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Bible Talks

Continued from Page 7

lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The two brief parables of Christ's ministry that we consider today deal with prayer and suggest four lessons—first, the value of importunity; second, reasons for delay in answer to prayer; third, pompous petitions; fourth, acceptable prayers.

In these two parables Christ again uses that most impressive form of logic, viz., reasoning from the less to the greater. He cites the case of an unjust judge "which feared not God, neither regarded man." As always, He states the case as strongly as words can state it.

The judge used as an illustration ignored the inner monitor—the conscience—that prompts us to do that which is in accord with our sense of justice and right. He had disregarded the voice within until its suggestions had become inaudible; his conscience had been "seared with a hot iron." It is quite natural that one who feared not God would be indifferent to his fellow man.

Man is sometimes thoughtless in dealing with his fellows even while he retains in his heart the fear of the Almighty; he does not apply his religion in his daily life. But Christ stated the whole case in regard to this judge; he was entirely beyond the reach of the influences that should control one worthy to be an arbiter of disputes.

NO GREATER CONDEMNATION FOR A JUDGE

The second party is also selected with a view to making the contrast as strong as possible. She was a widow.

At the present time the widow is a privileged party in court. A man is expected to take care of himself and the married woman is expected to find a sponsor in her husband; but the widow, bereft of her natural defender, appeals to the chivalry of the judge.

No greater condemnation can be spoken against a judge today than that he fails to give special consideration to the appeals of a widow. In ancient times the widow was still more deserving of special consideration.

The widow came unto the judge, begging, "Avenge me of mine adversary." He would not, for a while, give heed to her. If her case had not been an urgent one she would have been wearied by her repeated and unrewarded demands for justice. But, finally, her importunity coerced the judge into action even when the justice of her cause failed to awaken a response.

The judge, actuated by selfishness, merely to get rid of her—"lest by her continual coming she weary me"—disposed of her case. This is what an unrighteous judge—an unworthy official—would do, purely out of selfishness, to get rid of one whose very persistence was annoying.

THE CRY OF GOD'S CHILDREN

And now the contrast: "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"

If an unjust earthly judge will, from a low motive, finally do justice, will not the Heavenly Father, the embodiment of justice and all the other virtues, avenge those whom He has chosen as His own? Can the cry of God's children be unheeded?

The concluding phrase of Christ's question, "Though he bear long with them?" has given rise to different interpretations. One Bible commen-

tator gives two alternative explanations suggested:

"This may mean that God is loth to punish the enemies of His elect, wishing to give even them the longest chance, or that in spite of His delay in answering the prayer of His elect, He loves them and sorrows over them and will vindicate them as soon as His wisdom sees best."

Impatience over delay in answering prayer especially where the appeal is for the benefit to one's self, always smacks a little of resumption. Our request may be one that should, for our own good, be denied, or answer should, for our good, be delayed. God knows our needs better than we do.

IN GOD'S OWN TIME

If we mail a letter to a friend across the continent, we do not expect an answer the same day. We calculate the distance between the two places and make allowance for the time required for the mail trains to go to and fro.

In our appeals to the Heavenly Father we do not take into account the distance between God and His children, because prayer gave us a wireless communication with His throne long before man invented the radio. But we should take into consideration the infinite distance that separates the wisdom of God from human wisdom.

We are prone to think that because a thing seems desirable to us it must appear so to an all-wise Heavenly Father. Possibly the difference between the understanding of the child and the understanding of a parent will suggest the width of the gulf between our knowledge and the Father's knowledge.

The lesson invites continued prayer and gives assurance that in God's own time an answer will be given. "It may not be my way, and it may not be thy way; but in His own way, the Lord will provide."

A CONTEMPTIBLE CHARACTER

The second contrast presents a lesson which cannot be misunderstood. The dullest mind does not require extended examination or time for deliberation in considering the difference between the Pharisee and the publican, who "went up into the temple to pray."

What a contemptible character the Pharisee was, according to the portrait drawn by Christ.

Conceited, bombastic, uncharitable, insincere, insulting—the reader can add any other adjectives that occur to him, with confidence that the picture cannot be overdrawn.

"The Pharisee prayed thus with himself." With himself—not to God. The Heavenly Father was purely incidental to this prayer—the Pharisee's thoughts centered about himself.

"I thank thee that I am not as other men are"—he was in a class by himself. He was far above the ordinary run of people, but not so far but that he could get a very clear view of them as he looked down from his self-erected pedestal.

He could see them extorting, dealing unjustly, even given to immorality. To make plain his indictments against these creatures whom he regarded as inferior, he pointed to the publican as a little better than the others, but still much below himself.

BOASTING BEFORE GOD

He (the Pharisee) fasted twice a week. That was more than the law required; but his worship, being a matter of form rather than a matter of the heart, he carried the form to the limit, and told God about it.

He did not forget to refer to his tithes; he was not likely to forget these. This was a formality that evidently pained him, but he endured the pain, getting such consolation as he could out of boasting of it.

Here, too, Christ made the con-

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