

# The Sermon on the Mount

Rev. P. DeBoer

## Outline XIII Fasting

Matt. 6:16-18—“Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”

### I. Fasting in General:

A. The practice of fasting is frequently referred to in the Scriptures, both in the New and in the Old Testament. The Old Testament makes mention of Moses fasting, Ex. 34:28; Elijah fasted, I Kings 19:8; Nineveh fasted, Jonah 3:6; Israel fasted at Mizpeh, I Sam. 7:6; David fasted, II Sam. 12:16, etc. But also, the New Testament speaks of it: Jesus fasted, Matt. 4:2; John’s disciples, Luk. 5:33; the Christian Church at Antioch, Acts 13,2,3. See also I Cor. 7:5; II Cor. 11:27, etc.

B. Fasting consists in the practice of abstaining from certain (partial fast) or from all (total fast) food, for a longer or shorter time (one day, seven days, forty days), with a view to mortify the appetites, to express grief or to deprecate an expected evil. In so far as it consisted of the abstinence from food, it is comparable to the present day “dieting”, advocated by many. However, in so far as the purpose of this abstinence is concerned, a great difference must be noted. The purpose of dieting is bodily health and a “slim figure”; the purpose of fasting, as a religious rite, was spiritual.

C. Fasting as a distinct rite was done:

1. Primarily to express sorrow over sin, and thus denotes humiliation. I Sam. 7:6; Jonah 3:6. Great grief frequently robs men of their appetites; bitter sorrow makes food revolting. It is easy to see, that fasting became a common method employed to express sorrow and humiliation.

2. To mortify the appetites of the body and to devote one’s self the better to prayer. See Acts 13:2; I Cor. 7:5. The fundamental notion of fasting is that a continually stuffed body cannot devote itself wholly to spiritual things. E.g. a minister is not at his best to preach, nor the audience to hear, after a heavy meal. Hence fasting was primarily a means to an end, not something of value in itself.

D. Must We Fast?

It is noteworthy that although Scripture frequently speaks of fasting, it nowhere makes fasting obligatory, except in Lev. 23:26-32. Israel, under the influence of its teachers, introduced many fasts. But these were only traditions of men, not ordinances of God. The Pharisees fasted twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Zechariah 7:3, 5ff. speaks of fasts in the fourth, fifth and seventh months. None of these fasts, however, were ordained of God. The only fast that Israel was required to keep was that of the Great Day of Atonement, Lev. 23:26-32. This fast was fulfilled in Golgotha and the Atonement of Christ, and has therefore ceased to be binding for the church since Pentecost. Hence, we conclude fasting is not

required.

However, neither does Scripture condemn fasting. Fasting is permissible, provided it be more than merely an empty form. It is no sin to fast. If it were, then Christ would not have fasted, nor Paul, nor the Christians at Antioch. We might even add, that fasting either from some or from all food, is at times a very good thing. Over-eating is always sin. But even on Sundays a partial fast observed by Christians would make it possible for many a mother to come to church in the morning who is now busy with the preparation of a hearty meal. A little more fasting on Sundays would find less sleepers in church also. And so, it would be conducive to our spiritual welfare.

Although we admit that Scripture does not prescribe a ritual fast, not even once a year, for the New Testament church, fasting in its spiritual significance is required. Consult Isaiah 58:3-7. We must fast from sin, we must deny the lusts of the flesh, we must keep the body under and not allow its appetites to lead us away from wholehearted attention on the spiritual things.

**Questions:** What similarity and what great difference is there between fasting and dieting? May we diet? Does Scripture require fasting? If not, is fasting sinful? Did our Reformed fathers of the Reformation times and afterward practice fasting? Do the Catholics practice fasting? If so, is it a partial or a total fast, and when do they practice it? Should Christians today fast in any sense? Should Christians practice self-denial in respect to eating, smoking, etc?

## II. What Christ Said About Fasting:

A. Christ condemned the fasting of the hypocrites- Vs. 16

1. The Pharisees fasted “to be seen of men”. Their object was the honor of men. They were “hypocrites”. They appeared pious, but were not. They “played”, acted pious. It was only pretense. Their heart was evil and not in it at all.
2. Because they sought the praise of men, they “disfigured” their faces. Perhaps unshaved, hair uncombed, faces unwashed.

**Questions:** Why did the Pharisees fast on Mondays and on Thursdays? Which was the lesser sin: the outright wickedness of the publicans and sinners who revealed themselves as they were, or the pious hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees? If someone piously sits in church to leave the impression of piety, but in his heart hates God and His Word, does he commit the same sin the Pharisees committed?

B. How the Citizens of the Kingdom are to Fast, vss. 17, 18:

1. Fasting must be from the heart, sincere, and not mere “outward show”. Only such true fasting has a reward.
2. “Anoint thy head, and wash thy face”. This means: Your fasting must be before God, not outward show. Don’t tell the world about it. Only God need know it. Let your fasting be true humiliation over sin, and self-denial to God’s glory.

**Questions:** Should Christians put on a black shirt, go without a tie, etc., to show humility? Should we fast on Prayer Days, etc?

## **Outline XIV**

### **Undivided Service vs. Mammon Worship**

Matt. 6:19-24—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single; thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil; thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

The righteousness of the kingdom in respect to the service of God demands two things: (1) It demands true service from the heart, and not mere outward show, vss. 1-18. (2) It demands further wholehearted, undivided service, vss. 19-34. The present outline treats of whole-hearted, undivided service, and shows how Mammon worship is incompatible with the righteousness of the kingdom.

#### **I. Laying Up Treasures, vss. 19-21:**

##### **A. The Meaning of the Exhortation Itself:**

1. By “treasures” are to be understood all man sets his heart on, trusts in, and seeks as his good.
2. “Treasures upon earth” are all the earthly things, such as silver and gold, raiment, and even honor, pleasure and power.
3. Note that the Lord does not say. Do not lay up many treasures upon earth, or something similar: but, don't lay up any treasures at all upon earth. No earthly thing may be a treasure for us.
4. The citizens of the kingdom must, indeed, lay up treasures, but they must lay them up in heaven, only in heaven. This implies that Christians are to serve God and Him alone, and do His will also in connection with all earthly things. Earthly things and possessions may only be the means, the capital, with which to serve God.

##### **B. Why this Exhortation:**

1. Because also the citizens of the kingdom so long as they are still in the flesh have dire need of it. They, too, are by nature earthly minded, carnal, prone to lay up treasures on earth.
2. Because it is sure to lead to disillusion. The treasures on earth are subject to corruption and decay, “where moth and rust doth corrupt”. Yea, frequently, these treasures are gone before the elements of nature have done their destructive work, for “thieves break through and steal”. Earthly goods, earthly honor and pleasure perish. They endure but for a season. Earth's banks are never safe. Besides, men are but for a moment, and then they go on to their eternal reward and must leave all behind.
3. Because treasures laid up in heaven endure. Heaven alone is moth-proof, rust-proof, thief-proof. Heaven's banks alone are safe. The fear of God endures forever, and brings a rich reward. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled and fadeth not away, I Pet. 1:14.
4. Because “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also”. Where you lay up treasures reveals where your heart is. From the heart are the issues of life. This is

principally true, but also relatively. In so far as anyone lays up any treasures on earth, in so far his heart is still earthly and sinful.

**Questions:** May Christians save money? What is Christian stewardship? What did Christ teach in the parable of the covetous fool, Lk. 12:13-21? Can one lay up treasures on earth and in heaven at the same time? Show how people who spend their goods for pleasure are guilty of laying up treasures on earth?

## **II. The Eye, the Light of the Body: vss. 22, 23**

### **A. General Remarks:**

1. For a better understanding of the verses it is well to bear in mind that as God created man He flooded man with light,
  - a. God created physical light and the human eye to be the lamp or medium through which the whole body should have light. Physical light is very important, and the eye essential to give the body contact with it.
  - b. God created logical light, and the human reason is the God-given medium that makes it possible to apprehend, interpret, and understand.
  - c. God created spiritual light, and the image of God in the narrower sense (knowledge, righteousness and holiness) is the means whereby we have contact with it. As God created man he was filled with the light of God, and walked in the light.
2. Secondly, we should bear in mind that sin came.
  - a. Sin did not make man physically blind, although the consequences of sin also affect his physical eye-sight. Death also works in the physical eye, so that he needs glasses, etc. But sin did not mean that man became physically blind. Neither did sin make man insane.
  - b. It is true that by reason of the curse man lost his powers of intuition, by which he could simply read into the essence of things before the fall, and that in comparison to what he once possessed he has only a 'few glimmerings left of this original light of reason, but it is equally true that man did not lose his reason. He did not become insane, nor did he become a beast.
  - c. But man lost spiritual vision. His spiritual eye became evil (vs. 23), perverse, wicked. Walking in the midst of the light of God's revelation, yea, knowing that God must be served, man is totally corrupt. All the light that is in him is darkness! He holds the knowledge of God under in unrighteousness. He is willfully blind, imagining he sees, Jon. 9:40, 41.
3. Grace changes this. Not our physical eye-sight and not our mental eye-sight are in this life delivered from the consequences of sin — this waits until hereafter. But our spiritual eye-sight is restored. Christ opens the eyes of the blind, so that they say, "Once I was blind, but now I see". They can discern the things of the kingdom of God. They are principally delivered from their blindness.

### **B. The Meaning in the Context:**

1. Christ emphasizes this because while physical blindness is bad, mental blindness (insanity) is worse, spiritual blindness is infinitely the worst of all. The latter is fatal.
2. Eye-sight is a very important thing. If the little eye is "single", i.e. good, so that it sees straight, then the whole body has light. This is true physically — the blind man's whole body is deprived of light; it is true mentally — the mentally blind man, the insane,

are deprived of the normal light of reason in all their activity, and wander aimlessly in a world of their own; it is true spiritually — the spiritually blind man as well as the insane wanders about in a world of his own making, a world which exists in his own mind alone. Spiritual blindness is fatal, for it cuts man off from the communion of the living God, from all that is truly life.

3. When men lay up treasures on earth, there is something wrong with their eye-sight. Something radically wrong. Men only lay up treasures on earth when their spiritual eye is diseased with sin. People act insanely, foolishly, only when their reason is affected. People only lay up treasures on earth when their spiritual eyesight is perverse.
4. Hence, above all watch your spiritual eyesight, as Christians. All life's activity depends upon it.

**Questions:** What three kinds of blindness can be spoken of? Is man's spiritual eyesight merely dimmed? How does vs. 23b prove "total depravity"? How is physical eyesight affected by sin? How is mental eyesight affected by sin? Can the unregenerate see the things of the kingdom, Jon. 3:3? What does spiritual eyesight have to do with laying up treasures?

### **III. God or Mammon, vs. 24**

A. Also, this vs. contains an argument against laying up treasures on earth. Such laying up of treasures is Mammon worship.

B. Note the Following:

1. The word Mammon, a word of Hebrew origin, was the term commonly employed in Jesus' day to denote money, goods, possessions. In idiomatic American it might be fittingly rendered: the Almighty Dollar.
2. Material things, especially the Almighty Dollar as the medium of exchange, is conceived of as a Master. And indeed, money is powerful: it brings honor and prestige, it buys a name, supplies the pleasures of life, etc. Generally, it is used in the service of sin, when Lk. 16:11 speaks of "unrighteous Mammon". It is the Idol of the world, to which all men since the fall render obeisance.
3. Notice, that Jesus speaks of serving Mammon. Men think their money serves them: in fact, however, the wicked are servants of it. The word "serve" refers to such service as a bond slave renders to his master and owner, and denotes utter subjection to the master's every wish. To be God's servant is not slavery, but true freedom.
4. Men serve either God or Mammon. It is an "either-or" question, never "both-and", nor "neither-nor". This is true in respect to the deepest attitude of our heart generally, as well as of every single action.
5. Christ emphasizes the utter impossibility of serving both God and Mammon. This is the emphatic point of the text. There is also need of emphasizing the impossibility of a synthesis of the two. Such emphasis is not necessary for the wicked world, since it always merely serves Mammon and makes no attempt to serve God. But the church of God as it historically exists in the world repeatedly makes itself guilty of wedding God and Mammon, of seeking both. The danger of synthesis always threatens the church, through the sin that remains in us. So, the Pharisees tried to harmonize the worship of God and Mammon, Lk. 16:14. It is this attempt to fuse the two that mars the church's life here below. For remember, although God and Mammon cannot be wed, the fact remains that men ever anew attempt it. It always ends in spiritual failure, for no more than light

and darkness can be harmonized can the service of God be fused with the service of Mammon. God requires wholehearted, undivided service.

**Questions:** Does the natural man look upon the service of Mammon as a bondage from which he seeks to be delivered? May a Christian ever seek wealth? Is the service of God slavery? What shows that God's people today often seek to serve God and Mammon? How can Christians fight against the prevalent Mammon worship of the world in its influence upon their own lives, in the church, etc?

## **Outline XV**

### **Trust in God Versus Worry**

Matt. 6:25-34—"Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not so much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

There is a close connection between this section and the preceding, which is suggested by the "therefore" of vs. 25. The thought runs as follows: Because the citizens of the kingdom are to render wholehearted service and trust to God, therefore also they should not worry. Undivided trust in God precludes worry.

**I. The Carefree Spirit to Which Christ Exhorts, vs. 25.** "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. . . ."

A. "Take no thought" is, in our present day English, an unhappy translation. Scripture does not condemn the legitimate thoughtfulness which Scripture elsewhere commands, Prov. 6:6; 11 Cor. 12:14; 1 Tim. 5:18, etc. Christians owe legitimate thoughtfulness to the supply of their material needs and those of the church. But Christ condemns all that goes beyond that, and especially worry. The Revised Version translates, "Be not anxious", and this correctly so. Anxiety about the bread-question Christ condemns. Christians must not worry, must never worry, for worry is sin. Christians should be carefree in the Lord.

B. Christ mentions food and raiment, but this does not mean that Christians may be anxious about other things. All worry is sin. However, Christ is here thinking of our material needs. These things are generally the main cause of worry.

**Questions:** What does I Tim. 5:8 make very evident? Is indolence a sin? Do we usually worry about our actual material needs, or about our imaginary needs?

## **II. Considerations that Demand Such a Carefree Spirit, vss. 25c-30.**

Tenderly and lovingly Jesus points out that there is no need at all for worry. On the contrary, there is every reason for such a carefree, trusting and happy bearing. The world may speak of a “bread-question”, but for the Christian there is no question. It is a question answered in advance.

A. First Argument — vs. 25c, “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Jesus here reasons: If God gave life, will He then not also give the wherewithal to continue to live? Most assuredly! No more than an employer will hire a man to work in his shop and then give him no work to do, no more will God give life and then withhold the means whereby to live.

B. Second Argument — vs. 26, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

If God supplies the needs of the birds, who have no instinct to lay up provision for a future season, shall God not certainly supply the needs of His dear children? Notice, “your heavenly Father” feedeth them. Certainly, that Father will also take care of His children which are of much greater value to Him.

C. Third Argument — vs. 27, “Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?”

The Greek allows a twofold translation. It can be rendered as our version has it, but it may also mean, Who by taking thought can lengthen the span of his life? The meaning is: You cannot worry yourself into growth or a longer span of life. Worry is fruitless, as well as useless. You can, humanly speaking, only worry yourself to death.

D. Fourth Argument — vss.28-30, “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you., That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you..”

The word translated “lilies” simply means wild flowers, and does not say exactly which is meant. Undoubtedly Jesus had in mind the lilies for which Palestine was known. What a marvelous beauty God lavishly bestows upon the flowers of the field, which are but for a short time! Even the grass of our lawns, how beautiful this green carpet is. Under the microscope, the beauty of a single stem of grass is so marvelous, that if we realized it as we were mowing our lawn, I’m afraid we would grieve too much to go on. If God so lavishly bestows beauty upon the field, how much more he will clothe His children. Yes, God frequently not only clothes, but gives us much more raiment than we really need. Why then should Christians worry, with such a God as their Father?

**Questions:** Should Christians be interested in the beauty of nature? Why does Jesus compare the glory of the lilies to the glory of Solomon?

## **III. The True Character of Worry:**

A. Worry is “little faith”, and therefore Christians should not worry, vs. 30c and 31. “O ye of little faith. Therefore take no thought saying, what shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or.

Wherewithal shall we be clothed?"

1. Men continually are talking about these questions. Even the citizens of the kingdom worry about them; but they should not.
  2. Worry is "little faith". Little faith is not the same as no faith. By no means; it is faith, but faith mixed with sin. The Bible speaks of "weak faith", "faith as a mustard seed", "great faith", etc. Instead of "little faith". Lk. 112:29 speaks of a "doubtful mind". Hence little faith is a faith not wholly resigned to and trusting in God. It is a faith that needs to increase and grow.
  3. Hence growth in the faith is the only way to attain to the carefree spirit Christ calls us to. It cannot be attained by laying up treasures, for a sense of security based on things comes and goes with them. It can only be attained by growth in faith. The only antidote for worry is faith; the root of all worry is unbelief.
- B. Worry is also conformity to the world, vs. 32, "For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of them."
1. The Gentiles are first of all the heathen as opposed to Israel as nation, and then also the children of the world as opposed to the true citizens of the kingdom.
  2. Instead of serving God the wicked world seeks the temporal things. Think of the parable of the covetous fool. You can expect this of unbelievers. You can also expect them to worry, for they do not confess an Almighty God and Father.
  3. When Christians worry they are guilty of conformity to the world. Not only theater attendance, dancing, etc. are worldly-mindedness, but also worry is worldly-mindedness. Christians must be transformed also in this respect.
  4. Neither is there any need at all for this anxiety, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things". That He knows the needs, means also that He 'will supply them.

**Questions:** What four kinds of faith do Reformed people speak of? Is "little faith" true faith? How only does "little faith" grow? Discuss what is meant by conformity to the world, and mentions various forms of it? Is worry a common one? Does worry ever seriously affect the church?

#### **IV. The Only Right Way of Living for Christians, vss. 33, 34**

- A. Positively, vs. 33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you."
1. Christians are to seek the kingdom of God. The word "to seek" means "to strive after", and implies strenuous effort. Neither must we forget that although the kingdom of God remains from beginning to end a gift of God in Christ, the grace of God in Christ operative in the believers makes them seek and strive. They must work out their own salvation, just because God works in them to will and to do, Phil. 2:12, 13.
  2. They must seek the kingdom of God by seeking righteousness, the righteousness of God. Such is the meaning of the appendage, "and his righteousness".
  3. They must seek it first. This does not mean in point of time, but logically, principally. Lk. 12:3 omits the word "first" altogether. As a matter of fact, the thought is that Christians must only, and always, be seeking the righteousness of the kingdom.
  4. But what about our material needs then? "And all these things shall be added unto you". They are guaranteed to us, God will most certainly supply all we really need as long as

we live. Therefore, Christians can wholly attend to the righteousness of the kingdom, and need never worry and thereby sin.

B. Negatively, vs. 34, “Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

1. Once more Christ exhorts against anxiety. He adds “for the morrow”, since anxiety is always looking into the future, and weighed down by it. God is there tomorrow also.
2. The curtain of evening is a curtain which God draws between today and tomorrow. We may not attempt to push it aside. Besides, the evil of every day is sufficient for the day; why should we by worry load on ourselves what may be in the morrow?
3. From the last part speaking of the evil of every day, it is evident that Christ does not mean to promise that God will always give His people prosperity.

**Questions:** May Christians seek material things at all? What does Christ mean by “seek”? Just how must Christians seek righteousness? May Christians hanker after luxuries and abundance? If we go to church on the first day of the week, may we then the rest of the week seek the material things? What should come first in our lives: Christian education for our children or a new home and car? Is a job that requires absence from catechism right for Christian young people to take? May Christians feel free to leave the Prot. Ref. Churches if they can get a job in another city?

## **Outline XVI**

### **Captious Criticism and Spiritual Discernment**

Matt. 7:1-6 — “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. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, hut 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. 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.”

The previous chapter spoke of the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to God; this new section (vss. 1-12) treats of that righteousness in respect to our relation to men. Some interpreters of the Sermon believe there is no unity of thought at all in these verses — they consist only of several unconnected sayings. Although we admit the connection is more loose than in other parts of the Sermon, we refuse to admit that there is no connection between these verses. The entire Sermon is one grand whole, every part related to the other, and therefore we also expect that here. Besides, after the Sermon has in chapter 6 spoken of the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to our relation to God (the first table of the law), we expect Christ to speak of our relation to men (the second table of the law). The latter is also the case. Vss. 1-5 speak of judging the brother, vs. 6 of recognizing men who are dogs and swine. Besides, vs. 12 is the so-called Golden Rule according to which we are to treat the neighbor. The therefore with which the vs. is introduced also points to a conclusion from the preceding. As we go on with our outlines, we expect to trace the unity of thought more exactly, but sufficient has been shown to warrant the statement that the underlying thought of these verses is: the righteousness of the kingdom in respect to our relation to men.

## **I. Captious Judging, vss. 1-5:**

### **A. Judge not, vs. 1a.:**

1. From vss. 3, -1 and 5 it is evident that Christ means judgment of the brother. It is a judgment of persons, yes, even of brethren.
2. When Christ says, "Judge not" He does not mean that in no instance, never, are we to judge the brother in any sense. This cannot be for then Scripture conflicts with Scripture which cannot be. The magistrates, whether of church or state, must judge, according to God's Word. Christ cannot therefore be condemning such official judgment. Furthermore, Christians are told by Christ in John. 7:24 to "judge righteous judgment", and this implies judgment also. And, finally, vs. 5 itself when it shows the proper way to judge implies that Christ does not condemn all judging.
3. What Christ does condemn? All sinful judging, all love-less uncharitable, hypocritical judging. He condemns all judgment that is without mercy and love, that is exercised in a spirit of self-righteousness and haughtiness. This interpretation is sustained by: (1) The parallel passage from Lk. 6:38-42, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven". (2) It is sustained by the consistent teaching of Scripture, as well as by other passages of the Sermon itself (5:7; 5:21-25; 6:14, 15. etc.)

### **B. Reasons why Christ warns against such Judging, vss. 1b-5:**

1. Because such captious criticism brings sure punishment. Vss. 1b, 2, "For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again". This means that as you treat others, others will treat you. Christ, in harmony with the consistent reference of the Sermon to future punishment also surely refers to the judgment to come. However, it is frequently true that people who are always criticizing and condemning others receive a like return from men. See Lk. 6:37, 38 for proof that it is the return reward of men that is on the foreground.
2. Because such captious criticism reveals that the person himself is guilty of gross sin, vs. 3. Anyone who always goes about condemning other Christians for their faults, may well take inventory of his own spiritual life. His loveless, uncharitable attitude shows there is something radically wrong with himself. He sees the mote (a little chip or sliver) in his brother's eye, but he is entirely forgetful of the beam in his own eye. The beam is a large rafter, and stands for a large fault. What is this fault? Perhaps some certain gross sins the man may be guilty of himself? I don't think so. If that were the case vs. 5 would mean that one would have to get rid of all his own great faults first before he could speak to the brother. Dare anyone ever say that he is rid of all great faults? In my opinion the beam in his own eye represents not any great fault, but the one fault of self-righteousness, of loveless, merciless criticism. The attitude revealed in condemning a brother to destruction, the attitude that has no room for mercy and forgiveness, that destroys but does not seek to save is the beam.
3. Because such hateful criticism makes it utterly impossible to aid the erring brother, vss. 5, 6. A judgment of love is demanded by Scripture. The Bible does not mean that we shall not see the brother's faults, but we shall see them in connection with Christ and in mercy. To help the brother out of his sins — and this is our Christian brotherly duty — demands that the beam of merciless, uncharitable, unforgiving criticism be cast out. Then there is mercy, love, forgiveness, and one can "see clearly" to cast the little sliver out of

the brother's eye. Not a haughty spirit of self-righteousness, but a humble spirit of love and mercy only can help the brother overcome his faults. Such a spirit of love is the only spirit compatible with the righteousness of the kingdom.

**Questions:** In what sense must Christians judge one another, and in what sense may they not do it? Are Christians bound to help one another overcome faults? Is self-righteous judging a prevalent sin in the midst of the church? How can it be counteracted, if it is there? How does captious criticism undermine society life very frequently?

## **II. Discrimination in the Exercise of Holy Things: vs. 6**

In the above section, Christ warns against self-righteous judgment and by implication exhorts to love and mercy in judgment of the brother. This verse, "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", in our estimation, limits the (previous warning. The proper use of the brotherly-admonition has its limits — it must not become a casting of the holy pearls to the swine and dogs.

### **A. The Holy Pearls — What are They?**

1. The word "pearls" suggests things that are precious. Notice, that Christ speaks of them as "your" pearls, i.e. they belong in an especial manner to the citizens of the kingdom and are esteemed highly by them.
2. The term "that which is holy", or simply "the holy thing" (as in the Greek), implies that these things are separated in an especial manner for the service of God. The Old Testament speaks of holy bread, the holy temple, the holy place, the holy land, the holy Sabbath, the holy oil, the holy seed, the holy city, the holy covenant, the holy angels, etc. In every instance, it means that these (persons or things have been set apart from the common sphere to be consecrated to the Lord and His service. In the same way, we today speak of holy baptism, holy communion, holy apostles, holy offices, holy Sabbath, holy table of the Lord, holy Gospel, etc.
3. Hence, it is evident from the analogy of Scripture that by "that which is holy" and by "your pearls" Christ means all those sacred things that are of great value in our Christian religion. The preaching of the Word is a holy thing, and must not be despised as a common thing. The Lord's Supper is a holy Supper and must be so treated.

### **B. The Dogs and the Swine:**

1. As such: Dogs were in Palestine held in very low esteem. They were street scavengers: ran wild as our present-day wolves. To be called a dog or to be eaten by the dogs was the worst possible thing that could happen to one. See I Kings 14:11; 16:41; 1 Sam. 17:43; II Kings 8:13; Is. 56:10. Swine were unclean animals, and the eating of swine's flesh was an abomination. Cf. Lev. 11:7; Deut. 14:8; Is. 66:3, 17.
2. Jesus refers to some men as swine and dogs. From the viewpoint of the Old Testament the heathen were dogs and swine, Matt. 15:27. Very likely Jesus here means wicked people who creep into the church for other reasons than the faith, and destroy the church. In Phil. 3:2 Paul warns the church for false teachers and calls them "dogs". Peter in II Pet. 3:22 speaking of those who fell away from the faith says, "But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire". Hence "dogs" and "swine" are not the true children of God, but those people in the midst of the church visible that reveal

themselves as outright wicked. They want the world, and the things below. Spiritually they rut in the mire of sin.

C. Don't give the Holy Pearls to the Dogs and the Swine:

1. If men become wicked, and show that they want sin, don't continue admonishing them. Don't keep on warning one that goes on cursing who perhaps will only curse the more if you warn him. Don't keep on preaching the gospel to them, but shake the dust off your feet and let them have their mire. Don't open up the Lord's Table to them, the Table which is only for the children of the kingdom. Don't keep them on the rolls as baptized members. Don't make them ministers, elders and deacons.

2. Why Discrimination must be Exercised:

- a. Because these things are holy!
- b. Because they are "your pearls", intended for you!
- c. Because it is dangerous to cast pearls before swine. Swine want garbage, not pearls. If you give them pearls, they'll tear you. This is also true in the church. If you let them be members of your church, they will use their influence to undermine the church. If you make them ministers, they will by false doctrine lead the church astray. If you make them elders, they will drive out the true people of God. Such evil men always destroy the church. Don't give your holy things to them.

**Questions:** What are holy things, and why are they holy? Is the dog ever spoken of favorably in Scripture? How can we tell which men are dogs and swine? Are erring children of God to be treated as "dogs and swine"? In what ways can the church of today learn a lesson from this verse?

Originally Published in:  
Vol 1 No 4 April 1941