

of his faith, the great salvation from sin and misery published by the word of Christ; the other receives the reward of his extreme foolishness, everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. "Salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous;" but, "the hope of the hypocrite shall perish." They that hate knowledge, and do not choose the fear of the Lord, "shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and shall be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them: but who so hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from the fear of evil."

We are left to picture to ourselves the blessedness of the wise man's confidence in view of the gathering storm, and the peacefulness of his security while the deluging torrents fall, and the angry floods lash his dwelling place, and the wild winds howl around it their violent blasts. No shock alarms him, no fear disturbs him. The earth on fire reels and quakes, the rending heavens pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat; but he feels unspeakably calm and even joyful throughout the terrible commotion. He knows that so long as the Rock of Ages endures, his foundation and structure will also stand.

But there is a notice of the extent of the catastrophe which removes the foolish builder and his house from their place—*great was the fall of it*. Every vestige of the once smiling homestead is obliterated. The tide carries away all the materials of which it was constructed, and the surging waters smooth the sandy bank on which it stood. As for the builder himself he perishes in the wreck of his own handiwork. Great is the ruin. Property and life are alike destroyed. There is no loss which can befall a man equal to the loss of his soul. And that loss is tremendously aggravated when it happens through foolish trifling with the means of salvation.

Learn from all this the stupendous folly of formality in religion and the awful perdition which is the decreed and righteous doom of the hypocrite and the self-deceiver. The sin of insincerity in the service of God is as destructive to the heartless professor as it is dishonouring to the Searcher of hearts.

And learn wherein lies your safety as professing followers of Christ. It is in the exercise of the wisdom which builds up the right foundation—the wisdom not of hearing merely, not of doing merely, but of both hearing and doing the word of Christ. These two the Lord hath joined together by the wedding ring of faith, to form an indispensable condition of meetness for His heavenly kingdom. "Let no man put them asunder." Let every one take heed whereon he buildeth and how he buildeth. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," and, "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Wise

unto salvation is the man who hears the sayings of the blessed Redeemer and keeps them. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them. Let the testimonies of the Lord be the men of your council, for only such council as cometh of them can stand in the day of trial. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man."

A feature of many other verses of the Sermon on the Mount is especially discernible in these. The Great Teacher gives to his word a distinguishing function and dividing power. With the one unchangeable instrument—the sword of his spirit, always sharp, always powerful, always cleaving asunder—he lays open by broad characteristics respectively discriminating, two ways, two courses, two characters, two classes of men, two issues of life. The truest wisdom is partitioned off from the greatest foolishness; the faithful doer is determinately separated from the unprofitable hearer; the path of life is clearly marked out in contradistinction to the way of death.

This office and effect of Christ's word are not confined to the multitudes who first heard it, as they stood around the eminence from which the Divine Speaker addressed it to them. They extend, in the fulness of their reality, to all the ages of the New Testament dispensation, to all the localities, organizations, and audiences of Christendom. They everywhere and always establish the most important and enduring distinction, between the church and the world, between the members of a congregation, between the children of a family. They fulfil that saying of Christ, himself the living and eternal Word—*I came not to send peace but a sword*. True, he sends peace to his people and confusion to his enemies; but the progress in this world of his kingdom, which is not of this world, is necessarily marked by the occurrence of collisions, the evolution of differences, the establishment of permanent divisions, caused by the mutually repelling contact of light with darkness, and truth with error; and these, ever happening, though not always visible to human eye, unavoidably produce the greatest dissimilarity that can possibly exist between one individual and another. They set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Aye, aye, my brethren, peacefully as we live together amid all the distinctions of wealth and poverty, learning and ignorance, success and adversity, which characterize our present temporal state, and underneath all the differences of opinion, temper, and character, which belong to us as individuals, there is a great and glorious work of separation ever advancing amongst us—secretly, silently, steadily advancing,—more radical, more irreconcilable, more permanently disuniting, than the feuda