

SOME OF THE LORD'S CORRECTIONS

Matthew 7:1-6

Intro: I believe that we must consider every part of the Sermon on the Mount in the light of the way the disciples, and most of the Jews of that day, had been influenced by their teachers, the scribes and the Pharisees. Paul told Timothy much later than the days when our Lord was on earth that he was to be an example of what all believers should be. We find Paul's words in 1 Tim. 4:12:

12 Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Timothy was not to feel that because he was younger than many of the people to whom he ministered, were older than he was, that this meant that he was not to be an example to them. This did not mean that Timothy was just to be concerned about his own life. He wanted to be an example to other believers regardless of their age because this is one of the main ways that anybody teaches.

If you were at Al Houck's funeral service yesterday and heard the letters that Pastor Gary read from Al's children, you doubtless will remember that Alan, Al's only son, spoke of the days before his father was a Christian, and the ungodliness of his character, but he wanted to be like his Dad. But then Al was saved, and his life underwent a complete transformation. He talked in a more gentle way. He showed greater love for his wife and children. And again Alan said that he wanted to be like his Dad.

And so whether we are thinking about parents in the home, or the rabbis in the synagogue, or missionaries like Paul and Timothy, the same rule applies. Those under us are going to learn just as much as from what we are, how we talk, the way we conduct ourselves, as they do from the content of our teaching.

I pointed out to you earlier in this series on the Sermon on the Mount what the Lord said to the multitude of Jews and to His disciples who were listening to Him. Let me read our Lord's words on this subject to you again. They are found in this same Gospel of Matthew, chapter 23, verses 2 and 3. He said,

2 . . . , The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:

3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and

do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not (Matt. 23:2-3).

The Lord had pointed out very strongly that the scribes and Pharisees were a bunch of hypocrites because they were not examples of their own teaching. And so we should be surprised that they were training the Jewish people to be hypocrites. They would strongly deny that statement, but it was true nevertheless.

We are all hypocrites by nature. We soon learn to try to impress people that we are better than we are. And so it is very important that all teachers – pastors, parents, even among friends who are about the same age – we seek to be examples. Even older brothers and sisters need to be examples to the younger ones.

Even the Apostle Peter, in addressing those who were elders in the early church, said,

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:1-4).

This does not mean that our teaching will be 100% effective, but it does mean that if we seek to practice what we preach, we are going to have the blessing of the Lord and no one will be able to call us hypocrites. People must have confidence in us if they are to have confidence in our teaching. One thing stands out clearly in the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that was that no man was able to bring a harsh criticism against the Lord that could stand. There will always be those who will lie and bring false charges against us, but we must always seek to have “a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

It is extremely important that we teach the truth of God’s Word, but it is equally important that we seek to live according to the truth of God’s Word.

James was dealing with this subject when he wrote those familiar words we find in the first chapter of his epistle:

21 Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.

The New English Version translates verse 21 this way:

So get rid of every filthy habit and all wicked conduct. Submit to God and accept the word that he plants in your hearts, which is able to save you.

Then continuing with the KJV:

22 But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:

24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.

25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

26 If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain (James 1:21-26).

In this passage James was probably speaking to those who had heard the Gospel, and had professed to believe it, but he was warning them how to guard themselves from being hypocrites! However, his words have their application to all of us who know the Lord. We all need to be on our guard against trying to make people think that we are better than we are.

Now this brings me to my text in Matthew 7. What was the Lord doing here as He spoke primarily to His disciples? He was warning them *not to be like the scribes and Pharisees*. The most critical people of our Lord's day were the scribes and Pharisees. But this brings me to one major function of the Word of God, actually two. In the verses I am thinking about now Paul mentioned four functions of the Word of God. And, of course, I am referring to 2 Tim. 3:16 and 17:

16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim 3:16-17).

Where are we going to find the truth about how a child of God should live? Just one place: in the Word of God, the Bible. And what are its uses?

- 1) "Doctrine," which means teaching.
- 2) "Reproof." It will show us what is wrong in our lives.
- 3) "Correction." It shows us how to correct what is wrong.
- 4) "Instruction in righteousness." There is always more that we need to learn and apply to our lives. We never outgrow our need for the Bible.

So what was our Lord doing in these six verses at the beginning of Matthew 7? He was reproofing and correcting. That is why I have entitled these verses, **SOME OF THE LORD'S CORRECTIONS**. We don't find all of the Lord's corrections here in these first six verses. They are found all through Scripture. But here we have just some of them. And they are very, very important corrections. We have one in verses 1 and 2. We have the second correction in verses 3, 4, and 5. And we have the third in verse 6.

What is the first? It is:

I. HARSH CRITICISM OF OTHERS (Matt. 7:1-2).

He was not saying that we should close our eyes to wrongdoing. Nor was he saying that we should not try to help people if we are in a position to do so. But He was saying that we are not to be critical of others in order to put ourselves in a better position with other people, or to put them in a position where others will be critical of them.

The scribes and the Pharisees were experts in harsh criticism. And you can see that in the way they treated our Lord Jesus Christ. They tracked Him down like a pack of hungry wolves. It seems that everywhere the Lord went there were always a delegation of scribes and Pharisees. Why? Was it because they wanted to hear the truth, that they wanted to be saved? Absolutely not! They were envious of our Lord's popularity with the people, and they were looking for any evidence at all that might incriminate Him so that they could have Him condemned to death.

Now not all harsh criticism is that bad, but it always is bad. This kind of criticism is never constructive; it is always destructive. Instead of seeking

to become better children of God ourselves, we criticize others, pointing out their weaknesses and failure, in order that people might think more highly of us. This is what the Lord was talking about when He told His disciples, “Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Who would judge them? God would! And that is exactly what happened ultimately when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Sin is always a serious violation of the will of God, but it is especially serious when it gets into high places like the scribes and the Pharisees held.

For years the scribes and Pharisees got away with what they were doing, but eventually the judgment of God fell upon them. If they had listened to the Lord, things could have been different. And if they had read their own Scriptures and applied their reading to themselves first, things could have been different. God is very patient. He waits much longer than we would wait. But eventually, with continued violations of His will, judgment will fall.

But now let us look at verses 3 through 5. What is the problem here? I am going to call it:

II. SPIRITUAL EYE TROUBLE (Matt. 7:3-5).

This is the second time the Lord has spoken about the eye, drawing another important lesson from it. See the first time in verses 22 and 23.

Note the words “mote” and “beam.” A “mote” was something like a speck of dust that sometimes get in our eyes. Strong called it a twig or a straw, but I think the more common definition is a speck of something. But it amounted to nothing in comparison with a plank of wood that the critic had in his own eye.

It is sometimes illustrated by the story that Nathan told David about the rich man who had lots of cattle and sheep, and the poor man who had only one little ewe lamb. The rich man had a visitor come to his house, and instead of killing and cooking one of his own lambs or cattle, he took the poor man’s lamb and killed it. David was furious as he listened to the fictitious story that Nathan the prophet told him, and David declared that the rich man should die, and that the poor man should be recompensed fourfold. Then it was that Nathan said to David, “Thou art the man” (2 Sam. 12:7).

What the rich man had done was nothing in comparison with David's two sins: his adultery with Bathsheba, and the murder of her husband Uriah.

We all tend to be experts in seeing other people's problems, but blind to our own. The man with the speck in his eye needs help, but our Lord indicated what we all know is true, that if we get rid of the plank in our eyes, then we can see more clearly, and with a clear conscience, to help our brother who only has a speck in his eye.

Do you remember what the Apostle Paul told the Roman church about criticism, the harsh judgment that we often express against each other. You will find his words in Rom. 14:13:

13 Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.

What did he mean by this? He meant that it is possible that the reason my brother is the way he is, is because I am the way I am. And that if I change, he will change too.

So often we blame others for our trouble, when the trouble may really be with us. Perhaps that is one big reason why David prayed such prayers as we find in Psa. 19:14 ("Let the words of my mouth...") and Psa. 139:23 and 24 ("Search me, O God, and know my heart..."). And Paul's words in Phil. 2:3 and 4 fit in right here:

3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

To look after our own things is to make sure that our house is in order. Then, and only then, will we have the right attitude toward helping a brother or sister in Christ who may be in need.

But we have one more verse to deal with: verse 6. Here we have:

III. A WARNING (Matt. 7:6).

Assuming that the disciples have learned the lessons taught by our Lord in verses 1 through 5. There is often such relief and such peace that comes to the heart of a repentant believer that he, or she, is inclined to feel that now doors will be open for the Gospel that have been closed before. And that may be true to a certain extent, *but not necessarily in all cases*. There

will always be dogs and swine. This is just another way of saying that there will always be those who will hear the Gospel, and there will always be those who hate and reject the Gospel. Dogs are not interested in anything that is holy, and to be sure swine are not interested in pearls. The Gospel is pure and holy, and it is even more valuable than any pearls. But it is neither holy nor valuable to dogs and swine. We have to be careful about branding people one way or the other, but we can know without any doubt that there are the elect of God who will hear and believe. But there will always be those who despise the Gospel and may be even violently opposed even to listening to it. Our hope is that God will use His Word in the hearts of His elect. He is the One Who determines when and with whom the Gospel will be received. You and I can never force people to be saved. Our only resort when dealing with rejecters is to the Lord in prayer.

Concl: How different all of this was from the way the scribes and the Pharisees went about their work! What the Lord was seeking to impress upon the hearts of His disciples was that they needed the closest and daily attention to the condition of their own hearts. That was the order of first importance. The second was that as servants of the Lord with clean hands and pure hearts we should give ourselves to the ministry of the Word, not arguing with people, nor forcing ourselves upon them, but giving the Word to those who want to hear, and committing to the Lord those who by our contact with them would rather die than come.

But now let us realize that all of this was not just for the disciples two thousand plus years ago, but it is for us understand today. Let us pray that we will understand the ways of the Lord and remember, as it was told to ancient Israel, that those who serve the Lord are to be clean in the Lord's sight. If we all take this to heart, we surely will see more of the blessing of the Lord.