

A FAITH FOUNDATION NECESSARY

– JUNE 9. – LUKE 6:39-49. –

"Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." – Jas. 1:22.

THE GREAT TEACHER in today's lesson emphasizes the necessity of knowledge and of a faith built thereupon. The blind leading the blind represent the ignorant leading the ignorant into difficulties, into the ditch. In the mental blindness of the past many Christians assumed that the Master here taught that the blind leaders and the blind followers of our day would all fall into the pit of eternal torment, but not so. The thought is that they will stumble and experience injury instead of reaching the desired destination.

The destination sought by the Jews was fellowship with and relationship to God – His highest favor, mentioned to Abraham, saying, "In thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." St. Paul says of that promise, "Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh, but the election hath obtained it and the rest were blinded." (Rom. 11:7.) The entire Jewish race was blinded and turned aside and fell into the pit – into confusion, darkness, separation from God. This was the very matter against which Jesus forewarned them. They were following the lead of the Scribes and Pharisees and Doctors of the Law, all of whom were blind leaders who misled their too trusting followers. The disciple or follower will not fare better than his master or leader or teacher; he cannot hope for better results than his leader.

How important, then, that God's people recognize the true Leader, Jesus, that they hear His voice, and heed not the voice of others. In the present, in the ending of this Gospel Age, we have a condition of things very similar to that which obtained in the end of the Jewish Age. We have many great, learned and wise men in all the denominations of Christendom, as the Jews had in Jesus' day in all their different

sects. It is equally important that we take heed that we do not follow blind leaders today – in fact, it is much more important. Why should we follow any of the creeds when now we have the Word of God in such convenient form and when all are able to [R5029 : page 165] read it? Who cannot rejoice that recently the Pope issued instructions that the Roman Catholic bishops should encourage Catholics to study the Bible? How it would rejoice us to find the Protestant leaders similarly urging the Word of God upon their peoples!

Alas! on the contrary, we find that many of the great and wise of the principal pulpits of the world are undermining the faith of the people by telling them that the Bible is not Divinely inspired, that Moses and the Prophets did not write the books ascribed to them, and hence indirectly saying that Jesus and the Apostles were deceived when they made quotations from the Old Testament and ascribed them to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Moses, Habakkuk, etc. These great men style themselves Higher Critics and endorse the theory of Evolution, that humanity is undergoing a process of evolution from monkey-likeness up to God-likeness. They are thus indirectly telling their people that there was no fall from God's image and likeness, that there was no sin committed, no sentence for sin, no Redeemer from sin and its sentence and that restitution is not to be hoped for nor to be desired. – Acts 3:19-21.

Surely the Great Teacher's advice not to follow blind leaders was never more needed than in our day. Blessed will they be who heed the warning, and by it will be guided back to a more thorough study of the words of the Great Teacher, His Apostles and the Prophets.

HUMILITY A CHARACTER FOUNDATION

The parable of a man with a beam in his own eye trying to pick a mote out of his brother's eye was a forceful method whereby the Master inculcated the necessity of humility on the part of those who would be taught of God. Humility is here as elsewhere put as a foundation virtue. The Latin word for humility is *humus*, ground. This

implies that it is the soil out of which other virtues are produced. Those who think they know everything can learn nothing. As Chalmers has said: "The more a man does examine, the more does he discover the infirmities of his own character." As Wheatley remarked, "Ten thousand of the greatest faults in our neighbors are of less consequence *to us* than one of the smallest in ourselves." A knowledge of our sins and imperfections should make and keep all humanity humble; but how beautiful it is to realize that the perfect Jesus was humble and that all the holy angels are so!

GRAPES OFF A BRAMBLE BUSH

While the Scriptures forbid God's people to judge one another, they do commend to us another kind of judging. We are not to judge in the sense of condemning, sentencing, etc., those who claim to be honest, sincere, reverential, merely because they differ from what we would expect; God knows their hearts and to his own Master each servant must stand or fall eventually.

But while not condemning the heart we are to judge of the outward conduct. The parable which our Lord in this lesson gives respecting the gathering of grapes from bramble bushes illustrates this point. God's people are likened to the grape-vine, which produces no thorns but luscious clusters of fruit. Mankind in general are likened to bramble bushes, ready to scratch, tear, injure, on the slightest provocation, and are merely self-sustaining, not bringing forth fruitage that would be a blessing to others. We are to distinguish between such characters and God's people: "By their fruits shall ye know them."

It is said that at times a bramble bush will be entirely covered by a vine, so that the grapes would appear to be coming from the bush. We are not to be mistaken. A good tree cannot bring forth an evil fruitage, neither can an injurious tree bring forth a good fruitage. The lesson, applied to humanity, is that those who are really God's people cannot live injurious lives or fruitless lives; they must be fruit-bearing else they are none of His. And should we find some of the fruits of the

spirit commingling with a thorniness of life, an evil, injurious disposition, we are to assume that in some sense of the word the fruitage is merely put on and does not belong to the bramble-bush character.

It is therefore useless for any man to tell us that he has given his heart to the Lord in fulness of consecration and that he has received the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit and yet find him rejoicing in sin, taking pleasure in iniquity, injustice, selfishness and a course of life injurious to his neighbors. If his heart be changed the results will be manifest in his daily life, because "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK

The closing parable of this lesson is in full tune with its opening verse. In the first parable the blind who trust to the leadership of the blind fall into the ditch. In the parable now before us the picture is that of a householder. If he be wise he will not build upon the shifting sands, which either a wind storm or a rain storm may undermine, and cause a wreck, but he will seek a solid, rock foundation which will endure the storm.

This parable illustrates two classes of believers. Both hear the Great Teacher's instructions and both believe and both rear faith structures and entertain heavenly hopes. But the one is more prudent, more careful than the other. One seeks for the doctrines and principles of the Divine Word, and builds his faith structure upon that true foundation which the Divine Revelation affords. His faith cannot fail whatever storms may assail; it is surely founded on the Divine promises.

The unwise believer takes too much for granted and builds upon the traditions of the elders, the creeds of the Dark Ages, etc. He fails to appreciate the necessity for having a proper foundation for his faith and his works. In the time of stress and storm with which this Age will

end all such will find the foundation swept from under their faith structure. There will be a general fall of Babylon, as the Scriptures declare – everything not well founded upon the sure Word of God will give way; "That day shall declare it." St. Paul mentions the same class and applies the lesson specially to our day in his letter to the Corinthians. Those whose faith structure will fail will thereby suffer great loss, though they themselves may be saved as by fire – through great tribulation. – I Cor. 3:13-15. [R5028 : page 165]

DEEDS, NOT WORDS

"They do the least
Who talk the most,
Whose good designs,
Are all their boast;
Let words be few.

"They do the most
Whose lives possess
The sterling stamp
Of righteousness;
For deeds are true."

