

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO MATTHEW 7

Ver. 1. *Judge not, that ye be not judged.*] This is not to be understood of any sort of judgment; not of judgment in the civil courts of judicature, by proper magistrates, which ought to be made and pass, according to the nature of the case; nor of judgment in the churches of Christ, where offenders are to be called to an account, examined, tried, and dealt with according to the rules of the Gospel; nor of every private judgment, which one man may make upon another, without any detriment to him; but of rash judgment, interpreting men's words and deeds to the worst sense, and censuring them in a very severe manner; even passing sentence on them, with respect to their eternal state and condition. Good is the advice given by the famous Hillel^{f458}, who lived a little before Christ's time;

“Do not judge thy neighbour, (says he,) until thou comest into his place.”

It would be well, if persons subject to a censorious spirit, would put themselves in the case and circumstances the persons are in they judge; and then consider, what judgment they would choose others should pass on them. The argument Christ uses to dissuade from this evil, which the Jews were very prone to, is, “that ye be not judged”; meaning, either by men, for such censorious persons rarely have the good will of their fellow creatures, but are commonly repaid in the same way; or else by God, which will be the most awful and tremendous: for such persons take upon them the place of God, usurp his prerogative, as if they knew the hearts and states of men; and therefore will have judgment without mercy at the hands of God.

Ver. 2. *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged,* etc.] Both by God and men; to which agree those proverbial sentences used by the Jews;

“He that judgeth his neighbour according to the balance of righteousness, or innocence, they judge him according to righteousness.”

^{F459} And a little after,

“As ye have judged me according to the balance of righteousness, God will judge you according to the balance of righteousness.”

Hence that advice of Joshua ben Perachiah ^{f460}, who, by the Jewish writers, is said to be the master of Christ;

“Judge every man according to the balance of righteousness.”

Which their commentators explain thus ^{f461}; when you see a man as it were in “equilibrio”, inclining to neither part, it is not clear from what he does, that he is either good or evil, righteous or unrighteous; yet when you see him do a thing which may be interpreted either to a good or a bad sense, it ought always to be interpreted to the best.

And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again. This was an usual proverb among the Jews; it is sometimes delivered out thus, **hdm dgnk hdm**, “measure against measure” ^{f462}; but oftener thus, and nearer the form of it here, **wl ʿyddwm hb ddwm ʔdaç hdmb**, “with what measure a man measures, they measure to him”: one might fill up almost a page, in referring to places, where it is used in this form: besides those in the ^{f463} margin, take the following, and the rather, because it gives instances of this retaliation ^{f464}:

““With what measure a man measures, they measure to him”; so the woman suspected of adultery, she adorned herself to commit sin, and God dishonoured her; she exposed herself to iniquity, God therefore stripped her naked; the same part of her body in which her sin begun, her punishment did. Samson walked after his eyes, and therefore the Philistines plucked out his eyes. Absalom was lifted up in his mind, with his hair, and therefore he was hanged by it; and because he lay with his father’s ten concubines, they therefore pierced him with ten lances; and because he stole away three hearts, the heart of his father, the heart of the sanhedrim, and the heart of Israel, therefore he was thrust with three darts: and so it is with respect to good things; Miriam waited for Moses one hour, therefore the Israelites waited for her seven days in the wilderness; Joseph, who was greater than his brethren, buried his father; and Moses, who was the greatest among the Israelites took care of the bones of Joseph, and God himself buried Moses.”

Ver. 3. *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye?* etc.]

By “mote” is meant, any little bit of straw, or small splinter of wood, that flies into the eye, and does it damage, hinders its sight, and gives it pain; and designs little sins, comparatively speaking, such as youthful follies, human frailties, and infirmities, inadvertencies and imprudencies; which may be said to be light faults, in comparison of others: and though not to be vindicated, nor continued in, yet not to be severely looked upon and chastised. To scrutinize diligently into, aggravate, dwell upon, and sharply reprove the lighter faults of others, is a conduct, which is here inveighed against, and condemned by Christ; and more especially, when it may be said with the greatest truth and justice to such,

but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye: by the “beam” is meant, greater sins, grosser abominations, and such as were more peculiar to the Pharisees; as pride, arrogance, a vain opinion of themselves, confidence in their own righteousness, hypocrisy, covetousness, and iniquity; things they did not advert to in themselves, when they loudly exclaimed against lesser evils in others. Such men must be of all persons inexcusable, who condemn that in others, which either they themselves do, or what is abundantly worse.

Ver. 4. *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother?* etc.] This is not so much an interrogation, as an expression of admiration, at the front and impudence of such censorious remarkers, and rigid observators; who not content to point at the faults of others, take upon them to reprove them in a very magisterial way: and it is as if Christ had said, with what face canst thou say to thy friend or neighbour,

let me pull out the mote out of thine eye? give me leave to rebuke thee sharply for thy sin, as it deserves,

and behold a beam is in thine own eye; thou art guilty of a far greater iniquity: astonishing impudence! Art thou so blind, as not to see and observe thy viler wickedness? Or which, if conscious of, how canst thou prevail upon thyself to take upon thee to reprove and censure others? Dost thou think thy brother cannot see thy beam? And may he not justly retort thine iniquities upon thee, which exceed his? and then what success canst thou promise thyself? Such persons are very unfit to be reprovers of others.

Ver. 5. *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye,* etc.] Very rightly does our Lord call such a man an hypocrite, who is very free

in remarking and reprovng other men's sins, and covering his own; and indeed, one end of his critical observations, rigid censures, and rash judgments is, that he might be thought to be holier than he is. Christ very manifestly points at the Scribes and Pharisees, who were men of such a complexion; and whom he often, without any breach of charity, calls hypocrites. The meaning of this proverbial expression is, that a man should first begin with himself, take notice of his own sins, reprove himself for them, and reform; and then it will be soon enough to observe other men's.

And then shalt thou see clearly, to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye: then will he, and not before, be a proper person to reprove others; all objections and impediments to such a work will then be removed. Our Lord here speaks in the language of the Jewish nation, with whom such like expressions were common, and of long standing^{f465}

“In the generation that judged the judges, one said to another, *Æyny[^ybm μsyq l wj* , “cast out the mote out of thine eye”; to whom it was replied, *Æyny[^ybm hrwq l wj* , “cast out the beam from thine eye”: one said to another, “thy silver is become dross”: the other replies, “thy wine is mixed with water”.”

Again^{f466},

“R. Taphon said, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that will receive reproof; if one should say to him, “cast out the mote out of thine eye”, will he say to him, “cast out the beam out of thine eye?” Says R. Eleazer ben Azariah, I wonder whether there is any in this generation, that knows how to reprove.”

From whence it is clear, that these phrases were used in the same sense they are by Christ; and which is still more evident by the gloss upon them: for upon the word “mote”, it observes,

“That it is as if it had been said, *^wj q ^w[* , “a little sin”, which is in thine hand (i.e. which thou hast committed): the other could say to him, cast thou away *l wdq ^w[* , “the great sin”, which is in thine hand; so that they could not reprove, because they were all sinners.”

Agreeable to these, are some other proverbs used by the Jews, such as
“a vice which is in thyself, do not speak of to thy neighbour,”

^{f467} or upbraid him with it: and ^{f468} again

“adorn thyself, and afterwards adorn others.”

Which is produced by a noted commentator ^{f469} of their’s, to illustrate the text in (^{<3111>}Zephaniah 2:1) on which he also makes this remark;

“inquire first into your own blemishes, and then inquire into the blemishes of others.”

The sense of each of them is, that a man should first reform himself, and then others; and that he that finds faults with others, ought to be without blame himself.

Ver. 6. *Give not that which is holy to the dogs*, etc.] Dogs were unclean creatures by the law; the price of one might not be brought into the house of the Lord, for a vow, (^{<6238>}Deuteronomy 23:18) yea, these creatures were not admitted into several temples of the Heathens ^{f470}. Things profane and unclean, as flesh torn by beasts, were ordered to be given to them, (^{<0223>}Exodus 22:31) but nothing that was holy was to be given them, as holy flesh, or the holy oblations, or anything that was consecrated to holy uses; to which is the allusion here. It is a common maxim ^{f471} with the Jews,

“*μυβλ κλ ἰλ ykahl μυçdqh ta ὕdwp ἤyaç*, “that they do not redeem holy things, to give to the dogs to eat”.”

Here the phrase is used in a metaphorical sense; and is generally understood of not delivering or communicating the holy word of God, and the truths of the Gospel, comparable to pearls, or the ordinances of it, to persons notoriously vile and sinful: to men, who being violent and furious persecutors, and impudent blasphemers, are compared to “dogs”; or to such, who are scandalously vile, impure in their lives and conversations, and are therefore compared to swine;

neither cast ye your pearls before swine. But since the subject Christ is upon is reproof, it seems rather to be the design of these expressions, that men should be cautious, and prudent, in rebuking and admonishing such persons for their sins, in whom there is no appearance or hope of success; yea, where there is danger of sustaining loss;

lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you: that is, despise the admonitions and reproofs given, and hurt the persons who

give them, either by words or deeds; (see ^{<1007>}Proverbs 9:7,8). The Jews have some sayings much like these, and will serve to illustrate them ^{f472};

“*μυρτζη η γνφλ μννφη κκλ ςτ ι α*, “do not cast pearls before swine”, nor deliver wisdom to him, who knows not the excellency of it; for wisdom is better than pearls, and he that does not seek after it, is worse than a swine.”

Ver. 7. *Ask and it shall be given you*, etc.] This is to be understood of asking of God in prayer, for such things as are wanting; whether of a temporal nature, as food and raiment, which Christ, in the former chapter, had warned against an immoderate and anxious concern for; or of a spiritual nature, as grace, and wisdom to behave in a proper manner, both towards God and men: and such, who ask according to the will of God, in the name of Christ, and under the direction, guidance, and influence of the Spirit, who ask in faith and fear, and with submission to the divine will, shall have what they ask for; not as what they deserve, but as a free gift.

Seek, and ye shall find. This is still meant of prayer, and of seeking God, his face and favour: which such shall find, who seek in a right way, by Christ, and with their whole hearts, diligently:

knock and it shall be opened unto you as beggars do, who use much importunity for relief and assistance. So men should stand and knock at the door of mercy, which will not always be shut against them. Faith in prayer is a key that opens this door, when a poor soul finds grace and mercy to help it in time of need. Our Lord’s design is to express the nature, fervour, and constancy of prayer, and to encourage to it.

Ver. 8. *For everyone that asketh receiveth*, etc.] For God is no respecter of persons; whoever makes application, be he a Jew, or a Gentile, rich or poor, bond or free, a man of great gifts, or mean parts, provided he asks aright, from right principles, and with right views, shall not lose his labour; but shall receive all such good things at the hand of God, as are suitable and convenient for him.

And he that seeketh findeth; he that seeks for God in Christ, the grace and mercy of God, the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that seeks after the true riches, both of grace and glory, shall be sure to find them; (see ^{<1021>}Proverbs 21:21).

And to him that knocketh it shall be opened: that is, to him that is constant at the throne of grace, who continues knocking at the door of mercy, and will have no denial, it shall be opened to him; and he shall have entrance into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus.

Ver. 9. *Or what man is there of you,* etc.] “That is a father”, as in (<Q111>Luke 11:11) that is, is in the relation, and has the affections of a father; and indeed is a man, and has the nature and passions of a man; unless he is become a mere brute, and devoid of all humanity,

whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? No, by no means; no man can act such a merciless, cruel part as this to a child: for though he might impose upon him by the likeness of some sort of stones with bread; yet could not hope to satisfy his hunger, or stop his mouth this way; but must expect to hear from him again with bitter complaints.

Ver. 10. *Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*] Which is somewhat like a fish, especially an eel. Fish and bread are mentioned, because these were common food; (see <H64>Mark 6:41 8:6,7) (<Q13>John 21:13) and particularly in Galilee, a fish country, where Christ now was, and from whence he had called his disciples, who were fishermen. In (<Q12>Luke 11:12) it is added, “or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” which is used, as the rest, to show the absurdity and inhumanity of such conduct; and that indeed nothing of this kind is to be found among men, unless it be among monsters in nature.

Ver. 11. *If ye then being evil,* etc.] As all mankind in general are, both by nature and practice: they are conceived in sin, shapen in iniquity; are evil from their youth, and transgressors from the womb; are corrupt, and do abominable things; and such these Jews were Christ speaks unto; and who, very likely, has respect chiefly to the evil of covetousness they were addicted to. The argument is taken from the lesser to the greater, and runs thus; that if ye, who are but men, men on earth, yea evil men, not over liberal and beneficent, nay covetous and niggardly,

know how to give good gifts unto your children; can find in your hearts, having it in the power of your hands, to give suitable provisions for the support and sustenance of your children;

how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven; who is omniscient and omnipotent; who knows the persons and wants of his children, and

what is proper for them, and is able to relieve them, being Lord of heaven and earth,

give good things to them that ask him? Not only temporal good things, as meat, drink, and clothing; but all spiritual good things; every supply of grace; all things pertaining to life and godliness. In (^{<2113>}Luke 11:13) “the Holy Spirit” is mentioned, and so seems to design his gifts and graces, everything that is necessary for the spiritual and eternal good of his people: but for these things he must be inquired of, and sought after; and it is the least saints can do to ask for them; and they have encouragement enough to ask; for it is but ask and have.

Ver. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever*, etc.] These words are the epilogue, or conclusion of our Lord’s discourse; the sum of what he had delivered in the two preceding chapters, and in this hitherto, is contained in these words; for they not only respect the exhortation about judging and reproving; but every duty respecting our neighbour; it is a summary of the whole. It is a golden rule, here delivered, and ought to be observed by all mankind, Jews and Gentiles. So the Karaite Jews^{f473} say,

“all things that a man would not take to himself, *wyj al mtwç[l ywar`ya*, “it is not fit to do them to his brethren”.”

And Maimonides^{f474} has expressed it much in the same words our Lord here does;

“all things whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, (says he,) do you the same to your brethren, in the law, and in the commandments:”

only there seems to be a restriction in the word “brethren”; the Jews, perhaps, meaning no other than Israelites; whereas our Lord’s rule reaches to all without exception, “all things whatsoever”

ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: let them be who they will, whether brethren, or kinsmen, according to the flesh, or what not; “for this is the law and the prophets”: the sum of the law and the prophets; not the whole sum of them, or the sum of the whole law: but of that part of it which respects our neighbours. Remarkable is the advice given by Hillel^{f475} to one who came to be made a proselyte by him;

“whatsoever is hateful to thee, that do not thou to thy neighbour; *hl wk hrwth l k ayh wz*, “this is all the whole law”, and the rest is an explication of it, go and be perfect:”

yea, this rule is not only agreeable to the law of Moses, and the prophets, but even to the law and light of nature. Aristotle being asked, how we ought to carry ourselves to our friends, answered ^{f476}, as we would wish they would carry it to us. Alexander Severus, a Heathen emperor, so greatly admired this rule of Christ’s, that he ordered it to be written on the walls of his closet.

Ver. 13. *Enter ye in at the strait gate*, etc.] By the “strait gate” is meant Christ himself; who elsewhere calls himself “the door”, (⁶⁰⁷John 10:7-9) as he is into the church below, and into all the ordinances and privileges of it; as also to the Father, by whom we have access unto him, and are let into communion with him, and a participation of all the blessings of grace; yea, he is the gate of heaven, through which we have boldness to enter into the holiest of all by faith and hope now; as there will be hereafter an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God, through his blood and righteousness. This is called “strait”; because faith in Christ, a profession of it, and a life and conversation agreeable to it, are attended with many afflictions, temptations, reproaches, and persecutions. “Entering” in at it is by faith, and making a profession of it: hence it follows, that faith is not the gate itself, but the grace, by which men enter in at the right door, and walk on in Christ, as they begin with him.

For wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction; so that the one may be easily known from the other. There is no difficulty in finding out, or entering in at, or walking in the way of sin, which leads to eternal ruin. The gate of carnal lusts, and worldly pleasures, stands wide open,

and many there be which go in thereat; even all men in a state of nature; the way of the ungodly is “broad”, smooth, easy, and every way agreeable to the flesh; it takes in a large compass of vices, and has in it abundance of company; but its end is destruction. Our Lord seems to allude to the private and public roads, whose measures are fixed by the Jewish canons; which say ^{f477}, that

“a private way was four cubits broad, a way from city to city eight cubits, a public way sixteen cubits, and the way to the cities of refuge thirty two cubits.”

Ver. 14. *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way*, etc.] And so, difficult to enter in at; and when entered, the way is unpleasant to the flesh to walk in, being hedged up on each side with afflictions and tribulations; and moreover, is like the “narrow place”, or **στενός τοπος**, “the strait place”, as the Septuagint in (^{<0225>}Numbers 22:26) render it; in which the angel that met Balaam stood; and in which there was no turning to the right hand or the left; and such is the way to eternal happiness. The great encouragement to walk on in it is, because it is that way

which leadeth unto life: unto eternal life: it certainly leads thither; it never fails of bringing persons to it; believers in Christ, all that walk in Christ the way, though they are said to be “scarcely” saved, by reason of their afflictions and trials, they meet with in their way to the kingdom; yet they are, and shall be certainly saved: they shall be safely brought to glory; which will be an abundant recompense for all the troubles and sorrows that have attended them in their journey.

And few there be that find it; the way, and so consequently the life it leads to. “The gate is strait”; small and little, and so unobserved: there is but one way to heaven, and the generality of men neglect it. “The way is narrow”, and so disagreeable; the company few, and not engaging. Men choose large gates, broad ways, and much company. The flesh loves to walk at liberty, unconfined, and uncontrolled, and with a multitude to do evil: hence, Zion’s ways are thin of passengers; a small number, comparatively speaking, walk thereto, and will be saved; a remnant, a little flock, a little city, and few men in it. It is asked in the Talmud ^{f478},

“why is the world to come created with “jod?” (the least of the letters in the “Hebrew alphabet”) the answer is, because **μϋϳ [wm
wbç μϋqydx**, “the righteous which are in it are few”.”

Some read the words, as the Syriac, Arabic, and Vulgate Latin, with a note of admiration, “how strait is the gate!” etc. and so some copies.

Ver. 15. *Beware of false prophets*, etc.] Or false teachers; for not such who pretended to foretell things to come, but such who set up themselves to be teachers of others, are here meant; (see ^{<001>}2 Peter 2:1). It may be

queried, whether our Lord has not respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, who sat in Moses's chair, and taught, for doctrines, the commandments of men? and of whose doctrines he elsewhere bids men beware: for whatever plausible pretences for holiness and righteousness might appear in them, they were repugnant to the word of God, and destructive to the souls of men; such as their doctrines of free will, justification by the works of the law, the traditions of the elders, etc. since it follows,

which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves; for these "loved to go in long clothing", (^{<4128>}Mark 12:38) **tyl j b**, in a garment which reached to the feet, and was made of the wool of sheep. The Babylonish garment Achan saw and stole, Rab says ^{f479}, was **at l ymd al j xya**, a garment called "melotes": which is the very Greek word the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses for sheep skins, persecuted saints wandered about in, (^{<38137>}Hebrews 11:37) and the gloss upon the place, in the Talmud referred to, says, that this was **yqn rmx l ç tyl j**, "a talith", or "garment of pure wool"; and Jarchi ^{f480} says, that

"it was the way of deceivers, and profane men, to cover themselves, **µtyl j b**, "with their talith", or long garment, "as if they were righteous men", that persons might receive their lies."

All which agrees very well with the Pharisees, who would have been thought to have been holy and righteous, humble, modest, and self-denying men; when they were inwardly full of hypocrisy and iniquity, of rapine, oppression, and covetousness; and, under a pretence of religion, "devoured widows' houses". Though, it seems, by what follows, that Christ has respect, at least also, to such, who bore his name, and came in his name, though not sent by him, and called him Lord, and prophesied, and cast out devils, and did many wonderful works in his name; who, that they might get the good will and affections of the people, clothed themselves, not in garments made of sheep's wool, but in the very skins of sheep, with the wool on them, in imitation of the true prophets, and good men of old; pretending great humility, and self-denial, and so "wore a rough garment to deceive", (^{<3130>}Zechariah 13:4) when they were inwardly greedy dogs, grievous wolves, of insatiable covetousness; and, when opportunity offered, spared not the flock to satisfy their rapacious and devouring appetites. The Jews speak of a "wolfish humility"; like that of the wolf in the fable, which put on a sheep skin.

“There are some men, (says one of their^{f481} writers,) who appear to be humble, and fear God in a deceitful and hypocritical way, but inwardly lay wait: this humility our wise men call *tybaz hwn* [, “wolfish humility”.”

Such is this our Lord inveighs against, and bids his followers beware of.

Ver. 16. *Ye shall know them by their fruits*, etc.] By “fruits” are meant, not so much their external works in life and conversation; for a false prophet may so behave, as not to be discovered thereby. So the Pharisees were outwardly righteous before men; and false teachers among Christians may have the form of godliness, and keep it up, though they are strangers to, and even deny the power of it: but their doctrines are here meant, and the effects of them. When doctrines are contrary to the perfections of God, repugnant to the Scriptures of truth, tend to depreciate the person and offices, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ, to lessen the glory of God’s grace, to exalt the creature, and to fill men’s minds with notions of the purity, self-sufficiency, and ability of human nature; when they are calculated to feed the pride and vanity of men, to get money, and gain applause, to serve their own interests, and gratify men’s lusts and passions, they may be easily discerned who they are, and from whence they come. The Jews have a proverb pretty much like this^{f482}, [*ydy hypj qm yxwb*, “a gourd is known by its branches”. The gloss upon it is,

“it is, as if it was said, from the time it buds forth, and goes out of the branch, it is known whether it is good or not;”

i.e. the goodness of the gourd is known by the fruit its branches bear. So a good preacher is known by the good doctrine he brings, and a bad one, by his unsound doctrine. Christ is not speaking of these false prophets, as men, or as private professors of religion, but as prophets, or teachers. “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” Grapes and figs were common fruit; there was great plenty of them in Judea; we often read of the “gathering” of them. It is a matter in dispute with the doctors^{f483},

“if a man intends *mybn[j qwl w mynat j ql l* , “to gather figs, and he gathers grapes”, black ones, and he gathers white ones, white ones, and he gathers black ones, whether he is guilty of a sin offering or not.”

One says he is, another says he is not. These words of Christ put me in mind of another passage, which seems to speak of grapes of thorns^{f484};

“he that marries his daughter to a scholar, it is like to grapes of the vine, with grapes of the vine, a thing beautiful and acceptable; but he that marries his daughter to a plebeian, it is like to grapes of the vine, **hnsb ybn**[b, “with grapes of the thorn”, a thing ugly, and unacceptable.”

Though **ybn**[, in the last sentence, must be taken for berries which grow on some thorn bushes, and not what are properly grapes; for grapes do not grow upon, and are not to be gathered from thorns, and bramble bushes. The meaning of our Lord is, that from the false doctrines of men comes no good fruit of faith, holiness, joy, peace, and comfort. Their doctrines are like “thorns”, which prick and pierce, give pain and uneasiness; and, like “thistles”, choke, and are unprofitable, afford no solid food and nourishment; yea, their words eat as do a canker, are contrary to vital religion and powerful godliness. This sense I prefer; because, on the one hand, it is possible for a false teacher to do works, which may be externally good; though indeed no good works, properly speaking, can be performed by an unregenerate man, because he has neither good principles to act from, nor good ends in view: and, on the other hand, a man who is destitute of the grace of God, and lives ill, may yet have right notions of the Gospel, though he has no experimental knowledge and relish of it; but where false doctrines are imbibed, and propagated, no good fruit can follow upon it.

Ver. 17. *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit*, etc.] As is the tree, so is its fruit; if the tree is good, it will bring forth good fruit. The tree that brings forth good fruit, is good antecedent to the fruit it produces; it is first good, and then puts forth good fruit: it is not the fruit that makes the tree good, but makes it appear to be so; but it is the goodness of the tree that makes the fruit good. As a good man does, and will do good works, but his works do not make him a good man; he is so before he performs good works, or he would never be able to do them; these make him appear to be a good man: so a good preacher, that has an experimental knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, will deliver out sound doctrine, who is first made so by the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God; and by searching the Scriptures, and examining his doctrines by them, he will be known and appear to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of

faith and good doctrine; and such a good minister of the Gospel, out of the good treasure of Gospel truths put into his earthen vessel, will bring forth, from time to time, good and excellent truths, to the edification and profit of those that hear: “but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit”; if the tree is corrupt, the fruit will be corrupt; and as is the preacher, so will be his doctrines: if he is a corrupt preacher, or a man of a corrupt mind, destitute of the truth, his preaching will be such as will tend to corrupt both the principles and practices of men; for such evil men and seducers, out of the evil treasure of false doctrines, which they have received into their judgments, will bring forth, either more secretly or openly, evil tenets in their ministry, which prove of bad consequence to the souls of men.

Ver. 18. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit*, etc.] A man that is unprincipled with the grace of God, has an experimental acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, and is guided by the Spirit of God into all truth, as it is in Jesus, cannot knowingly deliver, maintain, and abide by any doctrine that is contrary to the glory of God’s grace, and the person of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the fundamental doctrines of the Bible; or what is repugnant to the experiences of God’s people, and prejudicial to their souls.

Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. A corrupt preacher, one destitute of the truth of the Gospel, reprobate concerning the faith, who never had any experience of the doctrines of grace, and denies them in the theory of them, cannot, consistent with himself, and his own principles, deliver, or preach good doctrine; or that which tends to produce any good fruit, either in the experience or lives of men. It is true, a corrupt man, that is, an unregenerate man, may preach sound doctrine, it being what he believes, though he has no experience of it: but then this man is not a corrupt tree, that is, a corrupt preacher, though a corrupt man. As our Lord means by “a good tree”, not a good man, barely, or one that is made so by the grace of God; but a good minister, one that is furnished by the Spirit of God, and is well instructed in the kingdom of heaven: so by “a corrupt tree” he does not mean a corrupt man, a man that is in a state of nature, habitually and practically evil; but a corrupt preacher, a false prophet or teacher, that has sucked in corrupt principles, and has nothing else in him, and therefore can bring forth no other.

Ver. 19. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit*, etc.] Every preacher and teacher that does not bring the Gospel of Christ with him, and plainly and faithfully preach it to the people, sooner or later,

is hewn down: however he may have appeared as a tall lofty cedar, and have carried it with a high hand against Christ and his Gospel, spoke “great swelling words of vanity”, and behaved with much “loftiness” and “haughtiness”; yet the time comes on, when all this is bowed and made low, “and the Lord alone is exalted”: such preachers are either cut off from the churches of Christ, or hewn down by death,

and cast into the fire; into the fire of hell; into the lake of fire and brimstone, “where the beast and false prophet shall be”.

Ver. 20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*] This is the conclusion of the whole, and a repetition of what is before said, the more to fix the rule of judgment upon their minds, and engage them to try men by their doctrines, and their doctrines by the standard of the Scriptures, and not believe every spirit; for with some care and diligence such persons may be detected, and the malignant influence of their ministry be prevented. The sum of the whole is, that ordinarily, and generally speaking, as men are, so are the doctrines they preach, and by them they may be known, and judged to be what they are. Christ here, and in the preceding verses, is speaking not of men of bad lives and conversations, who take upon them to teach others; for there is not so much reason to caution good men against these; they are easily detected, and generally discarded; but of men that put on sheep’s clothing, who pretended to much holiness of life and conversation, and strictness of religion; and under that disguise delivered out the most corrupt and unwholesome doctrines; which tended greatly to depreciate him and his grace, and to do damage to the souls of men.

Ver. 21. *Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord*, etc.] Not every one that calls Christ his Lord and Master, professes subjection to him, or that calls upon his name, or is called by his name; or makes use of it in his public ministrations. There are many who desire to be called, and accounted Christians, and who make mention of the name of Christ in their sermons, only to take away their reproach, to cover themselves, and gain credit with, and get into the affections and goodwill of the people; but have no hearty love to Christ, nor true faith in him: nor is it their concern to preach his Gospel, advance his glory, and promote his kingdom and interest; their chief view is to please men, aggrandize themselves, and set

up the power of human nature in opposition to the grace of God, and the righteousness of Christ. Now not everyone of these, no, not any of them,

shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. This is to be understood not of the outward dispensation of the Gospel, or the Gospel church state, or the visible church of Christ on earth, in which sense this phrase is sometimes used; because such persons may, and often do, enter here; but of eternal glory, into which none shall enter,

but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. This, as it may regard private Christians, intends not merely outward obedience to the will of God, declared in his law, nor barely subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel; but more especially faith in Christ for life and salvation; which is the source of all true evangelical obedience, and without which nothing is acceptable to God. He that seeth the Son, looks unto him, ventures on him, commits himself to him, trusts in him, relies on him, and believes on him for righteousness, salvation, and eternal life, he it is that does the will of the Father, and he only; and such an one, as he is desirous of doing the will of God in all acts of cheerful obedience to it, without dependence thereon; so he shall certainly enter the kingdom of heaven, and have everlasting life; (see ⁴¹⁶⁰John 6:40) but as these words chiefly respect preachers, the sense of them is this, that only such who are faithful dispensers of the word shall enter into the joy of their Lord. Such do the will of Christ's Father, and so his own, which are the same, who fully and faithfully preach the Gospel of the grace of God; who declare the whole counsel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable to the souls of men; who are neither ashamed of the testimony of Christ, nor afraid of the faces of men; but as they are put in trust with the Gospel, so they speak it boldly, with all sincerity, not as pleasing men, but God, and commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God: such as these shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God. The Vulgate Latin adds this clause, "he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven", and so does Munster's Hebrew edition of the Gospel according to Matthew.

Ver. 22. *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord,* etc.] That is, in the last day, the day of judgment, the great and famous day, fixed by God, unknown to angels and men, which will be terrible to some, and joyful to others; the day in which the faithful ministers of the Gospel shall be owned by Christ, and received into the kingdom of heaven: "many", not of the common people only, but of the preachers of the word, who have filled up

the highest station in the church below; not one, or two, or a few of them only, but many of them “will say to me”; to Christ, who will appear then as the judge of quick and dead, to which he is ordained by his Father,

Lord, Lord; not “my Lord, my Lord”, as the Syriac version reads it; for they will not be able to claim any interest in him, though they will be obliged to own his dominion, power, and authority over them. The word is repeated to show their importunity, sense of danger, the confusion they will be in, the wretched disappointment they will have; and therefore speak as persons amazed and confounded, having expected they would have been the first persons that should be admitted into heaven. Their pleas follow;

have we not prophesied in thy name? This may be understood either of foretelling things to come; which gift wicked men may have, who have never had any experience of the grace of God, as Balaam, and Caiaphas, and others; or rather of preaching the word, which is sometimes called prophesying, (^{<6126>}Romans 12:6 ^{<6139>}1 Corinthians 13:9,14:1-5) and which may be done in the name of Christ, pretending mission and authority from him, and to be preachers of him, and yet be no better than “sounding brass”, or “a tinkling cymbal”; yea, nothing at all as to true grace, or spiritual experience.

And in thy name have cast out devils? Diabolical possessions were very frequent in the times of Christ; no doubt but they were suffered, that Jesus might have an opportunity of showing his power over Satan, by dispossessing him from the bodies, as well as the souls of men; and of giving proof of his deity, divine sonship and Messiahship: and this power of casting out devils was given to others, not only to the twelve apostles, among whom Judas was, who had the same power with the rest, and to the seventy disciples; but even to some who did not follow him, and his disciples, (^{<4088>}Mark 9:38) and some did this in the name of Jesus, who do not appear to have any true faith in him, and knowledge of him; as the vagabond Jews, exorcists, and the seven sons of Sceva, (^{<4193>}Acts 19:13,14). An awful consideration it is, that men should be able to cast out devils, and at last be cast to the devil.

And in thy name done many wonderful works? that is, many miracles; not one, or a few only, but many; such as speaking with tongues, removing mountains, treading on serpents and scorpions, and drinking any deadly thing without hurt, and healing all manner of diseases and sicknesses. Judas, for one, was capable of pleading all these things; he had the gift of

preaching, and a call from Christ to it, and yet a castaway; he had the power of casting out devils, and yet could not prevent the devil from entering into him; he could perform miracles, do wonders in Christ's name, and yet, at last, was the betrayer of him. These pleas and arguments will be of no use to him, nor of any avail to any at the great day. It may be observed, that these men lay the whole stress of their salvation upon what they have done in Christ's name; and not on Christ himself, in whom there is salvation, and in no other: they say not a syllable of what Christ has done and suffered, but only of what they have done. Indeed, the things they instance in, are the greatest done among men; the gifts they had were the most excellent, excepting the grace of God; the works they did were of an extraordinary nature; whence it follows, that there can be no salvation, nor is it to be expected from men's works: for if preaching the word, which is attended with so much study, care, and labour, will not be a prevailing argument to admit men into the kingdom of heaven; how can it be thought that ever reading, or hearing, or any other external performance of religion, should bring persons thither?

Ver. 23. *Then will I profess unto them,* etc.] Publicly before men and angels, at the day of judgment,

I never knew you; which must be understood consistent with the omniscience of Christ; for as the omniscient God he knew their persons and their works, and that they were workers of iniquity; he knew what they had been doing all their days under the guise of religion; he knew the principles of all their actions, and the views they had in all they did; nothing is hid from him. But, as words of knowledge often carry in them the ideas of affection, and approbation, (see ^{<19006>}Psalm 1:6 ^{<19219>}2 Timothy 2:19) the meaning of Christ here is, I never had any love, or affection for you; I never esteemed you; I never made any account of you, as mine, as belonging to me; I never approved of you, nor your conduct; I never had any converse, communication, nor society with you, nor you with me. The Persic version reads it, "I have not known you of old", from ancient times, or from everlasting; I never knew you in my Father's choice, and my own, nor in my Father's gift to me, nor in the everlasting covenant of grace; I never knew you as my sheep, for whom, in time, I died, and called by name; I never knew you believe in me, nor love me, or mine; I have seen you in my house, preaching in my name, and at my table administering mine ordinance; but I never knew you exalt my person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice; you talk of the works you have done, I never

knew you do one good work in all your lives, with a single eye to my glory; wherefore, I will neither hear, nor see you; I have nothing to do with you. In this sense the phrase is used in the Talmud^{f485}:

“Bar Kaphra went to visit R. Juda; he says to him, Bar Kaphra,
 מל װ[מ אַרײַקם ינײַא, “I never knew thee.””

The gloss upon it is,

“he intimates, that he would not see him.”

So here, Christ declares, he knew them not; that is, he did not like them; he would not admit them into his presence and glory; but said,

depart from me, ye workers of iniquity. The former of these expressions contains the awful sentence pronounced by Christ, the judge; which is, banishment from his presence, than which nothing is more terrible: for as it is his presence that makes heaven, it is his absence that makes hell; and this supposes a place and state, whither they are banished; which is elsewhere called their “own place, the lake” which burns with fire and brimstone; “everlasting fire”, prepared for the devil and his angels. Departure from Christ’s presence is the punishment of loss, and being sent to everlasting burnings, is the punishment of sense; and the whole, as it is an instance of strict justice, so a display of Christ’s almighty power. The latter expression contains the character of these persons, and in it a reason of their punishment; they were “workers of iniquity”: it may be, neither adulterers, nor murderers, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, nor thieves, or any other openly profane sinners; but inasmuch as they did the work of the Lord deceitfully, preached themselves, and not Christ; sought their own things, and not his; what they did, they did with a wicked mind, and not with a view to his glory; they wrought iniquity, whilst they were doing the very things they pleaded on their own behalf, for their admission into the kingdom of heaven. Some copies read, “all the workers of iniquity”, as in (~~4068~~ Psalm 6:8) from whence the words are taken.

Ver. 24. *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine*, etc.] The comparison in this, and the following verses, is the concluding part of our Lord’s discourses upon the mount, which are meant by these sayings, or doctrines, he here speaks of; and as he had in some foregoing verses chiefly respect to preachers, so here, to hearers, his disciples and followers in general. The subject of this comparison, in (~~4067~~ Luke 6:47) is, “whosoever

cometh unto me”; as all that are given to Christ by the Father will do, sooner or later: such whom he encourages to come to him, are they that labour and are heavy laden; and they that come aright, come as poor perishing sinners; they believe in him, give up themselves to him, to be saved by him with an everlasting salvation; all which is owing to efficacious grace. These hear his sayings, as doctrines, not merely externally, but internally, having ears to hear given unto them, so as to understand them, love them, believe them, feel the power, taste the sweetness, and have a delightful relish of them; and such an one hears them,

and doth them: he is not only an hearer, but a doer of the word of the Gospel; the doctrines of it he receives in the love of them, and exercises faith on them; upon Christ, his grace and righteousness held forth in them, which is the great work and business of a Christian, he is to do, and does do in this life: the ordinances of it he cheerfully obeys; and all the duties of religion he performs from love to Christ, without any view to obtain eternal life hereby, which he only expects from Christ, as his sayings and doctrines direct him. The comparison follows,

I will liken him to a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. Luke says, “he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation a rock”. Every believer is a builder; the house he builds, is his own soul, and the salvation of it; in order to which he digs deep, till he comes to a rock, to a good foundation; he searches diligently into the Scriptures of truth; he constantly attends the ministry of the word; he inquires of Gospel preachers, and other saints, the way of salvation; which having found, he lays the whole stress of his salvation on the rock of ages, which rock is Christ: he makes him the foundation of all his hopes of eternal life and happiness; which is the foundation God has laid in Zion; and which has been laid ministerially by the prophets of the Old, and the apostles of the New Testament; and by believers themselves, when they build their faith and hope upon it. This foundation, the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, is as a rock, firm and strong, will bear the whole weight that is laid upon it; it is sure and certain, it will never give way; it is immoveable and everlasting; the house built upon it stands safe and sure.

Ver. 25. *And the rains descended, and the floods came,* etc.] These several metaphors of “rain”, “floods”, “stream”, and “winds”, may design the temptations of Satan, the persecutions of the world, the corruptions of a man’s own heart, and the errors and false doctrines of men; from all which

such a man is safe, who is built upon the rock Christ Jesus; (see ~~231D~~ Isaiah 32:2) not but that the rain of temptation may descend upon him, with great violence and force, but shall not beat him down; he shall be made able to bear the whole force of it; the gates of hell cannot prevail against him; the floods of persecution may be cast after him, but shall not carry him away; the stream of corruption may run strong against him, yet shall not overset him; and the wind of divers and strange doctrines may blow hard upon him, but not cast him down: some damage he may receive by these several things, but shall not be destroyed; he may be shaken by them, but not so as to be removed off of the foundation, on which he is laid; yea, he may fail from some degree of the steadfastness of his faith, but not so as to fail totally and finally; the reason is, because he is founded on the rock Christ Jesus, which is sure and immoveable: whence it appears that such a man acts the wise and prudent part, and may be truly called “a wise man”.

Ver. 26. *And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine*, etc.] Who only externally hears them, but has no understanding of them; do not believe them, nor like and approve of them, but hates and despises them; or if not, depends upon his external hearing of them, and contents himself with a speculative knowledge, without the practice of them,

and doth them not; does not yield the obedience of faith to the doctrines of the Gospel, nor submits to the ordinances of it, but neglects them, and all other duties of religion: or if he does obey, it is only outwardly, not from the heart; nor from a principle of love; nor in faith; nor in the name and strength of Christ; nor for the glory of God, but in order to obtain life for himself: such

shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand; or, as Luke has it, “without a foundation upon the earth”; upon the surface of the earth, without digging into it for a foundation: and such may be said to build

without a foundation, who pretend to make their peace with God by their own works; who hope for pardon on the foot of the mercy of God, and their own repentance; seek for justification by their own, and not the righteousness of Christ; look for acceptance with God, for the sake of their own worthiness; and who expect salvation in any other way than by Christ: as in each of these articles, they leave out Christ, they may be said to build without a foundation indeed, and to build “upon” the surface of “the earth”; as they do, who build their hope of salvation upon anything that is

merely external; as, their riches and grandeur, their wisdom and learning, their natural descent, and religious education, their civility, courteousness, and what is called good nature, their liberality and alms deeds, their morality, common justice and honesty, their legal righteousness, whether moral or ritual, and a round of religious duties; and such may be said to “build upon the sand”, on that which will bear no weight, but gives way, and sinks. The salvation of the soul is a weighty thing; and that which is like sand, as is everything of a man’s own, can never support it: God has therefore laid the salvation of his people on his own Son; and he must be a “foolish man” that builds on anything short of him.

Ver. 27. *And the rain descended, and the floods came*, etc.] Such builders, and such a building, cannot stand against the violent rain of Satan’s temptations, the floods of the world’s persecutions, the stream and rapid torrent of their own heart’s lusts, nor the blowing winds of heresy and false doctrine, and much less the storms of divine wrath and vengeance. They are in a most dangerous condition; they cannot support themselves; they must fall, and great will be their fall; their destruction is inevitable, their ruin is irrecoverable. The Jews make use of some similes, which are pretty much like these of Christ’s.

“R. Eliezer ben Azariah used to say ^{f486}, he whose wisdom is greater than his works, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are many, and its roots few, “and the wind comes”, and roots it up, and overturns it; as it is said, (^{2477b}Jeremiah 17:6) but he whose works are greater than his wisdom, to what is he like? to a tree, whose branches are few, and its roots many, “against which, if all the winds in the world were to come and blow”, they could not move it out of its place: as it is said, (^{2478b}Jeremiah 17:8).”

Again ^{f487},

“Elisha ben Abuijah used to say, a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with stones below”, and afterwards with bricks; and though **hbrh μym μyab**, “many waters come”, and stand at their side, they cannot remove them out of their place; but a man who hath no good works, and learns the law, to what is he like? to a man that “builds with bricks first”, and afterwards with stones; and though few waters come, they immediately overturn them.”

The same used to say,

“a man who hath good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar spread upon bricks; and though *μυμçg wyl* [*^ydrwy*, “the rains descend upon it”, they cannot remove it out of its place: a man that hath no good works, and learns the law much, to what is he like? to mortar thrown upon bricks; and though but a small rain descends upon it, it is immediately dissolved, and “falls”.”

Ver. 28. *And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings*, etc.] Delivered in this, and the two foregoing chapters, concerning true happiness; the duty and usefulness of Gospel ministers; the true sense and meaning of several commandments in the law; concerning alms, prayer, and fasting; concerning the care of worldly things, rash judging, rigid censures, and reproofs; the straitness and narrowness of the way to eternal life, and the largeness and breadth of the way to destruction; concerning false prophets, and the right hearing of the word.

The people were astonished at his doctrine; it being something new, and unheard of, what they had not been used to; and coming in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power, it carried its own evidence along with it, wrought conviction in their minds, and obliged them to acknowledge the truth of it.

Ver. 29. *For he taught them, as one having authority*, etc.] This does not so much respect the subject matter of his ministry, the gravity, weight, and solidity of his doctrine; which, to be sure, was greatly different from that of the Scribes, which chiefly lay in proposing and handling things trivial, and of no moment; such as the rituals of the law, the traditions of the elders, or washing of the hands and cups, etc. nor merely the manner of his delivery, which was with great affection, ardour, and fervency of spirit, with much liberty and utterance of speech, and with wonderful perspicuity and majesty; in which also he differed from the Scribes, who taught in a cold and lifeless manner, without any spirit and power; but this chiefly regards the method he used in preaching, which was by delivering truths of himself in his own name, and by his own authority; often using those words, “but I say unto you”: he spoke as a lawgiver, as one that had authority from heaven, and not from men;

and not as the Scribes, who used to say, when they delivered any thing to the people, “our Rabbins”, or “our wise men say” so and so: such as were on the side of Hillell made use of his name; and those who were on the side of Shammai made use of his name; scarce ever would they venture to say anything of themselves, but said, the ancient doctors say thus and thus: almost innumerable instances might be given, out of the Talmud, in which one Rabbi speaks in the name of another; but our Lord spoke boldly, of himself, in his own name, and did not go about to support his doctrine by the testimony of the elders; but spake, as having received power and authority, as man, from his Father, “and not as the Scribes”. Some copies add, and Pharisees; these generally going together; and so read the Vulgate Latin, the Syriac, the Persic versions, and the Hebrew edition of Matthew by Munster.