

THE POWER OF THE PENITENT

Luke 18:10-14

I read a story some time ago of a mother who had returned home from a shopping tour in town. She found someone had done something that deserved punishment. She called the little five year old aside, and then she called the older boy, about nine years old - and gave him a good whipping. When he was through crying, the older boy called the little brother aside, and said - how come Mama just whipped me. You was in that as much as I. You got me into it.

I confessed - he answered. Yes, I know. That's the reason I got my whipping. But why didn't she whip you - you were in it just as much as I was. I just confessed on you, was the reply.

Confess your own sins - not the members, not your brothers, not somebody else's is a real philosophy.

We have tonight a story that is a most amazing story of a man who was as honest as the day is long, who was lost. It is also an amazing story of a wicked man who was ungodly and yet he was saved.

And as you notice how good the good man really was, and how wicked the wicked man was - the story seems almost shocking. That a good man could probably be that good. Here is another man who could be that mean.

But here is one of the understandings of the end and the purpose of life. And part of it lies in the effect of our praying. Jesus had advised his disciples to pray continually. And not to become discouraged - V. 1. With that he told

a judge who was both irreligious and unsympathetic - V. 2. Here was a widow who asked him for help on a problem that was causing her trouble. This may have been a debtor who had not paid her what he owed. And was making unjust demands. The widow evidently had no money to offer the judge or influence to exert upon him. But because of her persistence - he responded to her. And Jesus made a contrast here of how God deals with people who earnestly pray, that God is faithful. And the next thing that Jesus did was to point out to his hearers - some self-righteous persons who had no use for others. And he described these two men who were going to pray. They were quite different. One was a Pharisee who reported to God how satisfied he was with himself. He had no request to make of God because he couldn't think of anything that God had that he wanted. Now prayer that is made because it is proper - isn't proper prayer.

Now the other man in this story was a tax collector. His society despised him but he despised himself even more. His only hope was that perhaps God wouldn't despise him. And he begs God for mercy and he went home forgiven and satisfied.

This instructs us not to waste our prayer upon our self applause. But in realistic fashion, ask God for his loving help. And we discover the power of the penitent.

Most of us do not find it easy to confess our sins. We would rather confess somebody else - and we want to vindicate ourselves. Even when we admit that we have made some mistake. We still like to insist that there are extenuating circumstances. Though deep down within our hearts we may be disturbed because of some moral or spiritual lapse. We do not want other people to look upon us or to intimate that we are at fault.

The phrase, save face - is supposed Chinese in origin - but actually I think

... that expresses something that has happened to man since the days of

Adam.

Another reason is that we don't want to confess is - we feel that this is a weakness. If one confesses that he is a failure - it is an admission, of his own weakness. To say that we have done wrong does not merely mean that we are weaker than we like to think. We are lacking in spiritual strength. And if possible, we like to avoid any embarrassment by not confessing our failures. Even though sometimes we must be forced to confess that we made a mistake. Many of <sup>us</sup> think of repentance in the light of this term.

Now our failure to repent indicates our spiritual weakness. Now this makes of us a Pharisee. When any individual has done wrong and is not sincerely eager to turn from the error of his way, he is then taking on an unChristian attitude. When we try to defend ourselves instead of admitting the truth, we are only attempting to boaster our ego. To me that is not strength - but it is weakness.

Now any person who is not aware of the possibility of making mistakes, and of admitting this - opens himself for additional failures. He is preparing himself for repeated evils of the same kind and the same quality.

After all, spiritual pride - is spiritual weakness. Augustine wrote - "How is it then that miserable men dare to be proud. Either of their freewill before they are freed or of their own strength if they have been freed. By what a man is overcome - to the same is he delivered as a slave. But if they have been freed, why do they want themselves as if it were by their own doing, and boast as if it had not been received."

The Pharisee was simply unwilling to be delivered from his own failure.

Our own virtues cannot redeem us. And our claims upon God cannot earn for us favor and consideration. Our unwillingness to repent means that we are not willing to face the facts about ourselves.

This leads us to consider ourselves just as good as God, or even better. And we will have a warped belief and become defeated.

Now part of the power of penitence indeed is the self-knowledge it brings us. We so recognize our error that we are ready and eager to confess our mistakes and cry out - God be merciful to me a sinner. No longer do we justify our failures by pointing to circumstances or placing the responsibility upon other people, or conditions.

Now any individual who refuses to assume his responsibilities and pushes the blame and failure somewhere else, shows and emphasizes his own weakness.

Penitence will bring us power because it rids us of the disorganizing influences about us. It takes out of our hearts and out of our minds - like acid which eats away our very lives. This power of penitence is something that can be found no where else. We must turn from the enemies of our own soul.

Now by way of introduction - this power of penitence is something that is entirely voluntary. The very nature of it makes it so. It is never the result of compulsion. Pope Alexander III, compelled Henry II to kneel at the tomb in penitence, of Thomas A. Becket at Canterbury.

Five years later the same ruler, triumphantly re-entered Rome after he had set his foot on the neck of the prostrate Roman king and emperor Frederick Barbarossa. As this incident took place on the Square of St. Marx at Venice - he quoted the words of the ancient Psalm. "The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under

feet." The mighty ruler of the church seemed to be following the example of the famed predecessor Gregory VII - who a century before had made the emperor Henry IV kneel after keeping him waiting in penitence 3 days, in the court of the castle of Canossa - where bare headed and bare footed the king had stood in the winter cold in snow of the Alpine Heights.

Now all of this however, is a long stretch from the penitence of the publican of whom Jesus spoke. In fact, it is miles apart because the man who recognized his own sins - confessed them voluntarily without hesitation. He turns from his failures and he starts home. And that was his destination. It was not a forced penitence with him.

In Palestine the devout observer, observed three prayer times daily - 9 A. M., 12 mid-day, and 3 P. M. Prayer was held to be specifically offered in the temple and so at these hours many went up to the temple courts to pray. And this is what this story is about that Jesus is telling - about two men who went in the same fashion to the temple to pray. The very purpose of this parable was to expose those who trust in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. By the certain, we understand not only the self-righteous Pharisee, against who the parable was particularly directed - but also the disciples in whom the Pharisee temper was gaining the mastery.

The word despise as used by our Lord describes the religious egotism - the Pharisee possessed which was most repulsive. The term means to count as nothing. This is a term used by Paul. Rom. 14:3, 16:1. And Cor. 16:11.

The best of us have to guard against the depreciation of others. We have to guard against thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought. Calvin writing

on this short most searchable parable said - Christ reproves and condemns two sins. Improper confidence in ourselves and second, pride, in despising others. The one which springs from the other. For whoever deceives himself by false confidence cannot fail to magnify himself above others.

Nor is it wonderful that he should despise his equal, who deals proudly toward God himself. But everyone who is puffed up by such self-confidence, truly wars against God.

Now before we take up these two men - the Pharisee and the Publican separately - we see here a contrast as our Lord portrays them in this well-known parable. Which Luke records alone.

The two went into the outer temple to pray. They are different in character, creed, and self-examination. Both presented themselves before the same holy God. But with a different attitude of mind.

Here are two individuals widely apart from each other. As well as in their manner of life. And in the opinion publicly entertained of them, the two are the two representatives of the two classes.

The self-applauding arrogant law keeper and the abased law breaker. The two characters are presented in deep relief - without confusion. Each is portrayed in his own color and is distinguished from the other.

The points of likeness, as well as the difference, can be observed. One was not good - and the other was bad. Both were alike. And at the beginning of the parable, equally sinners. While the outward form of their sin was opposite, the essential character of sinfulness was the same.

The Pharisee said and did not. The Publican neither said nor did. The one was a hypocrite and the other was a worldly. Both going at the same time and at the same place to pray. And both adopt in the name the same attitude in this exercise. They stood while they prayed.

Both looked into their hearts and into their lives. And both permit the judgement thus formed to determine the matter of their prayer. Both address themselves to the work of self-examination. And the prayers that followed, are the fruits of their own research. One found in himself only good. The other, found himself only evil.

*Handwritten:* Candid Camera - Hidden camera restaurant - st. - How Both etc. inside the church on 2 men worshipping -  
James Bullard

I. LOOK FIRST AT THE PHARISEE

Now to most of us when we hear the word Pharisee - we think of those hypocrites. None of them were sincere. It is true that many Pharisees were hypocrites. But Jesus is describing a truly good man. This is really part of the point of this parable. And you measure this man up by the law of Moses, and by the standards of religious piety, and you have a good man.

v. 11

He did not really go there to pray to God, but he prayed with himself. He stood up and said, God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.

Now I don't want to shock you, but there are some people tonight who say it right loud. I'm alright, and some of us nourish the feeling that we are better than some people we could name. Oh, we may lack the integrity to admit it, as this Pharisee - but that is the feeling in some people's hearts. Now true prayer is always offered to God and to God alone.

The Jews ordinarily stood up to pray - yes, he prayed face to face with himself. Dr. A. P. Robinson pictures this as a man looking and talking to himself in a mirror. He is talking to his own soul. Self congratulations, self satisfaction.

Now how much do you pray - not how often but how much. And this was like a performance in the theatre. With God, and not with yourself.

A newspaper reporter many years ago in writing about a worship service, writing of the pastor's prayer - he said, it was the most eloquent prayer ever prayed to a Boston audience. Perhaps, the well meaning reporter understood - or did not understand - but his words should be a warning to us. Whether we pray to an audience or to ourselves, really such is a sinful act. It degrades the highest expression of worship. And ignores him, who alone can direct our lives.

Now this does not mean that you should not pray in public. Jesus did both.

Now I do not know whether the Pharisee saw the Publican come into the temple at the same time - he did, at the fixed hour. But he took his stand apart and quickly he assumed a separate position - he not only stood with himself but he prayed with himself or to himself. Now prayer like this is filled with self pride - and it never reaches the ear of God.

He (stood by himself) because he was not the kind of man to mingle with the common herd of worshippers, who were not fit to be in his company. The Publican prayed alone. He considered himself unworthy to associate with the others. And the Pharisee prayed or spoke towards himself.



Pride was the God he worshipped - as the words of his prayer revealed.

Two words are used for the one English word stood - the one Jesus used of the Pharisee standing - taking up his position in an important place suggests in itself a straight upright position of perfect security and satisfaction.

Now with the Publican - stood means he stood with a bowed head. And a sorrowful countenance. His attitude was contrition.

Praying with himself the Pharisee used 34 words. To the Publican's seven words. Almost seven times as long a prayer.

It was also a prayer - self congratulation, self righteousness, and it rose no higher than the beautiful top of the temple in which it was prayed.

The prayer was ignorant of divine righteousness. He did not plead what he needed but what he was. His merits and he says, I give thanks that I am not as other men. He did not have a feeling of owing God anything. In praise, in thanksgiving, a man praying - yet no gratitude or adoration. Tradition said that Pharisees thank God for three things. One, that he was not created a Gentile. He was not an ordinary Roman citizen. That he was not born a woman.

Not as other men. Now this proud boast actually means the rest of mankind. He did not compare his own imperfections with others. He took great pride. And he looked on the majority of men as sinners, and he knew it.

Paul at one time was a Pharisee and he confessed himself. Even the chief of sinners, in an effort to set forth his own purity.

Now this Pharisee backed up. He could back up what he had in his life and he prayed about this literally - he begins, now listen to all the good things and the qualifications that he had. As a high ranking member of his church we might say.

First, an honest business man. I am not an extortioner In plain words he never took advantage of anyone in a business deal. This word was his bond. He was absolutely fair and trust worthy in every business relationship.

Now I know a lot of church members who cannot say that. And the list of church members who exploit others, would be terrific. But this man said that he had this standard of morality in his life. Doing business with others - he had been fair with all of them. Now this is a virtue that is lacking in far too many Christians and churches. I am amazed at some Christians and some religious organizations and some individuals who are often greedy and grasping in money matters and in pocketing every dime they can get a hold of by hook or crook. There are lots of Christians that ride around in an expensive automobile but won't pay the grocery bills each month. There are some others who live in big fine houses and will try to make one excuse right after another - even though they have ordered something they will not pay for it.

Second, he said, I am not unjust Now there is something that is more - you turn it around a little bit when you say, I am just. That little word just is a great word in the Bible - it means straight. Straight as the arrow flies - and it can mean in the Old Testament and in the New - moral straightness. To live ones life in a straight line - as the law of God, as revealed in the law of Moses. So here again, he had a great deal. He had acted justly and dealt fairly in the ordinary things in his life. So, he could say, I am not unjust.

Third, I am not an adulter. The deepest and the most daring transgressor of

law - both divine and human - the sin associated above all others with shame. There is none in the parable to suggest that the Pharisee was guilty of any of these vices. As he confesses. He was probably free from these sins. His marriage vows had been kept pure - and he had not violated them. And his wife was not ashamed to say, this is my husband. And the children were not ashamed to say, this is my Daddy. Do you see the point. Now there are many church members who cannot say that. And this Pharisee was a truly good moral man. We could never expect to find a better man than this. Now in this world of lust after the flesh, it is refreshing to find young men and women who have high morals and who do not follow this loose way and lude way of living. And certainly this Pharisee was to be commended for being true to his wife, his children, and his own body. He is not an adulter.

V, 12 ✓ Fourth, he was willing to fast. I fast twice in the week. Do you know what that means. The Bible scholars tell us that it was often the practice of these Pharisees to arise before sun-up and make their way to the temple, cast themselves upon their faces at the altar of the Lord, that they might remain there in fasting from sun-up to sun-down. Because they loved God and wanted to serve him.

I know (some church members who are not willing to fast five minutes. If the preacher happens to run a few minutes overtime at the noonday meal on Sunday, (they twist around in the pews like they are wired for electricity) They are dying to rush out for something to eat at the dinner table.

Now you may look down your nose at this Pharisee, but he had some devotion here that he would fast twice a week. I suppose that he meant he did without food two whole days a week. And although I am not in favor as Christians fasting as a ritual, without some real burden, yet I must say and take my hat off to this man that he was willing to sacrifice in order to do what he evidently believed was right. I only wish that more Christians would be willing to inconvenience themselves a bit in order to do the things they know would be pleasing to God. But instead of

willing to do this, and do without food - I want you to understand if you love the Lord and you want to see souls saved and you want to see your church grow, and if you want to win your loved ones to Christ - you ought to be willing to do something. Not just because it is convenient for you - but do that which is inconvenient. Now this man was better than many Christians. He was willing to do this because of his convictions.

✓ Fifth, he tithed too. Now get a good grip on your pocketbook. This man is about to medal. I give tithes of all that I possess. Did you hear that - tithes! Which is plural. And some scholars have discovered that devout men like this gave a tenth of even their tithes. And sometimes their offerings were on top of that. Many of them gave up to 50% of their total income to the service of the Lord and his temple.

~~Now many Christians do that.~~ I even hear church members today complaining about the tithe. It is a horrible demand. But here is a Pharisee that puts us to shame.

So now the man who does not give is a deliberate crook. You say that is strong language - it sure is. Do not believe it. God says this about it. Will a man rob God. Malachi says "yes". God gives the answer. He says you rob us in tithes and offerings. But you say that is the Old Testament - well, it is part of the Old Testament law. The law was not done away with when Jesus was nailed on the cross. Jesus said, you pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin. These ought ye have done. Matt. 23:23.

V.9 ✓ Sixth, he was a good man but he was lost. This is a real shocker. If Jesus

had not said it, we would hardly believe it. This man was good morally, deeply religious, but he went down to his house lost. He went down to his house condemned. He was eternally lost and his number is legend today. There was just one thing wrong with this man - he was headed for Hell. He was not saved. He was trusting his own righteousness.

Now, what I am trying to tell you is - that a good man like this - honest, clean, fasting, giving his tithes - even praying in public. What I am trying to tell you is, this man was on his way to Hell. Absolutely the Bible makes it clear. And all of us are sinners by birth and sinners by choice. And we cannot be saved from our sins by our own righteousness... what can wash away my sins. Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again. Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Jesus - "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" mat 6:48.  
John - "Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not, whosoever sinneth hath not seen him neither knoweth him" 1 John 3:9.  
What was wrong with him? - His heart toward God was absolutely wrong!

V.13 II. THE PUBLICAN The Wicked Man

Evidently this Publican was everything the Pharisee was not. He was crooked in his money matters. He was a Jew. He had taken a job from the Roman government to collect taxes., from his own countrymen. And since men were despised by the Jews, because they so often over-charged and were dishonest and kept the surplus. Evidently he was and adulter - it would be in keeping with his character. Probably the Pharisee meant when he said, Even as this Publican. V.11

Certainly it was not his custom to attend the temple services. He did not tithe nor fast. He was vile, filthy, wretched, and I imagine he felt out of place in the temple. And he was filled with shame as he stood there in one corner of the temple pleading with God to save him.

Now God did not save the Pharisee because he would not acknowledge that he was a sinner. He cannot save any man who does not approach him on the same basis

as the Publican. A sinner who needs forgiveness. Jesus came to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all expectation--Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the chief. I Tim. 1:15.

Now the attitude of the Publican is more wholesome - the Pharisee stood apart from the crowd - feeling that he was holier. Pride put him there. The Publican stood a far off because he felt unworthy - he was timid in his humble position.

*To get the impact - it is not he is a mere sinner - He had gone the limits, heart-broken, self-despising. Every man must begin here - (about) many of us would naturally identify with the Pharisee or the Publican?*

Who or what was a Publican - he was a Jew with working - collecting Roman taxes. He was the chief collector like Levi, who became Matthew. And like Zacchaeus, who also became a follower of Jesus. And these men were despised by the good Jews who would not allow them to enter the temple or the synagogue - or give a testimony in a court of justice. But now in the presence of God this man feels that he needs help. But as somebody has said, these two went to pray. Or rather went to brag and the other to pray. One stands up close and treads on high. Where the other does not send his eye. One nearer to God's altar trod - the other to the alters God. The Pharisee looked to Heaven with a haughty eye. The Publican could not even lift up his eyes to Heaven but with a blush on his face, smote his breast, to indicate there was keen remorse and the melting of his heart because of sin. How different was the cold attitude of the other.

With pride and the patient humility of a man in seven words prayed and his prayer reached God. (Things about Prayer) (1) No Man Who is Proud Can Pray!

*Notes Heaven does (Church Nativity Song) (2) No Man Who despises his fellow men can Pray! we are all part suffering & sorrowing humanity. (3) True Prayer comes from setting our lives besides the life of God!*

Did you know this man prayed 3 things.

First, I am a great sinner.

Second, I am liable too and deserve punishment.

Third, the Publican standing in the corner with no trumpet blowing - no bells ringing to call attention to his piety. He was ashamed even to look up to God.

And as he smote his breast which was a sign of contrition, there the despised hated man began to cry for mercy. As Titus 3:5 - mercy, good Lord, mercy I crave. This is the total sum - for mercy Lord is all my suit. Lord let thy mercy come. In the term rendered, be merciful, however, is related to the atonement - for it actually means to be propitiated. Rom. 3:25. He was casting himself on divine mercy and grace and the Publican attained favor with God.

There is one lesson we cannot fail to learn from the Publican's confession. It is that one of the foundations of character is our personal sense of sin. Sin means separation from God - and to confess our sin, to be penitent, to be concerned about deliverance from it. It is not morbid or unreal - but is essential, in life.

Somebody asked William Gladstone once what is the greatest lack in modern life - he replied slowly, (a sense of sin) that is the great lack of modern life.

What two different end products there were, said Jesus. This man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. Both men went home justified but with a different kind of justification. The Pharisee was wrapped in the same garment of justification that he wore to the temple. The Publican went home with the righteousness of God.

Justified means made right with God - rather than the other. How could this be. Is good evil and evil good. Does morality gain us nothing. Neither one of these men were really good. The worst of all sin is pride. And pride is the root of sin. Men are sinners - but it was different and dramatic. But he humbly confessed his sin while the Pharisee was trusting in his own righteousness - this man trusted in the grace to be saved through faith. It is a gift of God, not of works - lest any man should boast. Eph. 2:8.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And if we turn to Rom. 6:23, for the wages of sin is death and the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. We see the truth - we are all sinners. God loves us - he loves us too much that he gave Jesus - that we might receive him and be justified.

This gift is useless unless it is accepted. Of course, both you and I know that the finest gift in the world will do you no good if you will not accept it.

There was power in penitence.

First of all it brought a change of mind, heart, and will. When penitence is properly directed, it gives us hope. Jesus said, the Publican - I tell you - this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. There is power in the truth and goodness - and in sincere penitence for wrong. That we eagerly seek the forgiveness of the grace of God. There is great power in love and in penitent love of righteousness.

The meek are mighty. The real strength we need is most of all is mental and spiritual.

Moffitt translates a statement of Peter. Brace up your minds. The meek are so disciplined that they know how to do that. Rather than to have it done for them. The meek really are mighty. And they give themselves to the great forces of life. They are the disciplined - and they see what should be done and they do it.

Forgiveness in itself is a mighty force. But it takes power to forgive and



power to receive forgiveness. And who can forgive sins but God.

Dr. Wharton in Rockford, Ill., told of a visit of a boy one Sunday afternoon. The soldier entered his study door. The minister saw a home-sick boy. His real trouble however, was something far more serious. In an effort to drown his troubles he had been drinking. Suddenly it occurred to him that he was foolish to retreat from the problem. Realizing he was kidding himself about his escape. I came over here to ask you to write to my folks and tell them that I am a heel and that now I am going to try to do right. So he went on and on as he recounted certain facts which disturbed him. The letter was finally written but the minister did not write it. The soldier did. Signing his name, he looked over the desk, and smiled and said - well, "I feel better. It sort of helped me to lift up my head again. To know that I won a battle. Thus did he gain mighty power. There is no force comparable to that. Humble, he was not humiliated. He was lifted to a higher level than he had known. He had turned to the right direction.

*Penitent is eager to get rid of sin - intent on receiving the righteousness of God - The only way to receive God is turn from Transgression + rid self things separate us - Publican left the Temple was more mighty than he had ever been in all his life -*

There is always power in genuine penitence - it is a force when rightly used. It does something for others as well as for ourselves. It makes it possible for us to feel the wrongs of society and weakness.

*Penitent are ready for today & tomorrow. Has passed from one room to another.*

There was a stained - there was no stained glass window over the old North Church at Boston. The worshippers could look out upon the tenements which surrounded the church. These buildings are located at the North end - and the center of the Italian population. Some years ago as a certain worshipper listened to the Bishop's sermon - he watched an old woman on a fire escape platform - she was bent over a tub apparently doing the family washing. Easy Think of them - but will Repent self -

*we had to do precisely what Publican did - pray - "God be merciful to me a sinner" -*

*Bartholomew's Cottage from Train  
White washed  
of Brn  
Return -  
humble  
to return  
to me a sinner*

*to me a sinner - "God be merciful to me a sinner" -*