

.The Pharisee and the Publican

E G White

AND HE SPAKE this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 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. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 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. 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." This parable was spoken to show the need of true humility.

Both these men are represented as resorting to the same place for prayer. Both came to meet with God. But what a contrast there was between them! One was full of self-praise. He looked it, he walked it, he prayed it; the other realized fully his own nothingness. The Pharisee was looked upon as righteous before God, and thus he was in his own estimation. The publican, in his humility, looked upon himself as having no claim to the mercy or approval of God.

"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, . . . or even as this publican," the Pharisee prayed proudly. The publican would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." The Searcher of hearts looked down upon both men, and he discerned the value of each prayer. He looks not on the outward appearance; he judges not as man judges. He does not value man according to his rank, talent, education, or position. "To this man will I look," he declares, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." He saw that the Pharisee was full of self-importance and self-righteousness, and the record was made against his name, "Weighed in the balances, and found wanting." His self-righteous prayer was unanswered. But the poor publican, who could only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner," moved the pity of the Lord; and his prayer was accepted. "I tell you," said Christ, "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."

"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are." This prayer

represents the prayers of many. They think that because they perform outward religious duties, they are entitled to the approval of God. Like the Pharisee, they say, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." But they are self-centered and self-sufficient, and, altho they pray, they are unblessed of God. He says to them: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

The Majesty of heaven humbled himself from the highest authority, from the position of one equal with God, to the lowest place, that of a servant. His home was in Nazareth, a place proverbial for its wickedness. His parents were among the lowly poor. His trade was that of a carpenter, and he labored with his hands to do his part in sustaining the family. In order to save sinful man, he left his riches, his splendor, his honor, his glory, for a life of humility, shame, and reproach. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He came not to do his own will, but the will of Him that judgeth righteously. From his lips were heard the words, "I can of mine own self do nothing." His humility did not consist in a low estimate of his own character and qualifications, but in humbling himself to fallen humanity, in order to raise them with him to a higher life.

A Distinguishing Characteristic of God's People

Among the peculiarities which should distinguish God's people from the world is their humility. That man is nearest God, and is the most honored of him, who has the least self-importance and self-righteousness, the least trust and confidence in self, who waits on God in humble trusting faith. Instead of being ambitious to be equal with each other in honor and position, or perhaps even higher, we should seek to be the humble, faithful servants of Christ.

Christ has invited us: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." In humility and lowliness of mind we find great peace and strength. They shine brightest who feel most their own weakness; for such make Christ their righteousness. God brings men over this ground again and again, increasing the pressure until perfect humility and a transformation of character bring them into harmony with Christ, and they are vic-

tors over themselves.

In self-love, self-exaltation, and pride, there is great weakness; but in humility there is great strength. Pride and self-importance, when compared with humility and lowliness, are indeed weakness. It was our Saviour's gentleness, his plain, unassuming manners, that made him a conqueror of hearts. But in our separation from God, in our pride and darkness, we are constantly seeking to elevate ourselves, forgetting that lowliness of mind is power.

True humility means working for God, trusting entirely to his guidance. God looks down from heaven with pleasure on the trusting, believing ones who have a full sense of their dependence on him. To such he delights to give when they ask him. "He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with good things." "The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him." "He that putteth his trust in me shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain." Through good and bad report, through darkness, through all the antagonism of the agencies of Satan, the Sun of Righteousness calmly shines on, searching out evil, repressing sin, and reviving the spirit of the humble and contrite ones.

"Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." —*Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1897.