

words were first delivered, and attend closely to the ideas which they must have conveyed to the hearers *then*. This is the more necessary, because some of the expressions have considerably changed their meaning; and are now commonly employed in a very different sense, and connected with very different ideas, from those which were annexed to them at that day.

The name of PHARISEE, for instance, is now employed as an epithet of *reproach*, insomuch that most would be *offended* at being called *Pharisees*. But it was quite otherwise when the LORD JESUS spoke the parable. The name of *Pharisee* was then a name of respectability and honour; a name, of which none who bore it were ashamed. (See Acts xxiii. 6, xxvi. 4, 5.) They were the strict religious professors of the day; honoured by all the people for the outward regularity of their conduct, for their earnest zeal towards God, and for their extraordinary closeness of adherence to—what they conceived to be—the principles of the Divine Law.

The reason why the name of *Pharisee* has so much changed its signification, seems plainly to be this: The belief of the New Testament Scripture is commonly *professed* in these countries; and all who are in the least degree acquainted with their contents, must be aware that the Pharisees were among the bitterest opposers and persecutors of the LORD JESUS CHRIST; as they were indeed the objects of his most plain and severe rebukes. Hence, most people now are accustomed, from their childhood, to consider the *Pharisees* as very *wicked* persons; and annex *their* usual ideas of wickedness to the name, wherever it occurs.

But, to enter into the true view of this parable, we ought to throw off these recollections, for the present: and then, when we are told, "That

two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a PHARISEE, and the other a PUBLICAN," we shall see that the two characters presented to our attention are the most strongly *contrasted* that can be;—the character of the *Pharisee* marked by every thing most favourably thought and spoken of by the world; the character of the *Publican* marked by every thing the opposite,—by every thing which men most universally and justly reprobate.

For the *Publicans*—or farmers of the taxes imposed on the Jews by the Roman government—were so notoriously guilty of extortion and fraud in the execution of their office, so infamous for the immorality of their conduct, that the name of *Publican* was equivalent with that of a wicked profligate. This is evident, from our finding *publicans* and *harlots* classed together in the New Testament; where we see the *Publicans* ranking—proverbially—with sinners of the very vilest description upon earth. (See Matth. xxi. 31, 32. ix. 10, 11. xi. 19. Luke xv. 1, 2.)

Behold then, Reader, the two characters held forth to our view in the opening of this parable; the one, a strict religious professor, most highly esteemed by men for that, which men esteem most highly as the *best* thing;—the other, a notorious profligate. They both go up into the Temple, the place where *prayer was wont to be made* under the Jewish Law. They both go up there for the same professed purpose,—to *pray*. Here let us pause a moment, to reflect on the nature of that act, in which they are represented as professing to be engaged.

PRAYER—however lightly talked of, and slightly thought of frequently—is an engagement the most solemn. A *creature* drawing near to the infinite CREATOR! and holding fellowship with that GOD, before whom the heavenly host veil their faces with