

*And to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others, he spoke also this parable: Two men went up into the temple to pray: the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week: I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven; but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other: because every one that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.*

AUG. Since faith is not a gift of the proud but of the humble, our Lord proceeds to add a parable concerning humility and against pride.

THEOPHYL. Pride also beyond all other passions disturbs the mind of man. And hence the very frequent warnings against it. It is moreover a contempt of God; for when a man ascribes the good he does to himself and not to God, what else is this but to deny God? For the sake then of those that so trust in themselves, that they will not ascribe the whole to God, and therefore despise others, He puts forth a parable, to show that righteousness, although it may bring man up to God, yet if he is clothed with pride, casts him down to hell.

GREEK EX. To be diligent in prayer was the lesson taught by our Lord in the parable of the widow and the judge, He now instructs us how we should direct our prayers to Him, in order that our prayers may not be fruitless. The Pharisee was condemned because he prayed heedlessly. As it follows, The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself.

THEOPHYL. It is said “standing,” to denote his haughty temper. For his very posture betokens his extreme pride.

BASIL; “He prayed with himself,” that is, not with God, his sin of pride sent him back into himself. It follows, God, I thank you.

AUG. His fault was not that he gave God thanks, but that he asked for nothing further. Because you are full and abounds, you have no need to say, Forgive us our debts. What then must be his guilt who impiously fights against grace, when he is condemned who proudly gives thanks? Let those hear who say, “God has made me man, I made myself righteous. O worse and more hateful than the Pharisee, who proudly called himself righteous, yet gave thanks to God that he was so.

THEOPHYL. Observe the order of the Pharisee's prayer. He first speaks of that which he had not, and then of that which he had. As it follows, That I am not as other men are.

AUG. He might at least have said, “as many men;” for what does he mean by “other men,” but all besides himself? “I am righteous, he says, the rest are sinners.”

GREG. There are different shapes in which the pride of self-confident men presents itself; when they imagine that either the good in them is of themselves; or when believing

it is given them from above, that they have received it for their own merits; or at any rate when they boast that they have that which they have not. Or lastly, when despising others they aim at appearing singular in the possession of that which they have. And in this respect the Pharisee awards to himself especially the merit of good works.

AUG. See how he; derives from the Publican near him a fresh occasion for pride. It follows, Or even as this Publican; as if he says, "I stand alone, he is one of the others."

CHRYS. To despise the whole race of man was not enough for him; he must yet attack the Publican. He would have sinned, yet far less if he had spared the Publican, but now in one word he both assails the absent, and inflicts a wound on him who was present. To give thanks is not to heap reproaches on others. When you return thanks to God, let Him be all in all to you. Turn not your thoughts to men, nor condemn your neighbor.

BASIL. The difference between the proud man and the scorner is in the outward form alone. The one is engaged in reviling others, the other in presumptuously extolling: himself.

CHRYS. He who rails at others does much harm both to himself and others. First, those who hear him are rendered worse, for if sinners they are made glad in finding one as guilty as themselves, if righteous, they are exalted, being led by the sins of others to think more highly of themselves. Secondly, the body of the Church suffers; for those who hear him are not all content to blame the guilty only, but to fasten the reproach also on the Christian religion. Thirdly, the glory of God is evil spoken of for as our well-doing makes the name of God to be glorified, so our sins cause it to be blasphemed. Fourthly, the object of reproach is confounded and becomes more reckless and immovable. Fifthly, the ruler is himself made liable to punishment for uttering things which are not seemly.

THEOPHYL. It becomes us not only to shun evil, but also to do good; and so after having said, I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, he adds something by way of contrast, I fast twice in a week. They called the week the Sabbath, from the last day of rest. The Pharisees fasted upon the second and fifth day. He therefore set fasting against the passion of adultery, for lust is born of luxury; but to the extortioners and usurists he opposed the payment of tithes; as it follows, I give tithes of all I possess; as if he says, So far am I from indulging in extortion or injuring, that I even give up what is my own.

GREG. So it was pride that laid bare to his wily enemies the citadel of his heart, which prayer and fasting had in vain kept closed. Of no use are all the other fortifications, as long as there is one place which the enemy has left defenseless.

AUG. If you look into his words, you will find that he asked nothing of God. He goes up indeed to pray, but instead of asking God, praises himself; and even insults him that asked. The Publican, on the other hand, driven by his stricken conscience afar off, is by his piety brought near.

THEOPHYL. Although reported to have stood, the Publican yet differed from the Pharisee, both in his manner and his words, as well as in his having a contrite heart. For he feared to lift up his eyes to heaven, thinking unworthy of the heavenly vision those which

had loved to gaze upon and wander after earthly things. He also smote his breast, striking it as it were because of the evil thoughts, and moreover rousing it as if asleep. And thus he sought only that God would be reconciled to him, as it follows, saying, God, be merciful.

CHRYS. He heard the words, that I am not as the Publican. He was not angry, but pricked to the heart. The one uncovered the wound, the other seeks for its remedy. Let no one then ever put forth so cold an excuse as, I dare not, I am ashamed, I cannot open my mouth. The devils have that kind of fear. The devil would fain close against you every door of access to God.

AUG. Why then marvel you, whether God pardons, since He himself acknowledges it. The Publican stood afar off, yet drew near to God. And the Lord was nigh to him, and heard him, For the Lord is on high, yet has he regard to the lowly. He lifted not so much as his eyes to heaven; that he might be looked upon, he looked not himself. Conscience weighed him down, hope raised him up, he smote his own breast, he exacted judgment upon himself. Therefore did the Lord spare the penitent. You have heard the accusation of the proud, you have heard the humble confession of the accused. Hear now the sentence of the Judge; Verily I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

CHRYS This parable represents to us two chariots on the race course, each with two charioteers in it. In one of the chariots it places righteousness with pride, in the other sin and humility. You see the chariot of sin outstrip that of righteousness, not by its own strength but by the excellence of humility combined with it, but the other is defeated not by righteousness, but by the weight and swelling of pride. For as humility by its own elasticity rises above the weight of pride, and leaping up reaches to God, so pride by its great weight easily depresses righteousness. Although therefore you are earnest and constant in well doing, yet think you may boast yourself, you are altogether devoid of the fruits of prayer. But you that bears a thousand loads of guilt on your conscience, and only think this thing of yourself that you are the lowest of all men, shall gain much confidence before God. And He then goes on to assign the reason of His sentence. For every one who exalts himself shall be abased, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted. The word humility has various meanings. There is the humility of virtue, as, A humble and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. There is also a humility arising from sorrows, as, He has humbled my life upon the earth. There is a humility derived from sin, and the pride and insatiability of riches. For can any thing be more low and debased than those who grovel in riches and power, and count them great things?

BASIL; In like manner it is possible to be honorably elated when your thoughts indeed are not lowly, but your mind by greatness of soul is lifted up towards virtue. This loftiness of mind is seen in a cheerfulness amidst sorrow; or a kind of noble dauntlessness in trouble i a contempt of earthly things, and a conversation in heaven. And this loftiness of mind seems to differ from that elevation which is engendered of pride, just as the stoutness of a well-regulated body differs from the swelling of the flesh which proceeds from dropsy.

CHRYS. This inflation of pride can cast down even from heaven the man that takes not warning, but humility can raise a man up from the lowest depth of guilt. The one saved the Publican before the Pharisee, and brought the thief into Paradise before the Apostles; the other entered even into the spiritual powers. But if humility though added to sin has made such rapid advances, as to pass by pride united to righteousness, how much swifter will be its course when you add to it righteousness? It will stand by the judgment-seat of God in the midst of the angels with great boldness. Moreover if pride joined to righteousness had power to depress it, to what a hell will it thrust men when added to sin? This I say not that we should neglect righteousness, but that we should avoid pride.

THEOPHYL. But should any one perchance marvel that the Pharisee for uttering a few words in his own praise is condemned, while Job, though he poured forth many, is crowned, I answer, that the Pharisee spoke these at the same time that he groundlessly accused others; but Job was compelled by an urgent necessity to enumerate his own virtues for the glory of God, that men might not fall away from the path of virtue.

BEDE; Typically, the Pharisee is the Jewish people, who boast of their ornaments because of the righteousness of the law, but the Publican is the Gentiles, who being at a distance from God confess their sins. Of whom the one for His pride returned humbled, the other for his contrition was thought worthy to draw near and be exalted.

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