

which, granting that it really existed, he was more inclined to rejoice than to weep. He condemned every one except himself. All others were guilty, but he was justified. All were rejected, but he was accepted. All had gone astray, and he alone was going on in the right path. His prayers were the very marrow of truth and piety, but the supplications of others had no good quality to recommend them. He was not a man of unclean lips, he claimed to be living near to God, and therefore the words of his mouth must ascend to the throne on high, and there find acceptance. This was the way in which he reasoned with himself. Hence his contempt towards all men in general, and the publican in particular. His own heart had never felt the blighting influence of inward corruption, therefore he sought no relief from the unfelt burden of his sins. He did not, indeed, feel that he had any sins for which to express sorrow, or the just consequences of which he had good reason to fear; but he spoke rather as if to remind God of the sins of other people. He was not sensible that all his life long he had been feeding on mere husks, and trusting in a bruised reed. And what better is one's own righteousness? It feeds not the soul unto life. It lifts not up the sinking heart. It comforts not the mourning spirit. It sustains not the weak hands. It confirms not the feeble knees. Verily it is a bruised reed. It was on such a reed that the Pharisee leaned, therefore the presence of in-dwelling sin caused him no pain. The thought of death awoke no anxiety in his mind, and no dread of future punishment disturbed his carnal security. He had no apprehension of an unhappy life beyond the grave, for it is evident that he had taken the matter of salvation into his own hands; and he seemed to think that every thing that was necessary had been done for his eternal welfare. He stood in no terror of final condemnation. He had already succeeded in persuading himself that no danger awaited him in the great hereafter, nor did he perceive that by his rash and unwarrantable sentence against all mankind, he was greatly aggravating his own guilt. Against himself he thought that no judgment of an unfavourable kind could be pronounced, and therefore he did not ask mercy from God. "Through the pride of his countenance" he did "not seek after God." The voice of an accusing conscience did not alarm him. The fiery terrors of a broken law did not rouse him to reflection. No stern, uncompromising message came

forth from the inward monitor, and to him the law was not a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ, but really a dead letter, and yet he wished to be justified by it. Spiritual slumber had long locked in its powerful grasp the self-trusting Pharisee, and death-charged clouds of spiritual darkness still brooded, with a most threatening aspect, over the whole inner man. But notwithstanding this awful state, the Pharisee felt perfectly satisfied with himself, and saw nothing wrong in his life, or dangerous in his condition as a sinner, because he did not believe himself to be one. He was at peace with himself, but he was so on a false foundation. He discarded faith and charity, and rejected every divine operation in the fitting of the soul for glory; and perceiving no efficacy in the precious means which God had ordained for the salvation of men, this blind and self-reliant worshipper placed all confidence in his own strength, as if he needed no help from above. Still, however, high as were the claims which he urged in his own behalf, he did not meet with the approbation which he had all along expected, or obtain the blessing that was bestowed on his much despised but more humble neighbour. Verily, "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill." But, on the other hand, "every one that asketh (in faith) receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness," but not such as that of which the Pharisee boasted; for, when such men "cry unto" God He "will not hearken unto them,"—"and though they cry in His ears with a loud voice, yet will" He "not hear them." But "the Lord is nigh unto them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him: He also will bear their cry, and will save them." In His goodness true humility finds exaltation, and a godly submission to His rule, supreme honour; and to the meek of the earth, He dispenses His grace according to their need. To Him faith appeals not in vain, and the prayer of the righteous find a ready access to His presence. But "the Lord hateth a proud look," and He "will not suffer him that hath an high look and a proud heart." Though "the Lord is merciful and gracious," yet He "will by no means clear the guilty," but He takes pleasure in those who are "more ready to hear than to give