

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

– FEB. 9. – Luke 6:41-49. –

Golden Text – "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" – Luke 6:46.

THIS portion of our Lord's sermon suggests several important thoughts: – (1) That it is wrong to encourage in one's self a fault-finding disposition, even though the faults of others, if not our own, must be manifest and often painful to us. True brotherly love remembers that we are all imperfect in various ways, that while our neighbors' faults are unpleasant to us, ours may be equally unpleasant to them; and as we desire to have our neighbors considerate of our lameness from the fall and to have patience with our weaknesses, so, in the same brotherly love, we should exercise a similar forbearance.

(2) The Lord's words imply that a persistent fault-finding disposition, which ignores the faults of self and magnifies those of others, is mere hypocrisy – a vain pretension to a zeal for righteousness which is not sincere. A sincere zeal for righteousness will always begin with self-discipline; and in proceeding to help others will endeavor to do so with skill and carefulness, and as gently as possible, remembering the slow and painful processes of one's own self-correction and self-culture.

If any man does not submit his own heart to the leading and teaching of the Lord, he has no authority from him to teach others to do so. And for such to presume to do so, as did the Pharisees and doctors of the law, is hypocrisy, as the Lord plainly indicated. (See also Matt. 23:2-7,13.) "Unto the wicked [those who know what is right and do it not, who refuse to practise what they preach], God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest my

words behind thee?" (Psa. 50:16,17.) Only those who, being fully consecrated to the Lord, have received the anointing of his holy spirit, are commissioned of God to preach the gospel and serve the household of faith. And only such as continually and faithfully submit themselves to the leading of the spirit of God, out of the old paths of sin and uncleanness, into the paths of holiness, are worthy or able to perform the skilful service of teaching and serving the Lord's household.

(3) The Lord points to the common acts and words of our daily life as the index of our hearts, saying, "A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit; for every tree is known by his own fruit." So also, "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

Thus it appears that all of our words and actions in the little as well as in the great things of life testify in judgment, either for or against us, every day. With what carefulness, then, should we guard every act and word of life; and if overtaken in a fault, we should quickly repent and seek forgiveness, remembering that "If any man sin, we have an advocate," etc. – 1 John 2:1,2.

(4) Our attention is called to the necessity of doing, as well as hearing, the words of the Lord. To do as the Lord indicated, signified, not an insincere outward show of righteousness (calling attention to one's own good deeds by contrasting them with the failures of others, and at the same time being blind to deeper and graver personal faults), but it signified radical and thorough reform, a digging down deep through all the rubbish of pride and conceit and laying well the foundations of a sincere and righteous character. Digging deep for a sure foundation upon which to rear such a superstructure, we find nothing solid until we come to Christ the rock. (1 Cor. 10:4; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:7,8.) In ourselves we find no ground of stability upon which to rear our building of character and faith. Nor is there stability

in anything which other men can furnish. Human resolutions and human theories are all sandy foundations which cannot insure permanence in the storms of life. But those who are rooted and grounded in Christ and built up in him – in his doctrine, his love, and his character – shall never be moved. When the floods of temptation rise and in a steady stream beat against that house, it shall not be moved; for its strength is in Christ, the solid rock upon which it is founded.

Those not thus founded in Christ will surely fall: their faith will surely be swept away; and character must necessarily suffer from the decline of faith.
