

Matthew 7 Commentary-C H Spurgeon

PREVIOUS

NEXT

MATTHEW 7:1-12 THE KING CONTINUES TO REGULATE THE BEHAVIOR OF HIS SUBJECTS

He deals with matters in which we come into contact with our fellow men, as he had aforetime set in order our personal devotion towards God, and our private business for ourselves.

Matthew 7:1-2. JUDGE not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again

Use your judgment, of course: the verse implies that you will judge in a right sense. But do not indulge the criticizing faculty upon others in a censorious manner, or as if you were set in authority, and had a right to dispense judgment among your fellows. If you impute motives, and pretend to read hearts, others will do the same towards you. A hard and censorious behavior is sure to provoke reprisals. Those around you will pick up the peck measure you have been using, and measure your corn with it. You do not object to men forming a fair opinion of your character, neither are you forbidden to do the same towards them; but as you would object to their sitting in judgment upon you, do not sit in judgment upon them. This is not the day of judgment, neither are we his Majesty's judges, and therefore we may not anticipate the time appointed for the final assize, nor usurp the prerogatives of the Judge of all the earth.

Surely, if I know myself aright, I need not send my judgment upon circuit to try other men; for I can give it full occupation in my own Court of Conscience to try the traitors within my own bosom.

Matthew 7:3-5. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The judging faculty is best employed at home. Our tendency is to spy out splinters in other men's eyes, and not to see the beam in our own. Instead of beholding, with gratified gaze, the small fault of another, we should act reasonably if we penitently considered the greater fault of ourselves. It is the beam in our own eye which blinds us to our own wrongdoing; but such blindness does not suffice to excuse us, since it evidently does not shut our eyes to the little error of our brother. Officiousness pretends to play the oculist; but in very truth it plays the fool. Fancy a man with a beam in his eye pretending to deal with so tender a part as the eye of another, and attempting to remove so tiny a thing as a mote or splinter! Is he not a hypocrite to pretend to be so concerned about other men's eyes, and yet he never attends to his own? Jesus is gentle, but he calls that man a "hypocrite" who fusses about small things in others, and pays no attention to great matters at home in his own person. Our reformations must begin with ourselves, or they are not true, and do not spring from a right motive.

Sin we may rebuke, but not if we indulge it. We may protest against evil, but not if we willfully practice it. The Pharisees were great at censuring, but slow at amending. Our Lord will not have his kingdom made up of hypocritical theorists, he calls for practical obedience to the rules of holiness.

After we are ourselves sanctified, we are bound to be eyes to the blind, and correctors of unholy living; but not till then. Till we have personal piety, our preaching of godliness is sheer hypocrisy. May none of us provoke the Lord to say to us, "Thou hypocrite"!

Matthew 7:6. Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

When men are evidently unable to perceive the purity of a great truth, do not set it before them. They are like mere dog, and if you set holy things before them they will be provoked to "turn again and rend you": holy things are not for the profane. "Without are dogs": they must not be allowed to enter the holy place. When you are in the midst of the vicious, who are like "swine," do not bring

forth the precious mysteries of the faith, for they will despise them, and “trample them under their feet ” in the mire.

You are not needlessly to provoke attack upon yourself, or upon the higher truths of the gospel. You are not to judge, but you are not to act without judgment. Count not men to be dogs or swine; but when they avow themselves to be such, or by their conduct act as if they were such, do not put occasions in their way for displaying their evil character. Saints are not to be simpletons; they are not to be judges, but, also, they are not to be fools.

Great King, how much wisdom thy precepts require! I need thee, not only to open my mouth, but also at times to keep it shut.

Matthew 7:7, 8. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

To men you may not always speak of heavenly things, but to God you may. “Ask, seek, knock ”; let your prayer be adapted to the case; let it increase in intensity; let it advance in the largeness of its object. To receive a gift is simple, to find a treasure is more enriching, to enter into a palace is best of all. Each form of prayer is prescribed, accepted, and rewarded in a manner suitable to its character. The promise is universal to all who obey the precept. The commands are in opposition to the methods of carking care which have been denounced in the former chapter; and they are encouragements to the precepts of giving and non-resistance set forth previously, since he that can have of God for the asking may well give to men who ask, and even yield to those who unjustly demand. With such boundless stores at command, we should not be either niggardly or litigious. Lord, help me to have done with fretting, and to abound in asking, seeking, knocking; so shall I soon overflow with thanksgiving.

Matthew 7:9, 10. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?

In temporal things we make blunders, and ask for that as bread which we think to be so, when in truth it is a stone. We mistake a serpent for an eel, and beg for it as for a fish. Our heavenly Father will correct our prayer, and give us, not what we ignorantly seek, but what we really need. The promise to give what we ask is here explained, and set in its true light. This is a gracious correction of the folly which would read the Lord’s words in the most literal sense, and make us dream that every whim of ours had only to put on the dress of prayer in order to its realization. Our prayers go to heaven in a Revised Version. It would be a terrible thing if God always gave us all we asked for. Our heavenly Father himself “knows how to give ” far better than we know how to ask.

Matthew 7:11. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

We, although ourselves evil, correct our children’s blunders in their requests to us, and much more will our all-wise, and good, heavenly Father amend in his bestowals the errors of our beseechings. He will give the good which we did not ask, and withhold the ill which we so unwisely requested.

We know our children and know for our children; and yet we are poor, evil creatures: shall not the perfectly good Father, who knows all things, arrange his gifts most graciously? Yes, we are sure he will. “How much more ”! says our Lord, and he does not say how much more, but leaves that to our meditations. We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but he knows how to give as becometh his perfection; and he will do so.

He will give “good things ”, and especially his Holy Spirit, who is all good things in one. Lord, I would think more of Thee than of my own prayer; more of thy Son than of my own faith; and more of thy Holy Spirit than of all good gifts beside.

Matthew 7:12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Everything that has gone before leads up to this, and argues for it, and so he says “therefore. ” It will be instructive to look back, and

think this out.

Let my reader set about it.

In this place our King gives us HIS GOLDEN RULE. Put yourself in another's place, and then act to him as you would wish him to act towards you under the same circumstances. This is a right royal rule, a precept always at hand, always applicable, always right. Here you may be a judge, and yet not be judging others, but judging for others. This is the sum of the Decalogue, the Pentateuch, and the whole sacred Word.

Oh, that all men acted on it, and then there would be no slavery, no war, no sweating, no striking, no lying, no robbing; but all would be justice and love! What a kingdom is this which has such a law! This is The Code Christian. This is the condensation of all that is right and generous. We adore the King out of whose mouth and heart such a law could flow. This one rule is a proof of the divinity of our holy religion. The universal practice of it by all who call themselves Christians would carry conviction to Jew, Turk, and infidel, with greater speed and certainty than all the apologies and arguments which the wit or piety of men could produce.

Lord, teach it to me! Write it on the fleshy tablets of my renewed heart!

Write it out in full in my life!

MATTHEW 7:13-23 THE KING TEACHES HIS SERVANTS TO DISCERN AND TO DISTINGUISH

Matthew 7:13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Be up and on your journey. Enter in at the gate at the head of the way, and do not stand hesitating. If it be the right road, you will find the entrance somewhat difficult, and exceedingly narrow; for it demands self-denial, and calls for strictness of obedience, and watchfulness of spirit. Nevertheless, "enter ye in at the strait gate." Whatever its drawbacks of fewness of pilgrims, or straitness of entrance, yet choose it, and use it. True, there is another road, broad and much frequented; but it leadeth to destruction.

Men go to ruin along the turnpike-road, but the way to heaven is a bridle-path. There may come other days, when the many will crowd the narrow way; but, at this time, to be popular one must be broad—broad in doctrine, in morals, and in spirituals. But those on the strait road shall go straight to glory, and those on the broad road are all abroad. All is well that ends well: we can afford to be straitened in the right way rather than enlarged in the wrong way; because the first endeth in endless life, and the second hastens down to everlasting death.

Lord, deliver me from the temptation to be "broad", and keep me in the narrow way though few find it!

Matthew 7:15. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

We have need of our judgments, and we must try the spirits of those who profess to be sent of God. There are men of great gifts who are "false prophets." These affect the look, language, and spirit of God's people, while really they long to devour souls, even as wolves thirst for the blood of sheep. "Sheep's clothing" is all very fine, but we must look beneath it and spy out the wolves. A man is what he is inwardly. We had need beware. This precept is timely at this hour. We must be careful not only about our way, but about our leaders. They come to us; they come as prophets; they come with every outward commendation; but they are very Balaams, and will surely curse those they pretend to bless.

Matthew 7:16. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Their teaching, their living, and their effect upon our minds will be a sure test to us. Every doctrine and doctrinaire may thus be tried. If we gather grapes of them, they are not thorns: if they produce nothing but thistle-down, they are not fig-trees. Some object to this practical method of test; but wise Christians will carry it with them as the ultimate touchstone.

What is the effect of modern theology upon the spirituality, the prayerfulness, the holiness of the people? Has it any good effect?

Matthew 7:17, 18. Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every man produces according to his nature; he cannot do otherwise. Good tree, good fruit; corrupt tree, evil fruit. There is no possibility of the effect being higher and better than the cause. The truly good does not bring forth evil; it would be contrary to its nature. The radically bad never rises to produce good, though it may seem to do so. Therefore the one and the other may be known by the special fruit of each. Our King is a great teacher of prudence. We are not to judge; but we are to know, and the rule for this knowledge is as simple as it is safe. Such knowledge of men may save us from great mischief which would come to us through associating with bad and deceitful persons.

Matthew 7:19. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

Here is the end to which evil things, are tending. The ax and the fire. await the ungodly, however fine they may look with the leafage of profession.

Only let time enough be given, and every man on earth who bears no good fruit will meet his doom. It is not merely the wicked, the bearer of poison berries, that will be cut down; but the neutral, the man who bears no fruit of positive virtue must also be cast into the fire.

Matthew 7:20. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

It is not ours to howl or to burn; but it is ours to know. This knowledge is to save us from coming under the shadow or influence of false teachers.

Who wants to build his nest upon a tree which is soon to be cut down?

Who would choose a barren tree for the center of his orchard?

Lord, let me remember that I am to judge myself by this rule. Make me a true fruit-bearing tree.

Matthew 7:21. Not every one that saith unto me, lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

No verbal homage will suffice: "Not every one that saith. " We may believe in our Lord's Deity, and we may take great pains to affirm it over and over again with our "Lord, Lord "; but unless we carry out the commands of the Father, we pay no true homage to the Son. We may own our obligations to Jesus, and so call him "Lord, Lord "; but if we never practically carry out those obligations, what is the value of our admissions? Our King receives not into his kingdom those whose religion lies in words and ceremonies; but only those whose lives display the obedience of true discipleship.

Matthew 7:22, 23. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

An orthodox creed will not save if it stands alone, neither will it be sure to do so if accompanied by official position and service. These people said, "Lord, Lord "; and, in addition, pleaded their prophesying or preaching in his name. All the preaching in the world will not save the preacher if he does not practice. Yes, and he may have been successful, — successful to a very high degree, "are in thy name have cast out devils ", and yet, without personal holiness, the casterout of devils will be cast out himself.

The success boasted of may have had about it surprising circumstances of varied interest — “and in thy name done many wonderful works ”; and yet the man may be unknown to Christ. Three times over the person is described as doing all “in thy name ”; and yet the Lord, whose name he used so freely, so boldly, knew nothing of him, and would not suffer him to remain in his company. The Lord cannot endure the presence of those who call him “Lord, Lord ”, and then work iniquity. They professed to him that they knew him; but he will “profess unto them, I never knew you. ” How solemn is this reminder to me, and to others! Nothing will prove us to be true Christians but a sincere doing of the Father’s will! We may be know by all to have great spiritual power over devils, and men, and yet our Lord may not own us in that great day; but may drive us out as impostors whom he cannot tolerate in his presence.

MATTHEW 7:24-29 THE KING SUMS UP HIS DISCOURSE

Matthew 7:24, 25. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. -

We are to hear our Lord; and by this is, of course, intended that we are to accept what he says as authoritative: this is more than some do at this time, for they sit in judgment upon the teachings of. the Lord. But hearing is not enough; we must do these sayings. There must be practical godliness, or nothing is right within us. The doing hearer has built a house with a stable foundation: the wisest and safest, but the most expensive and toilsome thing to do. Trials come to him. His sincerity and truthfulness do not prevent his being tested. From above, and from beneath, and from all sides, the trials come: rain, floods and wind. No screen is interposed: all these “beat upon the house. ” It is a substantial structure; but the tests become so severe that nothing can save the building unless it be the strength of its foundation. Because the chief support is so immovable the entire erection survives. “It fell not ”: it may have suffered damage here and there, and it may have looked very weather-beaten; but “it fell not. ” Let the Rock of Ages be praised if, after terrible tribulation, it can be said of our faith, “it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ”

Matthew 7:26, 27. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the flood ” came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

The mere hearer is in a poor plight. He, too, is a house-builder. The hearing of the Lord’s sayings sets him upon work, and work which is designed to afford him shelter and comfort. He “built his house ”: he was practical and persevering, and did not begin and leave off before completion. Yet though he was industrious, he was foolish. No doubt he built quickly, for his foundation cost him no severe labor; his excavations were soon made, for there was no rock to remove: he “built his house upon the sand. ” But trials come even to insincere professors. Are we not all born to trouble? The same kind of afflictions come to the foolish as come to the wise, and they operate in precisely the same way; but the result is very different. “It fell. ” These are solemn words. It was a fine building, and it promised to stand for ages; but “it fell. ” There were minor faults in the fabric, but its chief weakness was underground, in the secret place of the foundation: the man “built his house upon the sand. ” His fundamentals were wrong.

The crash was terrible; the sound was heard afar: “great was the fall of it. ” The overflow was final and irretrievable. Many heard the fall, and many more saw the ruins as they remained a perpetual memorial of the result of that folly which is satisfied with hearing, and neglects doing.

Matthew 7:28, 29. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The sermon is over; what has come of it? Never was there so great a Preacher, and never did he deliver a greater discourse: how many were the penitents? How many the converts? We do not hear of any. Divine truth, even when preached to perfection, will not of itself affect the heart to conversion. The most overpowering authority produces no obedience unless the Holy Ghost subdue the hearer’s heart. “The people were astonished ”: was this all? It is to be feared it was. Two things surprised them; the substance of his teaching, and the manner of it.

They had never heard such doctrine before; the precepts which he had given were quite new to their thoughts. But their main astonishment was at his manner: there was a certainly a power, a weight about it, such as they had never seen in the ordinary professional instructors. He did not raise questions, nor speak with hesitation; neither did he cite authorities, and hide his own responsibility behind great names. "He taught them as one having authority." He spoke royally: the truth itself was its own argument and demonstration. He taught prophetically, as one inspired from above: men felt that he spake after the manner of one sent of God. It was no fault on their part to be astonished, but it was a grave crime to be astonished and nothing more.

My Savior, this was a poor reward for thy right royal discourse — "The people were astonished." Grant to me that I may not care to astonish people, but may I be enabled to win them for thee: and if, with my utmost endeavors. I do astonish them, and nothing more, may I never complain; for how should the disciple be above his Lord?