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The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican.

LUKE xviii, 9—14

The "two men" who "went up to the temple to pray," were "a pharisee" and "a publican." The pharisees were a set of people among the Jews, who pretended to be much more holy than others. They were remarkably strict in attending to many of the outward duties of religion, but they did not love God or act kindly to men. See Matt. xxiii. 23, 27, 28. Luke xi. 42—44. Publicans were persons who collected taxes; they were in general very wicked people; they were hated and disliked by almost all other men, and no respectable or decent person would have any acquaintance with them. They are often mentioned in the New Testament, along with sinners of the very worst character. See Matt. xxi. 31. Luke vii. 34. The pharisees, especially, despised them greatly.

"The pharisee stood and prayed;" that is, he thought he was praying, or at least, he wished others to think so; but the words he used are not at all

like a prayer. In the Bible we read many prayers of good men, and we find them confess that they are sinners, and ask mercies from God. See Psalms li. cxliii. 1, 2, 10. Dan. ix 1—20. But the pharisee seemed to think that he had no sins to be forgiven, and that there was no mercy which he needed. He began by saying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are." These words would have been very proper, if he had used them with a right meaning. If he had meant to say, "O God, I thank thee that thou hast kept me from being so wicked as many others, for I know that I should have been as bad as they, if thy goodness had not prevented me." This would have been quite proper. But he took all the praise to himself. He went on to mention some of the most wicked people he could think of, and among the rest, the poor publican, and he boasted before God, that he was not like them. He forgot that his heart was by nature no better than theirs; and that, if he had been in