

The Conditions of Sonship or the Narrow Way.

Matt. 7: 6, 7.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast your pearls before the swine, lest haply they trample them under their feet, and turn and rend you.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (R. V.)

The casual reader very naturally concludes that these verses are isolated and distinct thoughts; that there is no direct or vital connection between them: as is very natural to think of the whole chapter, or even of the whole "Sermon on the mount;" but a closer study will reveal the very opposite to be the case. For while such paragraphs, taken as a separate and distinct thought, leaves very little if any of its own and individual weight; yet the cardinal teaching of this chapter underlies the whole, as a continuous whole; and can only be fully appreciated in proportion as we recognize this fact.

Now this fundamental thought referred to has its culmination in the two verses chosen for the text: but to discover this we must lead up to it from the opening of the chapter.

The disciple of Christ has not only to declare the message of the gospel, but has especial custody of the entrance into the church, or kingdom of Christ. And for this he is required to be a thoroughly competent judge. He has to judge all who come to the gate seeking admittance. He has to judge between friend and foe, between godly sincerity and hypocritical superficiality, and like a true soldier he must allow no enemy to pass on peril of his life. And since wolves appear in sheep's clothing and Satan appears at the gate as an angel of light; his task is not an easy one. And just how far his Lord will excuse him for failure through misjudgment or carelessness or unfaithfulness it is not easy to say. But if we read our Lord's letters to the seven churches of Asia and especially that to the church at Pergamum (Rev. 2: 12-17;) and the letter to the church in Thyatira (Rev. 2: 18-29.) we must conclude that he will deal with them very severely.

Therefore this chapter opens with a warning respecting judgment. We are told to "Judge not lest ye be judged. For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

It might be inferred from this that we were to suspend all judgment, and allow people to come and go as they please no matter how morally debased they might be; but leave them to their own master to stand or fall. Some really take this stand; but such a position is prejudiced to all moral improvement and is antagonistic to the word of God.

This warning is not intended to discourage all judgment, but only hypocritical judgment. Let no one think for a moment that he shall escape the judgment of God because he condemns in others sin he is guilty of himself. "For with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged."

And continuing the same thought to a greater degree, our Lord says—"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye." There are so many ready to condemn the minutest omission in the life of the professor while their own life is full of the foulest commissions.

Our Lord denounced the Jewish church because hypocrisy was paramount. Hypocrites held the gates and lorded it over God's heritage; scrutinizing the slightest omission in others while they themselves were "full of all uncleanness." This must not be the case with the new kingdom.

Those who hold the keys and keep the kingdom must rigidly examine themselves and must be just as severe in their judgment of others; denouncing some as "dogs" and "swine" and allowing the children to pass into the kingdom.

Now since it is so blinding upon the disciple that he shall hold and keep the entrance into the kingdom with such rigidity; discriminating with such legal severity, without partiality, without bribe or self-serving; how is he to judge? What is the test?

The test is found in a solution of the text. Of course we all understand the language of verse six to be metaphorical. But was ever metaphor more true, more striking, more effective. And why not give that which is holy to the dogs? Because they would not appreciate the price of meat any more for it having been sanctified upon the altar. It is simply something to satisfy their canine desire. They are dead, insentient to the sacred significance of the word "holy." All things are carnal to the carnal-minded. Even in their attempt at respect for holy things they only desecrate them. And, for the same reasons, we should not "cast our pearls before swine." There are those who are as dead to, and whose mind is as far removed from, the thought of holiness as dogs and swine are to the higher things of human life.

This last statement is especially true when we take into consideration the extreme holy nature of the kingdom of Christ. It is time to give that which is holy to the dogs when they rise to feel their need of holy things. When they come asking importunately, seeking

penitently, knocking humbly, though earnestly, at the door of the kingdom till it shall be opened to them. And by this time they are no longer dogs and swine seeking only to satisfy their fleshly and carnal lusts; but sons of God seeking higher, holier and more sacred things.

Notice too, that those who are insentient to holy things, who do not understand them, nor seek after them; but only see in all around them means for the gratification of their unsanctified ambitions, are to God as dogs and swine; while those who show themselves alive unto God and "Ask" and "Seek" and "Knock" are to him as sons. And these three characteristics (asking, seeking, knocking,) constitute a vital Christian experience and form the shibboleths of the kingdom; to which test everyone must be put who seek for entrance.

But if the kingdom is narrowed down to the limits of those who prove that they have died to the world, the flesh and self, and that are ready to sacrifice their all, that they might know Christ and prove the power of his resurrection to convert the world, how contracted that kingdom will be; how narrow the gate, how straitened the way.

But it is not our's to criticise; not our's to covet the multitudes that walk the wider way; not our's to sympathize with those that complain of the narrowness of the gate. It is our's to enter in.

Yet the prize to be gained by all those who enter the narrow way is very great and very desirable; coveted by all, good and bad, rich and poor alike. The objectionable point about it is the price to be paid. Which is practically a death unto self, unto all that is comprehended in the word—self. The crucifixion of the ego, and a resurrection to a new and singular life unto God in Christ. This price, though great, is easily and willingly paid by those who come in the right spirit. But it is an insurmountable barrier to all those who are not ready to make this mighty exchange.

And yet while the price is so great the prize is so coveted that millions turn from the narrow gate with reluctant steps to walk the broader way.

Is it any wonder, then, that prophets arise who offer to these worldly, unregenerate millions, the prize of heaven at a much reduced rate; at a price more in keeping with their vain, covetous and unregenerate minds? It is no wonder. But these are "false prophets." (ver. 15)

These prophets are the more dangerous because of their subtlety. They will profess to serve the Lord of the narrow way; calling him "Lord, Lord."

They will also profess to draw their destructive teaching from the Word of God, and even claim the Lord of heaven as their patron. But the faithful disciple of the gate must not be hoodwinked by these superficial traits. He must judge them by the shibboleths and their fruit in time will tell. For not all that call "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom; neither is the Lord patron to all that undertake to preach the word. He will profess he never knew them.

And now what a beautiful and striking finish we have to this whole chapter, which is full of interest in itself; showing the master style of discourse our Saviour chose to reach the minds and hearts of the people. But the solemn conclusion is that all those that hear his words and do them are wise, and all who do not so hear and do are foolish.

But what are the final conclusions?

First we are impressed with the sacred narrowness of the kingdom, and especially of the initial demands.

Secondly, are we not impressed with the gravity of the trust committed to us as custodians of the gate and the kingdom? Has there not been a serious breach of this trust among us? Have we not been over anxious to "secure our young people?" So anxious that providing there was no special moral unfitness we have not allowed the question of spirituality to be a very serious bar? We have given that which was holy unto the dogs and cast our pearls before swine to that extent that there is a constant rending of the churches and constant trouble with unconsecrated members.

This is true not only of the church membership but also of the ministry. And still the widening instead of the narrowing of the gate and the way goes on.

The question is now asked—What are we going to do to save our young men in the colleges for the ministry? How are we going to arrest the falling off in the number of students who have the ministry in view?

The remedy suggested is to widen the indument.

Young men, of well-to-do families, do not enter the ministry because their parents do not wish them to do so. Others are holding back from the ministry because that calling has lost its dignity. That in fact it takes a somewhat ignoble place among the other profession.

That the minister has lost his place of honor as a man among men of equal college training. That the ministry does not offer the same opportunities for intellectual ambition.

Now, brethren, while all this may be true, are any of these a just reason why young men should turn their backs upon the ministry? And as a remedy should we try to reverse these things? Should we not rather thank God they are there as a test to those seeking to enter with impure motives?

Should we not rather call upon our young men in our colleges to recognize these facts and call upon them to give their life a willing sacrifice upon the altar of service to God, for the salvation of souls? And instead of discouraging them from burying their education and talents in some rural mission church rather encourage them to do so for the love of God. Calling upon them to surrender all thought of receiving anything like adequate remuneration for their services here, knowing that their reward will be all the greater hereafter.

W. A. SNELLING.

Thou Art The Christ.

The Master said—
"Behold my hour is come!" even now
The uplifted hand of the betrayer
Strikes me to my doom, and though I go
Eternal purpose to fulfill, and bring
My people back to God, yet woe to him
Whose stealthy hand leagued with the
Apostate foe, vainly smites the Godhead
Swiftly bringing aback upon his guilty head
The awful thunderbolts of the Almighty.

Wondering and amazed,
From his sacred hand the troubled twelve
Passed the cup of blessing to their trembling lips,
And sorrowing asked him, "Is it I?"
And the beloved disciple leaning
On his bosom whispered, "Is it I?"
But the Iscariot went out into
The darkness alone.

On the brow of Olivet the shadows deepened
And the air grew dense and heavy
The evening breeze that stirred the braiches
Of the ancient olives hushed itself to silence,
And their dark leaves folded themselves
Limp and motionless—

From the depths of Cedron
The pale moon gathered up her shining shafts
And clothed herself in clouds and darkness,
The stars withdrew their light in the gloomy
Heavens, while the Son of God prayed
Alone in the garden.

God! my God! Jehovah hear!
Father, if it be possible, save me from this hour—
Yet for this hour of mine own will
And for thy glory came I in the world,
Yet hear me! Oh, my God
Humanity fails 'neath the anguish
Of thy hidden face I faint under the
Burden of thy wrath for this lost world—
Yet came I not to save the lost!
Therefore—"Thy will be done."

But yet again he prayed—
While the red drops of his mighty sorrow
Bathed all the ground whereon he lay—
The tempter whispered in his ear
And the black and sickening air grew
Heavy with the poison of his hate.
When lo! about him unseen hosts
That in Heaven guard the Eternal Throne
Angel and archangel, with covered faces
Worshipping—and one with swift command
From the Secret Place of the Highest
Touched him with the strength of God,
And he arose and went forth to meet
The betrayer.

"Eloi! Eloi! lama sabacthani!"
My God! my God! Why hast thou forsaken me:—
But through the thick darkness no voice replied—
Lightnings and thunders and the
Horror of the affrighted world—
Death and Hell by the apostate led
At the gates of Heaven defiant stood,
And the uplifted sword of the archangel
Delayed to smite, yet they backward fled
Swift pursued by the horror of the
Ancient curse in Eden threatened.

"It is finished!" but the
Darkness deepened about the quaking earth
That upward rose, and beat and tossed,
And smote the multitude—the tribes and peoples
About the Cross and He that hung thereon,

The mitred Priest
Of the Holy House yet defiant stood—
When lo! through the darkness one ran with
Trembling uncertain footsteps, and clutching
Wildly at the sacred garments cried
With choking voice and ashen lips—"Behold
The veil of the temple is rent in twain!"
God of our Fathers! through the darkness
From the gaping earth, from the shrouded Heavens,
Trembling on the hushed and troubled air
An awful whisper smote his sickening soul—
"Verily—this is indeed the Son of God."

SARAH J. H. HEALY.

Good Friday, March 28th.

A remarkable instance of faithfulness unto death was recently described in a Chicago paper. An elevator in a tall office building fell from the eighth story to the basement.

Of the three passengers in the elevator when it fell, one was a little child, a little girl about eight years old. The man in charge of the elevator, when he saw that the car was actually falling, and utterly beyond control, turned quickly, caught up the little girl, and held her high above his head. The shock, when the elevator struck the solid floor of the basement, was something terrific. The two adult passengers and the elevator man were instantly killed; but the child held aloft in the arms of the latter, was saved, the shock being diminished for her by the interposition of the rescuer's body.

The man's last thought and last act were of the obligation resting upon him, his duty to preserve, as far as lay in his power, the lives that had been entrusted to him. He did what he could, and all that he could in that moment of mortal extremity.—Exchange.