If you refuse to humble yourselves, 
after hearing this parable, I call heaven and earth to witness 
against you this day, that God shall visit you with all his 
forms, and pour all the vials of his wrath upon your rebelli-
ous heads; you exalted yourselves here, and God shall abase 
you hereafter; you are as proud as the devil, and with devils 
shall you dwell to all eternity. "Be not deceived, God is 
not mocked;" he sees your hearts, he knows all things. And, 
notwithstanding you may come up to the temple to pray, your 
prayers are turned into sin, and you go down to your houses 
unjustified, if you are self-justiciaries; and do you know what 
it is to be unjustified? why, if you are unjustified, the wrath 
of God abideth upon you; you are in your blood; all the 
curses of the law belong to you: cursed are you when you go 
out, cursed are you when you come in; cursed are your 
thoughts, cursed are your words, cursed are your deeds; every 
thing you do, say, or think, from morning to night, is only 
one continued series of sin. However highly you may be 
esteemed in the sight of men, however you may be honoured 
with the uppermost seats in the synagogues, in the church 
militant, you will have no place in the church triumphant. 

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of 
God:" pull down every self-righteous thought, and every 
proud imagination, that now exalteth itself against the per-
fect, personal, imputed righteousness of the dear Lord Jesus: 
"For he (and he alone) that humbleth himself shall be ex-
alted."

He that humbleth himself, whatever he be: if, instead of 
fasting twice in the week, he has been drunk twice in the 
week; if, instead of giving tithes of all that he possesseth, he 
has cheated the minister of his tithes, and the king of his 
taxes; notwithstanding he be unjust, an extortioner, an adul-
terer,
terer, nay, notwithstanding the sins of all mankind center and
unite in him; yet, if through grace, like the Publican, he is
eabled to humble himself, he shall be exalted; not in a tem-
poral manner; for christians must rather expect to be abased,
and to have their names cast out as evil, and to lay down their
lives for Christ Jesus in this world: but he shall be ex-
alted in a spiritual sense; he shall be freely justified from all
his sins by the blood of Jesus; he shall have peace with God,
a peace which passeth all understanding; not only peace, but
joy in believing; he shall be translated from the kingdom of
Satan, to the kingdom of God's dear Son: he shall dwell in
Christ, and Christ in him: he shall be one with Christ,
and Christ one with him: he shall drink of divine pleasures,
as out of a river: he shall be sanctified throughout in spirit,
soul and body; in one word, he shall be filled with all the
fulness of God. Thus shall the man that humbleth himself
be exalted here; but 0, how high shall he be exalted here-
after! as high as the highest heavens, even to the right-hand
of God: there he shall sit, happy both in soul and body, and
judge angels; high, out of the reach of all sin and trouble,
eternally secure from all danger of falling. O sinners, did you
but know how highly God intends to exalt those who hum-
ble themselves, and believe in Jesus, surely you would hum-
ble yourselves, at least beg of God to humble you; for it is
he that must strike the rock of your hearts, and cause floods of
contrite tears to flow therefrom. O that God would give this
sermon such a commission, as he once gave to the rod of
Moses! I would strike you through and through with the rod
of his word, until each of you was brought to cry out with the
poor Publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." What
pleasant language would this be in the ears of the Lord of
Sabbaoth!

Are there no poor sinners among you? what, are you all
Pharisees? Surely, you cannot bear the thoughts of returning
home unjustified; can you? what if a fit of the apoplexy should
seize you, and your souls be hurried away before the awful
Judge of quick and dead? what will you do without Christ's
righteousness? if you go out of the world unjustified, you must
remain so for ever. 0 that you would humble yourselves!
then would the Lord exalt you; it may be, that, whilst I am
speaking,
speaking, the Lord might justify you freely by his grace. I observed, that perhaps the Publican had a sense of his justification before he went from the temple, and knew that his pardon was sealed in heaven: and who knows but you may be thus exalted before you go home, if you humble yourselves? O what peace, love and joy, would you then feel in your hearts! you would have a heaven upon earth. O that I could hear any of you say (as I once heard a poor sinner, under my preaching, cry out) He is come, He is come! How would you then, like him, extol a precious, a free-hearted Christ! how would you magnify him for being such a friend to Publicans and sinners? greater love can no man shew, than to lay down his life for a friend; but Christ laid down his life for his enemies, even for you, if you are enabled to humble yourselves, as the Publican did. Sinners, I know not how to leave off talking with you; I would fill my mouth with arguments, I would plead with you. “Come, let us reason together;” though your sins be as scarlet, yet, if you humble yourselves, they shall be as white as snow. One act of true faith in Christ, justifies you for ever and ever; he has not promised you what he cannot perform; he is able to exalt you: for God hath exalted, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow; nay, God hath exalted him to be not only a Prince, but a Saviour. May he be a Saviour to you! and then I shall have reason to rejoice, in the day of judgment, that I have not preached in vain, nor laboured in vain.