

people in Christ's time and in our time are not followers of God, but are living for self, for pleasure, and for sin. (2) *It is a mistake to say that "the voice of the people is the voice of God."*

14. Because. The reason so many are found in the ways of sin is that the way of righteousness is hard and constraining to the natural man. (3) *Nobody would choose to be lost if it were just as easy to be saved. Strait is the gate.* Rev. Ver., "because narrow is the gate and straitened the way." This is the case, not because God would have it hard for men to be saved, but because men are evil and prone to evil. If men were in the true spiritual and moral state, the requirements of the Gospel would not be hard, nor would the gate be narrow. Few were he that find it. Yet all find it who sincerely look for it. (4) *None who seek after God fail to find him.*

15. Beware of false prophets. On seeking for the straight gate and the narrow way, the disciples would be in danger of being misled by false guides; hence the need of this warning. "False prophets" here refers not only to those who predicted future events, but to all who professed to teach religious truth by divine inspiration. In our time it includes those who substitute their own opinions or impressions for the teaching of Scripture, and especially those who claim to be the "mediums" of departed spirits. Come to you. They come to disciples rather than to sinners, for it is a characteristic of all false teaching that it seeks to pervert disciples, instead of seeking to convert sinners. *In sheep's clothing.* Perhaps in allusion to the well-known prophetic garb of sheepskin, but more likely a reference to the pretense of meekness and sanctity. *Ravelling wolves.* Their natures are selfish, while their appearance is saintly.

16. Know them by their fruits. This means, 1.) Their fruit in their own personal character. 2.) Their fruit in the results of their teaching as shown in the lives of their followers. Tom Paine's life is the best antidote to his infidelity, and the conduct of spiritualists and free-thinkers is a sufficient commentary on their doctrines. *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* From the fruit we can reason back to the root. The sharp thorn shows a thorn-bush, the luscious grape proves the vine. So the morals of Christianity prove a divine origin, and the deeds of infidels point to Satan as their source.

17. Every good tree. As a rule, a good man will exert a good influence. He may make mistakes from erroneous judgment, but if his heart be sincere, the general outcome of his life will be good and not evil. *A corrupt tree . . . evil fruit.* However fair may be the first appearance, the final result of false teaching will be corrupt lives. While here and there a man may live above his creed, yet, on the average, the conduct of men will be broken the truth or falsity of their doctrine. (5) *The man who fears God is the one whom men do not need to fear.*

18. A good tree cannot. True in the material world, and true as a principle in the moral world. The few seeming exceptions are really in accord with the general law. *Neither can a corrupt tree.* This does not mean that a bad man or a false teacher will always do evil. He may do many noble and generous deeds. Yet he should be estimated, not by isolated acts, but by the general tenor of his life.

19. Hewn down. The tree that will not bear fruit becomes fuel; and the soul that will not exert a hallowing and refining influence shall be lost. *The fire.* Just what we desire for the destruction of the present we know not. But we can depend upon the fact that there is some kind of fire that can destroy the soul. (6) *How terrible the wrath which is declared by the lips of the Lamb of God!*

20. Wherefore by their fruits. We copy the admirable note of Lyman Abbott on this verse: "The infallible test of all religious teaching is the practical result in the lives of those that receive it. The answer to modern eulogists of Buddhism and Confucianism is India and China; the answer to the papal claim of infallibility is Spain and Italy; the answer to the eulogists of 'pure reason' and a Bible overthrown is Paris during the Revolution and Paris during the Commune. New England is the best refutation of those that sneer at Puritanism; and Christianity contrasted with the heathen world is a short but conclusive reply to all advocates of a universal and eclectic religion."

21. Not every one. From the warning against false teachers, Jesus passes to declare the doom of false professors. *Saith unto me, Lord, Lord.* That is, those who profess to be disciples of Christ. (7) *There is a vast difference between lip-service and heart-loyalty. The kingdom of heaven.* One who professes himself a servant of Christ may be received into the earthly Church, but only those whose lips echo their hearts have a membership in the Church of the faithful, whose names are written in heaven. *He that doeth the will.* The Saviour does not object to the profession itself but to the profession without the practice. *Of my Father.* He who does the will of the Father follows the example and precepts of the Son. *In heaven.* For only the one who has the heavenly nature can be at home in a heavenly environment. (8) *Soon or late, freely or by compulsion, in heaven or in hell, every soul must submit to God's order.*

22. Many will say. Teachers, leaders, and preachers in the Christian Church who have lived without a genuine spiritual life, professors but not possessors. Such there have been in all ages. *In that day.* The day of judgment, when wheat and tares are sifted asunder. *Lord, Lord.* Spoken once professionally, but now importantly. *Have we not prophesied.* Delivered Christ's message of repentance and salvation, even though the man that uttered it was unaved. *Cast out devils.* In ancient times performed by the apostles; in every age, instrumental in rescuing souls from the bondage of Satan. God may save souls through unsaved agencies; as Dr. Kane kindled a fire in the polar regions with a burning glass cut from a block of ice. *Many wonderful works.* Men may "do big things to pass," and may be very successful in working church machinery, who are themselves without divine grace. (9) *What a warning to preachers and teachers!*

23. Then will I profess. Literally, "speak out in public." *I never knew you.* In the sense of fellowship and acceptance. Augustine says, "I never knew you" is but another way of saying "Ye never knew me." *Ye that work iniquity.* Eternity is thus seen to depend upon the deeds of a life-time.

24. These sayings of mine. The precepts included in the entire Sermon on the Mount. *Doeth them.* Not only receives them into his mind, but obeys them into his life. *House upon a rock.* The reference is to peasants' cottages, often made of light and frail materials, but sufficient for the mild climate of the Orient. Built on the meadows at the mouth of the valleys, they are often washed away in the spring freshets, but standing on the higher ledges they are secure. (10) *The wise man is he who builds on Christ as his foundation.* (11) *Neither morality, nor principle, nor generous impulses, will afford a basis of character so sure as faith in Christ.*

25. The rain descended. The heavy spring-monsoon of the East. *Floods came.* Often a wady valley which is dry at one season is filled in a single night by a foaming torrent. *Beat upon that house.* A reference to the trials and temptations of life. (12) *Every character is sure to be tested.*

26. 27. Foolish man. He is indeed a foolish man who hears Christ's word without heeding it. *House upon the sand.* A character inspired by ambition, self-interest, or mere morality without the Gospel. *Great was the fall.* Whether palace or cottage, the ruin is irremediable, if it is the owner's fall. (13) *When a life-time of opportunity has been lost it can never be regained.*

28. Ended these sayings. Though the listeners could not fully comprehend these great truths, they were deeply impressed by them. *Astonished.* It came upon them as a revelation, and filled them with wonder. *Bertrine.* Rev. Ver., "teaching." Both the truths enunciated, and the manner of their declaration, were surprising.

29. Having authority. He quoted no name higher than his own. His "I say unto you" was spoken as outweighing a century of rabbis, and as equal to Holy Writ. *Not as the scribes.* The ordinary religious teachers, whose teachings were a mass of frivolous comments, concerning the length of a phylactery, or the washing of a cup, but devoid of the soul of originality. No wonder that the crowd left their schools for the mountain-assembly of the Great Teacher. (14) *That teaching alone will have power which comes from the depth of an earnest soul.*