

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION TO LUKE 18

Ver. 1. *And he spoke a parable unto them,* etc.] To his own disciples, as the Ethiopic version reads, in order to encourage them to prayer, with perseverance in it; since such sore times of trial and affliction were coming upon the Jews, of which he had spoken in the preceding chapter; and such times more especially call for prayer; (see ^{<4815>}Psalm 50:15)

[to this end], that men ought always to pray. This is opposed to them, who pray not at all, or have left off prayer before God, or who pray only in distress; and suggests, that a man should pray as often as he has an opportunity; should be constant and assiduous at the throne of grace, and continue putting up his requests to God, though he does not presently return an answer:

and not to faint; by reason of afflictions, temptations, desertions, and delays in answering prayer; and prayer itself is an admirable antidote against fainting under afflictive providences: it is with the Jews an affirmative precept that a man should pray, $\mu\omega\upsilon \text{ I kb}$, “every day” ^{f562}; it was usual with them to pray three times a day; (see ^{<4817>}Psalm 55:17 ^{<2160>}Daniel 6:10) there is no set time fixed by Christ; men should be always praying. This is not to be understood, that a man should be always actually engaged in the work of prayer; that he should be continually either in his closet, in private devotion to God, or attending exercises of more public prayer, with the saints; for there are other religious exercises to be performed, besides prayer; and besides, there are many civil affairs of life, it is every man's indispensable duty to regard: nor does our Lord mean in the least to break in upon, or interrupt the natural and civil duties of life; but his meaning is, that a man should persevere in prayer, and not leave off, or be dejected, because he has not an immediate answer; and this is clear from the following case.

Ver. 2. *Saying, there was in a city a judge,* etc.] In every city in the land of Israel, there was a sanhedrim, or court of judicature; in Jerusalem was the great sanhedrim, consisting of seventy one; and in every city where there

were an hundred and twenty men, or more, there was a lesser sanhedrim, consisting of twenty three; and in a city in which there were not an hundred and twenty men, were three judges; for there was no sanhedrim, or court of judicature, that consisted of less than three^{f563}: but

“although there is no judicature less than three, *ˆwrl dj al rtwm*, “it is lawful for one to judge”, according to the law, as it is said, (^{<R1915>}Leviticus 19:15) “In righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour”; but according to the words of the Scribes, (only,) when there are three, and two that judge, their judgment is no judgment: one who is publicly approved or authorized, or who has taken a licence from the sanhedrim, it is lawful for him to judge alone, but it is not accounted a judicature; and though it is lawful, it is the command of the wise men, that he set others with him; for lo, they say, do not judge alone, for there is none that judgeth alone, but one^{f564}.”

It may be, this judge was, *hj mwm*, an authorized and approved one; however, we have instances of single judges, or of persons that have judged alone, at least by the consent of parties.

“R. Abhu was sitting judge, in a synagogue in Caesarea, by himself, his disciples said to him, did not Rabbi so teach us, do not judge alone? he replied to them, when ye see me sit judge by myself, and ye come to me, as those that have taken upon themselves (or agreed to be judged by me); for the tradition is, of things in which they do not take upon them; but if they take upon them, (or agree to be judged,) one may judge, though alone^{f565}.”

And again, elsewhere^{f566};

“if he is publicly authorized or approved, he judges, though alone; says R. Nachman, as I judge pecuniary causes alone; and so says R. Chijah, as I judge pecuniary judgments alone. — Mar Zutra, the son of R. Nachman, judged a cause, and erred; he came to R. Joseph, who said to him, if they have received thee upon them (agreed to be judged by thee) thou needst not finish; but if not, go and finish.”

The qualifications of one to be a judge, even of the bench of three, were these^{f567};

“wisdom, meekness (or modesty), and fear, (i.e. of God,) and hatred of mammon, (or money,) love of truth, and to have the love of men, and to be masters of a good name (or to be of good report).”

But the judge in the text, came greatly short of these qualifications: his character follows,

which feared not God, neither regarded man; and therefore, according to the canon, was disqualified from being a judge, since he was destitute of the fear of God; and seeing he regarded not men, he could neither have any love to men, nor any share in the affections of men, and such an one is very unfit to be a judge, for he cannot be thought to have any regard to his conscience, or his credit, and so not to justice and equity. The former of these characters, is what belongs to every man in a state of unregeneracy; there is no true fear of God before the eyes, or in the heart of any unconverted man; wherever it is, it is put there by the grace of God: this is one of the first things which appears in conversion, and shows itself in an hatred of sin, and in the performance of duties; and is increased by the discoveries of the grace and goodness of God; but the want of this is more visible in some than in others: some, though they have not the grace of fear, yet are under some awe of the Divine Being, and pay a regard to the word of God; and what through the force of education, and the dictates of a natural conscience, dare not go such lengths in sin, as some do: but there are others, who even say there is no God, and at least live as if there was none; they endeavour to work themselves, and others, into a disbelief of the being of God; and set their mouths against heaven, deny his providence, and despise his word; stretch out their hands, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty; and in a fearless manner, run upon the thick bosses of his bucklers; they declare their sin as Sodom, and hide it not, yea, glory in it; they promise themselves impunity, and laugh at a future judgment; and of such a cast was this judge, and therefore a very improper person for such an office; for civil magistrates, and rulers of every sort, ought to be just, ruling in the fear of God: and as for the other part of his character, it is not to be wondered at; for such that fear not God, will have little regard to men; no otherwise, or further, than they are obliged to it: indeed, judges ought not to regard men in judgment; that is, to respect the persons of men, and through affection, or flattery, or bribes, wrest judgment: but this is not the sense of the phrase here, since this agrees not with the other part of the character, and since he is called an

unjust judge; but the meaning is, that he had no regard to the laws of men, any more than the laws of God; but made his own will the rule of his actions, and had no regard to doing justice between man and man; nor did he care what any man said of him; he had no concern about his reputation and character, having none to lose.

Ver. 3. *And there was a widow in that city*, etc.] Poor and helpless, and none among men to counsel, direct, and assist her, and take her part: now as in the accommodation of this parable, the elect of God answer to this widow; such an one is rather pitched upon to represent the helpless, desolate, and forlorn condition they are in among men in this world, though they are espoused to one husband, Christ; and especially to signify the state and condition of God's elect among the Jews in those sad times, before the destruction of Jerusalem, this parable has respect unto. Christ is the bridegroom of his church and people; he is their husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and they are espoused as a chaste virgin to him; and whilst he was here on earth, his disciples, who were the children of the bridegroom, could not fast and mourn, for which they had no reason; but upon the death of Christ, when he was removed from them, they had great sorrow of heart; they were left like widows and orphans; hence those words of Christ, (^{<B418>}John 14:18) and were persecuted by the Jews in their own land; and wherever they went, they stirred up the Gentiles against them; and so things continued till near the destruction of Jerusalem; during which time many a request was made to God, the judge of the widows and fatherless, to the following purport:

and she came unto him, saying, avenge me of my adversary; or do me justice in the cause depending between me, and him that has wronged me; hear the cause, and do right; vindicate, and deliver me. Many are the adversaries of God's people, as the sins and corruptions of their own hearts, Satan, and his angels, wicked oppressors, and persecutors; the last seem, in the mystical sense, to be designed here: it is lawful to pray for vengeance on them; it is right to apply to God, and leave it with him, to whom it belongs; and it has been the suit and cry of the best of men; (see ^{<A10>}Revelation 6:9,10). It does not become the people of God to avenge themselves, even when it is in the power of their hands; nor should they desire it for their own sakes, so much as for the glory of God; they should ask it, not to gratify a revengeful spirit in them, but for the honour or divine justice; and this should be always with submission to the will of God, leaving it to his own time and way, to whom vengeance belongs, and

who has said it is mine, and I will repay it; as he certainly will sooner or later: the purity of his nature, his abhorrence of sin, and sinful men, and his love to his own people engage him to it.

Ver. 4. *And he would not for a while*, etc.] He would give no ear to her cries, nor take her cause in hand, nor right her wrongs, and clear her of her adversary:

but afterward he said within himself; as he was considering the matter in his own mind, and reflecting on this woman's case and the frequent application she had made to him:

though I fear not God, nor regard man; a monster in iniquity he was, to say so of himself; for though the character belongs to many, there are few that are so impudent in sin, as to take it to themselves, and glory in it.

Ver. 5. *Yet because this widow troubleth me*, etc.] By often knocking at his door, by loud cries and earnest entreaties, with strong arguments, and floods of tears, and could not easily be removed from his presence, or got out of his house:

I will avenge her; I will hear her cause, do her justice, and deliver her from her troublesome adversary:

lest by her continual coming she weary me: so that it was not from a conscience of duty in him, as a judge, or from a commiseration of the poor widow's case; but from a selfish end, for his own ease, in perfect agreement to his character, that his house might not be disturbed, and his ears stunned with her noise and cry, and he was pestered with her company day after day. The character of this judge, his reasoning with himself upon it, his principles from which he acted, and the ends he had in view, are wholly to be left out in the accommodation of this parable; and no farther to be considered than as the argument from the lesser to the greater may be strengthened by them; the intention of the parable being only to show the force, efficacy, and usefulness of importunity in prayer, as appears by the application of it, by our Lord, in the verses following.

Ver. 6. *And the Lord said*, etc.] The Lord Jesus Christ, who delivered out this parable to his disciples:

hear what the unjust judge saith; and take encouragement from hence to be frequent and importunate in prayer with God; for if such a cruel,

merciless, and unjust judge is to be wrought upon by importunity to do justice, who has no principle to influence him, how much more will not God, who is a just judge, the judge of widows, and of the oppressed, a God of great mercy and compassion, who delights in the prayers of his people, knows their cases, and is able to help them, and who has an interest in them, and they in him? how much more will not he regard their importunate requests, and arise, and save them much such like reasoning this is used by the Jews:

“says R. Simeon ben Chelphetha, an impudent man overcomes a good man, or a modest man, (by his importunity,) how much more the goodness of the world itself^{f568?}”

that is, how much more will a man, by his continual prayer, prevail with God, who is goodness itself? And they have another saying^{f569}, that agrees with this:

“says R. Nachman, impudence (i.e. importunity) even against God is profitable.”

The application of this parable follows:

Ver. 7. *And shall not God avenge his own elect*, etc.] Who are a select number, a special people, whom he has loved with an everlasting love, so as of his own sovereign good will and pleasure to choose in his Son Jesus Christ unto everlasting life and salvation, through certain ways and means of his own appointing, hence they are peculiarly his: and these he will avenge and vindicate, right their wrongs, do them justice, and deliver them from their adversaries, and take vengeance on them; as may be concluded from his hatred of sin, his justice, and his holiness, from his promises, and from his power, and from the efficacy of prayer, and the regard he has to it: for it follows,

which cry unto him day and night; whose prayers he always hears; whose tears he puts up in his bottle; and whose importunity must surely be thought to have more regard with him, than that of the poor widow with the unjust judge:

though he bear long with them? either with their adversaries, their oppressors, and persecutors, who are vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction, whom he endures with much longsuffering, till the sufferings of his people are accomplished, and the iniquities of these men are full; or

rather with the elect, for the words may be rendered, “and is longsuffering towards them”: delays his coming, and the execution of vengeance, as on the Jewish nation, so upon the whole world of the ungodly, till his elect are gathered in from among them; (see ~~GRD~~ 2 Peter 3:9).

Ver. 8. *I tell you that he will avenge them speedily*, etc.] As he did in a few years after the death of Christ, when God's elect among the Jews were singled out, and gathered in from them, and were delivered from their persecutors, and saved from temporal ruin and destruction, whilst the Roman army made sad havoc of their enemies; and so will he do in the end of the world.

Nevertheless, when the son of man cometh; either to destroy Jerusalem, or to judge the world:

shall he find faith on the earth? either in the land of Judea, the believers being removed from thence, and scattered among the Gentiles, and not a man, at least in Jerusalem, that had any faith in Jesus, as the Messiah; or in the world at the last day: there will then be little of the doctrine of faith, and less of the grace of faith, and still less of the exercise of faith, particularly in prayer, and especially about the coming of Christ; it will be little thought of, and expected, or faith little exercised about it. With this agree some expressions in the Jewish writings ^{f570}:

“Says R. Jose, the holy, blessed God, will not be revealed to Israel, but in the time, *atwnmyhm j ktça al d*, “that faith is not found among them.””

And elsewhere ^{f571}, speaking of the times of the Messiah, and of a star that shall then appear, it is said

“when that star shall be seen in the world at that time mighty wars shall be stirred up in the world, on all the four sides, *j ktçy al atwnmyhmw*, “and faith will not be found” among them.”

They seem to regard the first coming of the Messiah: and which was true with respect to the majority of their nation; and the same holds good with regard to his second coming; in the apocrypha it says: “Nevertheless as coming the tokens, behold, the days shall come, that they which dwell upon earth shall be taken in a great number, and the way of truth shall be hidden, and the land shall be barren of faith.” (2 Esdras 5:1)

Ver. 9. *And he spake this parable unto certain,* etc.] Or with respect to certain men; having a view to them, in order to expose their pride, vanity, arrogance, and self confidence:

which trusted in themselves that they were righteous; or, as if they were righteous; or because they were so in their own eyes, and in the esteem of others: the ground of their trust and confidence were themselves, their hearts, and the supposed goodness of them, their outward holiness, their moral behaviour, their duties, and good works, their almsdeeds, and religious exercises, their ceremonial observances, and fleshly privileges; on account of which they thought themselves very righteous persons, such as could not fail of being accepted with God, and justified in his sight; whereas there are none righteous in, and of themselves, no, not one. All the descendants of Adam, as such, are sinners, destitute of a righteousness, and filled with all unrighteousness, and are enemies to true righteousness: no man is naturally righteous, nor is he capable of making himself so, by any thing he can do: none are righteous by their obedience to the law of works, for that is imperfect, and cannot justify before God, in whose sight no flesh living can be justified on this account, however righteous they may appear before men, or may be in their own eyes: for this is contrary to God's way of making men righteous, and would disannul the death of Christ, and encourage boasting in men. Such trust and confidence must be very vain, and arise from ignorance; from ignorance of God, of the perfection of his justice, and of the nature of his righteous law; and of themselves, of the impurity of their hearts, and the imperfection of their obedience. These were of the "pharisaical" sort, and of which complexion were the generality of the Jews; and many of these were now standing by Christ, and within the hearing of this parable, and for whose sake it was delivered:

and despised others; or, "every man", as the Syriac and Persic versions read; all the rest of mankind, all but themselves; they made nothing of them, had them in no account; treated them as persons unworthy of the regard of God, and not fit to stand near them, or to be named with them.

Ver. 10. *Two men went up into the temple to pray,* Which is called an house of prayer, (^{<280>}Isaiah 56:7) the Jews had a mighty notion of praying in a place of religious worship, as in the temple, or in a synagogue; imagining that their prayers were more acceptable to God, and sooner heard by him in such a place than in private:

“the prayers of the congregation, they say^{f572}, are heard always; and though there are sinners among them, the holy; blessed God, does not despise the prayer of many; wherefore, a man ought to join himself with the congregation, and not pray alone, whenever he can pray with that: and let a man go always, morning and evening, to the synagogue; for there is no prayer heard at all times but in the synagogue; and whoever has a synagogue in his city, and does not pray in it with the congregation, is called an ill neighbour. — -A divinity school is greater than a synagogue; and the great wise men, though they had many synagogues in their cities, did not pray but where they studied in the law.”

And they say^{f573}, that

“he that prays (in the synagogue) is as if he offered a pure offering. — -Says R. Abhu, in the name of R. Abhu, “seek the Lard where he may be found”; where is he to be found? in the synagogues, and in the schools.”

These two men had, doubtless, both of them a notion of the sanctity of the place, and acted according to the prevailing sense of the people. They went up hither, not by consultation, agreement, and appointment; for they were of a different cast from each other; but so it happened. Had they went by consent, there was a rule for them^{f574}:

“two men that go to a synagogue to pray, and one has finished his prayer before his neighbour, if he stays for him, his reward is double; and if he does not stay for him, his prayer is not heard.”

And they had rules also for the manner of their going to, and from the place of prayer: when they went thither, they were to go nimbly, in haste, and even run; but when they came back, they were to go very slowly and gently^{f575}.

“The commandment (they say^{f576}) is to run to a synagogue; for it is said, (~~200B~~ Hosea 6:3) “we shall know, we shall follow on to know the Lord”: but when a man comes out of the synagogue, let him not take large steps; but let him walk, little by little, or take short steps.”

How far these rules were complied with by these men, is of no great moment to know; who they were follows:

the one a Pharisee; one of those that trusted in themselves, as righteous, and despised all others, especially publicans and sinners; of these (see Gill on “^{408E}Matthew 3:7”). This was the strictest sect among the Jews; they were men that prayed, and fasted much, and were great sticklers for the ceremonies of the law, and the traditions of the elders, and did all they did to be seen of men:

and the other a publican; a gatherer of the Roman tax, though by nation a Jew; and therefore such were had in great contempt by the Jews in general; nor would they eat and drink and converse with them; (see Gill on “⁴⁹⁰Matthew 9:10-11”)

Ver. 11. *The Pharisee stood*, etc.] Standing was a praying posture; (see Gill on “^{408E}Matthew 6:5”) nor is this observed, as if it was something amiss: but the sense is, either that he stood in some place of eminence, that he might be seen of others; or he stood in a set, fixed posture, in a very grave and solemn manner, showing great devotion and seriousness; or he stood with great boldness and confidence:

and prayed thus with himself; the phrase, “with himself”, may be read either with the word “stood”, as it is in the Syriac version; and then the sense is that he stood alone, apart from the publican, at a distance from him, as despising him; and lest he should be polluted by him; (see ²⁸⁸⁴Isaiah 65:4) or with the word “prayed”, and does not design internal prayer, which was what the Pharisees did not use; for all they did was to be seen, and heard of men: but the meaning is, that he prayed only with respect to himself; he was wholly intent upon himself; his own self, and the commendation of himself, were the subject of his prayer: his whole dependence in it was on himself; and he was only seeking by it his own glory: he had no regard to the people of God, to aid the saints, nor did he put up one petition for them; nor had he any respect to Christ, the mediator, through whom access is had to God, and acceptance with him; nor to the Holy Spirit for his assistance; and though he addressed himself to God, yet in praise of himself, saying,

God I thank thee: there is no petition in this prayer of his for pardoning grace and mercy; nor larger measures of grace; nor for strength to perform duties, and to hold on to the end; nor for any favour whatever; nor is there any confession of sin in it. So that it scarce deserves the name of a prayer, for in it is only a thanksgiving: indeed, thanksgiving in prayer is right; and had he been a man that had received the grace of God, it would have been

right in him to have given thanks to God for it, by which he was made to differ from others: nor would he have been blameworthy, had he thanked God for the good things which he had received from him, or which by his assistance he had done; but nothing of this kind is said by him: he thanks God, in order to exalt himself, and places his righteousness in his own works, and treats all other men in a censorious and disdainful manner; thanking God, or rather blessing himself, saying,

that I am not as other men are; and yet he was as other men, and no better: he was a sinner in Adam, as other men; and a sinner by nature, as others are; and had the same iniquities and corruptions in his heart, as others; and had no more goodness in him than other men, and as far from true real righteousness. Perhaps he means the Gentiles, whom the Jews looked upon as sinners, and the worst of men; and yet they were in no wise better than the Gentiles, as to their state and condition by nature: it was usual to call the Gentiles **πυρj a**, “other men”; which phrase is sometimes explained by “the nations of the world” ^{f577}; and sometimes by the “Cuthites”, or “Samaritans” ^{f578}; (see Gill on “~~469~~ Luke 5:29”). — -He goes on,

extortioners, unjust, adulterers; and yet all these characters belonged to the men of sect: the Pharisees were oppressors of the poor, devoured widows' houses, and extorted money from them, under a pretence of long prayers: they are aptly represented by the unjust steward, in (~~210~~ Luke 16:1,8) and they were an unclean, unchaste, and an adulterous generation of men, (~~4129~~ Matthew 12:39 ~~488~~ John 8:8,9)

or even as this publican; pointing to him at some distance, with great scorn and disdain. This was his prayer, or thanksgiving. It may gratify the curiosity of some to have some other prayers of the Pharisees; and it may be worth while to compare them with this, between which there will appear a pretty deal of likeness.

“R. Nechunia ben Hakkana used to pray, when he went into the school, and when he came out, a short prayer: they said unto him, what is the goodness (or the excellency) of this prayer? he replied to them, when I go in, I pray, that no offence might come by means of me; and when I go out, “I give thanks” for my portion: when I go in, this is what I say, let it be thy good pleasure before thee, O Lord, my God, the God of my fathers, that I may not be angry with my colleagues, nor my colleagues be angry with me; that I may not pronounce that which is pure defiled, and that which is defiled,

pure; that I may not forbid that which is lawful, nor pronounce lawful that which is forbidden; and that I may not be found ashamed in this world, and in the world to come: and when I come out, this is what I say; I confess before thee, (or I thank thee) O Lord God, and the God of my fathers, that thou hast given me my portion among those that sit in the schools, and synagogues, and hast not given me my portion in the theatres and shows: for I labour, and they labour; I watch, and they watch; I labour to inherit paradise, and they labour for the pit of corruption ^{f579}.”

And these two prayers the Jews were obliged to recite at their going in, and coming out of the synagogue.

“It is a tradition of R. Juda, saying, three things a man ought to say every day; blessed be thou, *ywg ynç [al ç*, “that thou hast not made me a Gentile”; blessed art thou, that thou hast not made me an unlearned man (or one that is vain and foolish, uncivil and uncultivated); blessed art thou, that hast not made me a woman ^{f580}.”

In their prayer books ^{f581}, these thanksgivings stand thus:

“blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, that thou hast made me an Israelite; (in some books it is, as before, that thou hast not made me a Gentile;) blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, that thou hast not made me a servant; blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, that thou hast not made me a woman:”

when the women, instead of this last, say:

“blessed art thou, O Lord our God, the King of the world, who has made me as he pleases.”

And very agreeable to one of these benedictions does the Ethiopic version render the prayer of the Pharisee here; “I thank thee, O Lord that thou hast not made me as other men”.

Ver. 12. *I fast twice in the week*, etc.] Not “on the sabbath”, as the words may be literally rendered, and as they are in the Vulgate Latin and Ethiopic versions; for the sabbath was not a fasting, but a feasting day with the Jews; for they were obliged to eat three meals, or feasts, on a sabbath day,

one in the morning, another at evening, and another at the time of the meat offering: even the poorest man in Israel, who was maintained by alms, was obliged to keep these three feasts^{f582}. It was forbidden a man to fast, until the sixth hour, on a sabbath day; that is, till noon^{f583}: wherefore, it is a great mistake in Justin^{f584} and Suetonius^{f585}, that the sabbath was kept by the Jews as a fast. But the word is rightly rendered, “in the week”; the whole seven days, or week, were by the Jews commonly called the sabbath; hence, **tbçb dj a**, “the first of the sabbath”, and the second of the sabbath, and the third of the sabbath^{f586}; that is, the first, second, and third days of the week. Now the two days in the week on which they fasted were Monday and Thursday, the second and fifth days; on which days the law of Moses, and the book of Esther were read, by the order of Ezra^{f587}; and fasts for the congregation were appointed on those days^{f588}, and so a private person, or a single man, as in this instance, took upon him, or chose to fast on the same^{f589}: the reason of this is, by some, said to be, because Moses went up to Mount Sinai on a Thursday, and came down on a Monday^{f590}. But though these men fasted so often, they took care not to hurt themselves; for they allowed themselves to eat in the night till break of day. It is asked^{f591},

“how long may a man eat and drink, i.e. on a fast day? until the pillar of the morning ascends (day breaks); these are the words of Rabbi (Judah): R. Eliezer ben Simeon says, until cock crowing.”

So that they had not so much reason to boast of these performances: he adds,

I give tithes of all that I possess; not only of what was tithable by the law of Moses, as the produce of his ground; and by the traditions of the elders, as the herbs in his garden, (⁴²³³Matthew 23:23) but of every thing he had, which was not required by either of them; upon which he thought himself a very righteous person, and more than a common man: it is asked^{f592},

“who is a plebeian? (one of the people of the earth, or the common people) whoever does not eat his common food with purity with hands washed; these are the words of R. Meir; but the wise men say, whoever does not tithe his fruit.”

This man would not be thought to be such an one.

Ver. 13. *And the publican standing afar off*, etc.] Not at the outermost porch, or at the door: for

“a man might not fix his place at the door of the synagogue, but, **qyj ry**, “he must go afar off”, the space of two doors, and then pray^{f593};”

it may be in the court of the Gentiles, when the Pharisee was in the court of the Israelites; at least he was afar off from him: and indeed, those who came to humble themselves before the Lord, and confess their sins, were obliged to stand at the distance of four cubits one from another, that one might not hear the prayers and confessions of the other^{f594}: and it might be, that this poor man might stand at a greater distance than was required, that he might not displease the Pharisee, who, he knew, would resent it, should he stand near him; or rather this was done, to testify the sense he had of his state and condition, and of his unworthiness; as that he was afar off from God, and unworthy to draw nigh unto him, and deserved to be kept at a distance from him for ever. So it is said^{f595} of the Israelites, that they trembled at Mount Sinai, and “stood afar off”, **μτwnτwn[twrwhl** , “to show their humility”: and under a work of the law, and under such a like dispensation was this publican; and therefore

would not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven: and which, as it was an humble posture he stood in, agrees with the rules the Jews give^{f596};

“the order (or posture) of the body, how is it? when a man stands in prayer he ought to set his feet one by the side of the other, and fix his eyes, **hj ml** , “below”, as if he looked to the earth; and his heart must be open above, as if he stood in the heavens; and lay his hands upon his heart, putting the right hand over the left; and must stand as a servant before his master, with trembling, and fear, and dread, and may not put his hands upon his loins.”

And agreeably to this, it is elsewhere^{f597} said,

“he that prays, ought to fix his eyes below, and his heart above.”

And the Jews used to look downward, or shut their eyes, for the sake of attention in prayer; and it was even forbidden them to open their eyes to look upon the wall^{f598}. This showed in the publican, that the guilt of his sins lay heavy on him; that he could not look up; that shame filled him with

blushing; that sorrow caused his countenance to fall; and that fear of divine wrath, and displeasure, possessed him; and that he looked upon himself as unworthy of the smiles of heaven,

but smote upon his breast: pointing at the fountain of his sin; expressing by this action, his sorrow, and repentance for it; and an aversion and abhorrence of himself on account of it, joined with indignation and revenge; and he did this to arouse and stir up all the powers and faculties of his soul, to call upon God. The Persic version renders it, “he fell on his knees, and beat the earth with his head”; taking a sort of revenge on himself for sin:

saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. This is his prayer; a short, but a very full one, and greatly different from that of the Pharisee: in which is a confession that he was a sinner; a sinner in Adam, who had derived a sinful nature from him, being conceived and born in sin; and a sinner by practice, having committed many actual transgressions, attended with aggravating circumstances; a guilty and filthy sinner, a notorious one, deserving of the wrath of God, and the lowest hell: he speaks of himself, as if he was the only sinner in the world; at least, as if there was none like him: and there is in this prayer also a petition; and the object it is put up to, is “God”, against whom he had sinned; with whom there is mercy and forgiveness; and who only can forgive sin; and who has promised that he will: and has proclaimed his name, a God, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; and has given instances of his forgiving grace and mercy; and therefore the publican was right in addressing him by confession: the petition he makes to him is, to be “merciful”, or “propitious” to him; that is, to show mercy to him, through the propitiary sacrifice of the Messiah, which was typified by the sacrifices under the law: the first thing a sensible sinner wants, is an application of pardoning grace and mercy; and forgiveness springs from mercy; and because the mercy of God is free and abundant, therefore pardon is so: but this is not to be expected from an absolute God, or God out of Christ. God is only propitious in Christ: hence it may be observed, that God pardons none but those to whom he is propitious in his Son; and that he forgives sin upon the foot of a reconciliation, and satisfaction made to his law, and justice, and so pardon is an act of justice, as well as of mercy; and that there is no pardoning mercy but through Christ. The Arabic version renders it, “spare me, because I am a sinner”; (see ^{<2511>} Psalm 25:11).

Ver. 14. *I tell you that this man*, etc.] The publican that so freely owned himself to be a sinner, and by his carriage acknowledged he was unworthy of any favour; and who was treated with so much contempt by the Pharisee:

went down to his house; from the temple which was built on a mountain, *justified, [rather] than the other*: accounted as a righteous person in the sight of God; justified from all his sins, and accepted by him, when the other was abhorred and neglected. The Syriac and Persic versions, and so Beza's most ancient copy, read, "than the Pharisee", who had such an high opinion of himself, and despised others: not that the Pharisee was justified at all, when the publican really was; but the sense is, that if judgment had been to have been made, and sentence passed according to the then conduct and behaviour of both parties, the publican had greatly the advantage, in the sight of God; an humble demeanour being well pleasing and acceptable to him, when pride, and arrogance, boasting of, and trusting in a man's own righteousness, are abhorred by him;

for every one that exalteth himself, shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted. This was a proverbial expression, often mentioned by Christ on different occasions, and frequently used by the Jews; (see Gill on "^{<4032>}Matthew 23:12") to which may be added the following passages;

"whoever is of a haughty spirit, at last shall be made low ^{f599}."

And again,

"whosoever humbleth himself, the holy blessed God will lift him up ^{f600}."

Ver. 15. *And they brought unto him also infants*, etc.] As well as grown persons, that were sick, to be healed by him:

that he would touch them; in order, as some learned men think, to cure them of diseases that attended them; for one of the ways by which Christ healed persons, was by touching them; nor do we read of his touching in common for any other purpose, or of persons desiring him to touch them, or theirs, but for this end; in (^{<4093>}Matthew 19:13) it is read, "that he should put his hands on them"; and so the Arabic and Persic versions here read, in order to pray over them, and bless them: but neither in one place, nor the

other, is any mention of their baptism, or of their being brought for such a purpose; nor can it be concluded from hence;

but when [his] disciples saw [it], they rebuked them; the persons that brought the infants; (see Gill on “^{<4093>}Matthew 19:13”).

Ver. 16. *But Jesus called them unto him*, etc.] Not the disciples, as the Ethiopic version reads, nor the persons that brought the children, but the children themselves; for the antecedent to the relative *αὐτοῖς*, “them”, can be no other; which shows, that these infants were not new born babes, or children at the breast, but such as were more grown up, since they were capable of being called to, and of coming to Christ:

and said; that is, to the disciples; so the Persic version expresses it:

suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; (see Gill on “^{<4094>}Matthew 19:14”)

for of such is the kingdom of God; or “of heaven”, as the Syriac version reads, and as in (^{<4094>}Matthew 19:14) that is, the kingdom of God belongs to such, “who are as these”; or, “like to these”: as the Syriac, Arabic, and Persic versions render the words; ((see Gill on “^{<4094>}Matthew 19:14”).)

Ver. 17. *Verily I say unto you*, etc.], Christ takes an occasion from hence to teach his disciples humility, and guard them against pride and vanity:

whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God; the King Messiah, the doctrines of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, even the whole Gospel dispensation;

as a little child; without prejudice, pride, ambition, and vanity, with meekness, and humility:

shall in no wise enter therein; a very unfit and improper person to be a professor of the Gospel; or to be admitted to Gospel ordinances: or be a member of a Gospel church; or be reckoned a subject of the Messiah's kingdom, which is of a spiritual nature; and as he has not a meetness for, and a right unto the kingdom of glory, he shall never see it, and enjoy it.

Ver. 18. *And a certain ruler asked him*, etc.] A young man, (^{<4095>}Matthew 19:20) a ruler among the Jews, a civil magistrate, and a very rich man; he ran after Jesus, and overtook him in the way, as he was going towards Jericho, (^{<4107>}Mark 10:17)

saying, good master; “Rabbi”; or doctor,

what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁶Matthew 19:16”).

Ver. 19. *And Jesus said unto him*, etc.] In answer to his question, beginning with the character he gave him:

why callest thou me good? it being unusual to address men, even their Rabbins, under such a title:

none is good, save one, [that is], God: or “but God alone”; as the Vulgate Latin and Arabic versions render it; or, “but the one God”, as read the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁷Matthew 19:17”).

Ver. 20. *Thou knowest the commandments*, etc.] The ten commandments given to Moses, and delivered to people; and which they were careful to teach their children; though five are only here mentioned, and not in the order in which they stand: suggesting hereby that these must be kept, or the law must be fulfilled, and satisfaction made for the violation of it, or there can be no inheriting eternal life. The five commandments mentioned are, the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth, and fifth:

do not commit adultery; do not kill; do not steal; do not bear false witness; honour father and thy mother; (see Gill on “⁴⁰¹⁷Matthew 19:17”) and (see Gill on “⁴¹⁰⁹Mark 10:19”).

Ver. 21. *And he said*, etc.] That is, the ruler said to him, as the Syriac and Ethiopic versions add; “to Jesus”, as the Persic version expresses it;

all these have I kept from my youth up; (see Gill on “⁴⁰²⁰Matthew 19:20”) where it is added, what lack I yet?

Ver. 22. *Now when Jesus heard these things*, etc.] That he had kept all these commandments, and that ever since he was a child, and to that very time:

he said unto him, yet lackest thou one thing; not but that he lacked many other things, and even every thing: for he had performed no one thing as it should be: but Christ said, partly in answer to his pert question, “what lack I yet?” and partly by an ironical concession, granting he had kept them all, as he had said, yet one thing was wanting; and chiefly with a view to mortify his pride and vanity:

sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸¹Matthew 19:21”).

Ver. 23. *And when he heard this,* etc.] That one thing was wanting, and what that was, which was to part with all his worldly substance, and follow Christ;

he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸²Matthew 19:22”).

Ver. 24. *And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful,* etc.] As he might, by his looks and gestures; and perceived that he was determined not to part with his possessions, and follow him:

he said to his disciples, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! embrace the Gospel, and submit to the ordinances of it; deny themselves, part with their worldly substance for the cause of Christ, and interest of religion. Riches, which should be a reason for, are often a bar unto a profession of Christ, and his Gospel. This is delivered as an affirmation, or by way of assertion, (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸³Matthew 19:23”).

Ver. 25. *For it is easier for a camel,* etc.] These words were spoken to the disciples again, and were a second address to them, after they had shown astonishment at the former; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸⁴Matthew 19:24”) and (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸⁵Mark 10:24”).

Ver. 26. *And they that heard it, said, who then can be saved?*] These were the disciples of Christ, who so said; (see ⁴⁰⁸⁵Matthew 19:25).

Ver. 27. *And he said,* etc.] That is, Jesus, as the Syriac, Persic, and Ethiopic versions express it:

the things which are impossible with men, are possible with God; (see Gill on “⁴⁰⁸⁶Matthew 19:26”).

Ver. 28. *Then Peter said,* etc.] “To him”, as the Syriac and Arabic versions add; that is, to the Lord Jesus, as the Ethiopic version expresses it; who was always the most forward to speak on any occasion: he observing what was required of the young man, and how unwilling he was to comply with it, and the difficulty in every rich man's way of entrance into the kingdom of God, spoke as follows;

lo, we have left all: the Arabic version reads, “all ours”; all we had, our friends, trades, and worldly substance;

and followed thee: in (^{<1927>}Matthew 19:27) it is added, “what shall we have therefore”; referring to the promise of Christ, to the young man, that should he sell all he had, and give it to the poor, he should have treasure in heaven; (see Gill on “^{<1927>}Matthew 19:27”).

Ver. 29. *And he said unto them*, etc.] To his disciples, as the Ethiopic version reads; though the Syriac and Persic versions read, “and Jesus said to him”; that is, to Peter; he particularly replied to him:

verily I say unto you, there is no man: not only you shall have peculiar honour done you, as to sit on thrones, and judge the twelve tribes of Israel; but there is not a single person of a more private character,

that hath left house, or “houses”, as read the Syriac and Persic versions;

or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake: that is, for Christ's sake, and for the sake of his Gospel, as the other evangelists have it; and which teaches us how to understand the kingdom of God here, and elsewhere.

Ver. 30. *Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time*, etc.] Not more houses, parents, brethren, etc. but that which is abundantly preferable to them; such comfort, peace, satisfaction, and pleasure, as are not to be found in such enjoyments:

and in the world to come life everlasting; which was what the young man was desirous of inheriting, (^{<2188>}Luke 18:18 (see Gill on “^{<1929>}Matthew 19:29”)).

Ver. 31. *Then he took unto him the twelve*, etc.] His twelve disciples, as the Ethiopic version expresses it; he took them aside from the rest of the company, as they were travelling on the road, and privately delivered to them, what follows; (see ^{<1117>}Matthew 20:17)

and said unto them, behold, we go up to Jerusalem; to the feast of the passover, which was drawing near, and the last Christ was to eat with his disciples, the time of his sufferings, and death, being now at hand; and of which he thought fit to give his disciples notice: and therefore he called them aside, and in a private manner, told them,

that all things that are written by the prophets, concerning the son of man, shall be accomplished; particularly, (^{<B011>}Psalm 2:1,2) (^{<B216>}Psalm 22:6-8 ^{<B006>}Isaiah 1:6 ^{<B011>}Micah 5:1 ^{<B516>}Isaiah 53:5,6,12 ^{<B215>}Psalm 22:15 26:10 ^{<B012>}Hosea 6:2) for to these the following things have respect.

Ver. 32. *For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles*, etc.] As he was by the chief priests, Scribes, and elders, to Pilate, the Roman governor, and by him to the soldiers:

and shall be mocked; as he was by the latter, when they crowned him with thorns, arrayed him in a purple robe, and put a reed into his hand, and bowed the knee to him, saying, hail king of the Jews; and likewise by the Jews when he hung upon the cross:

and spitefully entreated. The Syriac and Persic versions leave out this clause here, and read it the next verse. It may regard the injuries done him, the abuses and affronts he received, both by words and blows:

and spitted on; as he was both by officers in the high priest's palace, and by the Roman soldiers in Pilate's hall; (see ^{<B516>}Isaiah 50:6).

Ver. 33. *And they shall scourge him*, etc.] As he was by Pilate's order, before he was crucified:

and put him to death; a shameful, and a painful one, the death of the cross:

and the third day he shall rise again; as he accordingly did.

Ver. 34. *And they understood none of these things*, etc.] “Not one of them”, as the Syriac and Persic versions render it; every article of his sufferings and death were unintelligible by them; they knew not how to understand him in any one point: or how to reconcile these things to the notions they had entertained of the temporal grandeur, and glory, of the Messiah, and his kingdom; and which shows their great ignorance of the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning these things.

And this saying, or “thing”; for it answers to the Hebrew word **rbd**, which signifies any affair, or matter, as well as a word, or saying: and so here, the whole of this affair

was hid from them; unless it should have a peculiar regard to that part of it, which expresses his resurrection from the dead; (see ^{<B010>}Mark 9:10) or the delivery of him to the Gentiles, (^{<B014>}Luke 9:44,45)

neither knew they the things which were spoken; the meaning of them. The Ethiopic version leaves out this, and puts the former clause, by way of question, “and he said unto them, and is this saying hid from you?”

Ver. 35. *And it came to pass that as he was come nigh unto Jericho*, etc.] Which lay in his way to Jerusalem;

a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: this was not blind Bartimaeus, nor his companion, for they were cured by Christ as he went out of Jericho; but this man before he came to it; for we afterwards read of his entrance into, and passing through Jericho, (~~290~~Luke 19:1) though much the same things are related in this account, as in that of the other two blind men; (see Gill on ~~488~~Matthew 20:30”).

Ver. 36. *And hearing the multitude pass by*, etc.] Their “voice”, as the Syriac version expresses it; the noise of their feet, and especially of their tongues;

he asked what it meant? what was the meaning of this concourse of people, and of this clamorous noise; or, as the Syriac version reads, “who it should be?” what person of note was passing by, that there was such a multitude after him? to which the answer best agrees.

Ver. 37. *And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by*.] Some of the company answered him, that Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, so much talked of, and said to be the Messiah, who was become so famous for his doctrines and miracles, for healing diseases, and dispossessing devils, was just “then” passing by; and this occasioned the noise and clamour.

Ver. 38. *And he cried, saying, Jesus thou son of David*, etc.] Believing him, at once, to be the Messiah; whence he calls him the son of David, which was a character and title of the Messiah, well known to the Jews; (see Gill on ~~400~~Matthew 1:1”) and therefore immediately called out unto him, being willing to take that opportunity as he passed, and whilst he was within hearing, to make his suit to him for his sight:

saying, have mercy on me: a poor, blind, and miserable creature, and restore me to my sight, which will be an act of singular mercy, and goodness, and will always be gratefully owned as such.

Ver. 39. *And they that went before*, etc.] In the company that preceded Christ; for he, as yet, was not come right over against the blind man:

rebuked him that he should hold his peace; being not well pleased that he should call him the son of David, which was acknowledging him to be the Messiah; or that he might not be troublesome to Christ, and retard his journey:

but he cried so much the more, thou son of David, have mercy on me; he neither dropped the character of Christ, nor his request to him; but called out more loudly, and with greater vehemence, earnestness, and importunity: so persons sensible of their need of Christ, and of his worth, excellency, and ability, are not to be discouraged from an application to him, by whatsoever they meet with from men, or devils.

Ver. 40. *And Jesus stood*, etc.] He stood still; he made a full stop, and went no further, when, it is very likely, he was just over against him:

and commanded him to be brought unto him; either by the disciples, or by some of the multitude:

and when he was come near he asked him; the following question.

Ver. 41. *Saying, what wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?* etc.] Is it alms thou askest? or is it thy sight thou wouldst have restored?

and he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight; this he chose, this was his request, and what he cried so vehemently for; and which he believed Christ, the son of David, was able to do for him.

Ver. 42. *And Jesus said unto him, receive thy sight*, etc.] Be it to thee as thou desirest, look up and see: thus by a word speaking, and power going along with it, without making use of any means, he fulfilled his desire.

Thy faith hath saved thee; or has obtained salvation for thee, a temporal salvation; and it may be also a spiritual and an eternal one: for that is the concern faith has in salvation; it is the means of obtaining and enjoying it: Christ, the object of faith, is the author of it.

Ver. 43. *And immediately he received his sight*, etc.] As soon as ever the word was gone out of Christ's mouth, virtue went forth from him, and cured the man of his blindness; his eyes were at once opened, and he saw as other men;

and followed him; his kind benefactor, with a grateful sense of his goodness, with strong affection for him, and faith in him;

glorifying God, who had sent such a Saviour to him; who had wrought such a wonderful miracle for him: for he was sensible that none but God could do this.

And all the people, when they saw [it]; what was done, how that the man they just before saw was blind, and begging by the way side, now had his sight restored to him, in an instant, and was following Jesus, in the crowd, along with them:

gave praise unto God; or, as Beza's most ancient copy reads, "glory"; they ascribed the glory to God, and praised his name, that he had raised up the Messiah among them; of which this was a clear proof, inasmuch as the eyes of the blind were opened, according to (²³⁸⁵Isaiah 35:5).