

Parables on Prayer.

MAY 22nd.

LUKE XVIII: 1-14.

Golden Text, Luke 11: 9.

THESE TWO parables are the complements of each other. The first is given to encourage habitual and persevering prayer; the second rebukes self-righteous ostentation as contrasted with humble sincerity in prayer. V. 1. This parable has its key hanging at the door, says Henry. It supposes that all God's people are praying people. *Men ought*—It is their duty and their privilege. Luke 21: 36. Rom. 12: 12. Ephes. 6: 18. Col. 4: 2. Vs. 2, 3. *A Judge*—At all the gates of the city were judges who were *expected* to administer justice without respect of persons, Deut. 16: 18. Matt. 5: 25. *Feared not*—He was unprincipled and remiss in duty. *A widow*—who needed and looked to him for protection. *Avenge me*—give me redress. Vs. 4, 5. *He would not*—paid no heed. *Lest she weary me*—to be rid of her incessant annoyance he will do what she asks. Vs. 6, 7. *The Lord*—the name expresses the authoritative interpretation of His own parable. *Hear*—If even he is moved to redress wrong, shall not God, who is not unjust, *avenge*—redeem from oppression, *his own elect*—his chosen ones. In the collective sense His Church, though what is here said is equally applicable to individuals. V. 8. *Nevertheless*—In this verse our Saviour seems to express a doubt that his disciples, in times of trial, might not shew such faith and perseverance as this widow, 2 Pet. 3: 17; teaching us that *faith* is the great thing Christ looks for in His people. Vs. 10, 12. *Two men*—from the opposite extremes of the society, meet at the same place, ostensibly for the same purpose. *The Pharisee stood*—struck an attitude as men would say, and *prayed*—rather made a speech, about himself, as though he should remind God not only of his freedom from grosser sins, but also of his gratuitous *works of supererogation*, for he *fasted* every Monday and Thursday, while the Law only enjoined one fast day in the year, Lev. 16: 29. Num. 29: 7; moreover, he gave tithes of *all he possessed*—whereas the Law required the tithe only of his increase, Lev. 27: 30. Deut. 14: 22. His “thanks” intimating rather that God was thus placed under an obligation to him than otherwise. *Even as this publican*—This contemptuous allusion caps the climax. Let the publican be as bad as he may, that was none of his business, Rom. 14: 4. V. 13. *As far off*—from the Holy place, which he deems himself unworthy to approach. This is ever the attitude of true humility, ch. 7: 7 and 15: 19. Mark 1: 7. *Be merciful to me*—He does not compare himself with the Pharisee, nor with other men, but feels himself a sinner in the sight of God. So St. Paul, 1 Tim. 1: 15. His prayer is comprehended in one word *Grace*—unmerited favour. V. 14. *I tell you*—Christ himself pronounces judgment. *This man* the publican; *justified*—his sins being pardoned, he is thenceforth treated as a just person. *The other*, was not seeking justification, and felt no need of it. Humility is the indispensable requisite for the reception of Grace. Job 33: 27, 28. Ps. 34: 18. Isa. 57: 15. Matt. 5: 3.

Parable of the Pounds.

MAY 29th.

LUKE XIX: 11-27.

Golden Text, Romans 14: 12.

COMPARE with the parable of the Talents, Matt. 25: 14-30. They are not identical, however. This was spoken at the house of Zaccheus, near Jericho, on the morning of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, vs. 36-38. The object of it, v. 11, was to correct the erroneous idea in the minds of the populace, and from which even the disciples were not quite free, Acts 1: 6, that the Messianic Kingdom was immediately to become visible on earth, and also to inculcate the duty of faithfulness. The tone of it shews an elevated self-consciousness of his Divine mission on the part of Christ, and an expectation of increasing future activity on the part of his disciples. Vs. 11-13. *These things*—see context, vs. 1-10. *A certain nobleman*—The fact that Archelaus had gone to Rome some years before to be installed as King of Judaea would still be fresh in their minds. *Ten pounds*—The Roman pound, 100 pence, about \$15. The equality of distribution illustrates different degrees of improvement of like opportunities. *Occupy*—not only keep, but use, in a business sense. V. 14. *His citizens*—subjects, meaning the Jews who repudiated our Lord's claims, John 19: 15: 21. *Hated him*, &c.—John 15: 18, 24, 25 and 1: 11. V. 15. *Returned*—Archelaus did, so will Christ, as king, and demand an “account,” Rom. 14: 12. Faithfulness is the main test, Matt. 25: 21. 1 Cor. 4: 2. Vs. 16, 17. *Thy pound*—not my industry—the servant owns that the pound is still God's pound. *Faithful in little*—not simply because he had gained ten pounds—success is admirable, but *fidelity* rather than capability is God's criterion of merit, and its reward is many things, yea “all things.” 1 Cor. 3: 21-23. Diligence and faithfulness have their abundant reward in the other life, 1 Pet. 1: 10-11. Vs. 18, 19. *Five pounds, five cities*—The degrees of glory in heaven will be according to the degrees of present fidelity; there “every vessel will be alike full, but not alike large,” 1 Cor. 3: 8. V. 20. *Here is thy pound*—an apt illustration of stolid indifference in those who have gifts but who use them not in God's service—who give themselves no concern as to whether Christ's Kingdom is advanced or not—who see no advantage to themselves in working or making personal sacrifices for the Lord's cause. Their selfishness strengthens their slothfulness. “Here is thy pound” sounds like honesty, but there are sins of omission as well of commission. *I have kept*—Yes, but did not the Master say “occupy?” make all you can for me. It is not enough to say we have done no hurt in the world. V. 24. *Take from him*—he may no longer be steward, ch. 16: 2, so unfaithful is he, Ps. 69, 25. *Give it to him*—such as shew a disposition to do good shall be encouraged. V. 26, 27. *That hath not*—i.e. who have gifts to no purpose, or, as in ch. 8: 18, shall be deprived of them. *Mine enemies*—The Jews about him, and, generally, all who reject him. *Slay them*—a strong expression of the severity and hopelessness of the retribution that awaits all who will not have the Lord Jesus to reign over them.