

its logical conclusion. The Pharisee, even though he had everything in the eyes of man - he received nothing from God! The publican, even though he had nothing in the eyes of man - he received everything from God!

He was "standing afar off." Here we begin to observe the basic difference between these two individuals. Here we begin to observe the **external** marks of **inward** penance and humility. The publican had the self same right as the Pharisee to come near and step all the way up to the front, but a profound consciousness of his unworthiness before God compelled him to take the lowest place - **EVEN AMONG HIS FELLOW-MEN**. So profound was his humility that he thought everybody **better than himself**. The prayer of the publican was simple; it was direct; it was brief; it was genuine; it expressed need - **REAL NEED**; it expressed dependency - **REAL DEPENDENCY**; it expressed sorrow; it was personal; it was private; it was spiritual; there was no pretense in it; and, **IT WAS POWERFUL** - powerful enough to move the awesome majesty of God! He could find in his heart and mind no good works to encourage him, or even to move him to thanksgiving. Rather, his prevailing thought was that his good deeds - such as they were - were outnumbered and overshadowed by the evil in him, and in the Presence of God his good deeds seemed altogether unworthy of mention. It never occurred to him that he could approach the spot where the self-righteous Pharisee had taken his stand. So great did he think his faults to be that he could not even lift his eyes to Heaven; rather, all that he felt were the pangs of his "unprofitable" condition. He could not but bow his head before the just Presence of God, and so he struck his breast in sorrow for his "unprofitable" condition. He could not but bow his head before the just Presence of God, and so he struck his breast as a sign of deep repentance. Almost breathlessly he begged for pity and forgiveness! His eyes could not bear at that moment to look, as it were, into the pure eyes of the sinless God. He did not really know it, but at that moment - **THAT VERY PRECISE MOMENT** - his soul, bowed in true humility and sorrow, was being made ready for the Master's embrace.

There was no fanfare around the person of the publican. In no way did he stand out. Rather he hid himself in the shadows of the temple - removed from everyone, not so much ashamed to be standing before the eyes of men, as he was ashamed to be standing before the eyes of God; yet, unknown to him, he stood tall and strong before that **PRESENCE**. His prayer was private and he said it privately. His prayer was meant for the ear of God, and God alone.

The contrast continues to the very last. As the Pharisee had compared himself with all mankind and concluded that he alone was good, that he alone was right, that he alone was properly worthy, the publican, on the