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"TO THE LAW AND TO THE TESTIMONY."

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Two men went up into the Temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a Publican. — Luke 18: 10.

This parable our Saviour spake unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, wherein is illustrated the two grand offspring systems of worship in the world, from the days of Cain and Abel to the end of time. Although the Pharisee and Publican both go up to the temple, and both go for the same purpose, yet, I suppose no two men were of more opposite characters; morally the Publicans must have been of very low repute, as our Saviour seems to class them with harlots, (see Math. 21: 31) while the Pharisees were (at least in their own esteem) of a very elevated moral character and very strict in their obedience to the law, so much so that they frequently complained of many acts of Christ, impeaching Him as being even immoral in His walk. Such, reader, was briefly the character of the two men who went up into the temple to pray. Let us now consider the substance and success of their prayers. 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. Now we may grant all this, and I suppose that the Pharisee was not as many others of his time, that he was not unjust in his dealings with men; that he was not an extortioner as many were; that he was not an adulterer. All this, I say we may grant, and really conclude that this Pharisee had refrained from those vices which he justly charges upon others, yet, however he was a sinner, he sprang from Adam who corrupted himself by transgression; hence his children must partake of his nature, and from him they can derive no other; but of this, we perceive nothing like a confession in the Pharisee's prayer which may justify us in the conclusion that he knew the natural vanity and deception of his

heart. But the Pharisee continues: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. This I suppose was true, for which Pharisees should not be reproached. To refrain from injustice, extortion, adultery, to pray, give tithes, &c., are excellent things in their place; however, these things nor any other thing, except Christ, must not be relied upon for justification, but that such like things was the Pharisee's reliance is plain from his prayer, for he not only does not even confess that he was a sinner, but he does not ask anything at all of the Lord, from which we may justly infer that he did feel in need of anything except that the Lord should be reminded of his excellent virtues; with which we will now leave the Pharisee for a while, and consider the Publican and his prayer. But first, his character, what was it? Perhaps he was an extortioner; in gathering taxes it may be that he had defrauded many; it is likely that he was an adulterer and unjust generally. Certain it is he was a sinner and had no plea to enter. Perhaps he thought that he was unlike other men; but unlike the Pharisee, he thought that he was the worst of all. So conscious was he of his guilt that he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. He does not state any reason why mercy should be granted him; this he could not then have done; he could see in himself a sufficient cause for judgment, but nothing to influence the mercy of the Lord. But his inability to see the channel of mercy did not lessen his need nor silence his crying for mercy. If he had felt, as many now speak, that God would be unjust if he does not something for us, this would hindered his penitent cry for mercy, for we must deserve that which God would be unjust to leave us without, and that which a man deserves is but justice to him, and should not in any case deserve the name of mercy. Herein we perceive the reason why the

Pharisee cannot pray acceptable; he feels himself worthy and cannot therefore feel a need of that which is properly called mercy. It was not so with the Publican, he knew that he had merited nothing but wrath, and it was that caused his cry for mercy; and though he may have heard the Pharisee thanking God (or himself rather) that he was not as this Publican, I have no idea that he was offended thereby; no doubt that the Publican would sincerely have confessed that the Pharisee was a much more excellent character than himself. Reader have you ever seen the time that you had no plea to offer, and yet felt that you were sinking down under the weight of God's wrath; when you had reformed your walk to the utmost of your capacity, and prayed as sincerely as you knew how, did you see that your reformation was no atonement, and did you feel that your prayers was unavailing? Suppose one had then told you that God would be just to banish you, what would have been your reply? Would you have said He is unjust, or did you not conclude that the justice of God must oblige your condemnation. Suppose then, one had told you that God was a gracious and merciful sovereign, and that He had made ample provisions for every poor, needy soul, whatever might be the number and magnitude of their sins. Suppose you had been told that Christ has borne all your transgressions in his own body, and that He has put away all your numerous sins by the sacrifice of himself, and that your present troubles was the effect of spiritual light, and good evidence that Christ was your friend and Saviour; and moreover, that salvation was wholly by grace and not of works, that the best you could do would not merit salvation, and the worst you had ever done could not hinder His love and mercy; do you think such preaching would be an offence unto you then, when it was plain to your understanding that nothing but free and unmerited mercy could reach your case? Nay, it is Pharisees and not

the heart broken penitent that object to the sovereign mercy and abounding grace of God. No doubt the Pharisee had more expectation of being justified than the Publican did, but what were the grounds of his hope, he tells us plainly in his prayer, he did not feel to be as other men were, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, &c. These bad things he says he was not guilty of, but he had fasted, given tithes, alms, &c., these good things he had done, and such was the ground of his hope. And doubtless if one had told him that trusting in his own goodness was a false hope and would avail nothing, he would have been offended; and so it is now, modern Pharisees cry as loudly against the doctrine of grace without works as their ancient brethren did against Christ. But be it so, the Publican went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee, which furnishes an unanswerable argument for the doctrine of grace, for if human goodness should be considered a condition of mercy, then the Pharisee had been justified rather than the Publican, for no doubt his moral department was much better. This error has been and ever will be an irreconcilable mystery to Pharisees, that the wise and prudent, self-righteous man, who from self-love refrains from outward vice and immorality, should be cast off while our Lord will sooner receive into His kingdom Publicans and harlots, and such as are base and vile among men; not that His people walk in such a manner after they are called therefrom. No, if any walk perversely, if any are thieves, murderers, fornicators, adulterers, drunkards, defrauders, &c., &c., such give but poor evidence that they have ever prayed the Publican's prayer, though they may have used his words with the Pharisee's spirit. If we are possessed of a boastful spirit; if any contend that salvation is conditional, depending upon some work or worthiness of man, which they profess to have performed, such professors may use the words of the