

Plain Talk by Jesus

"His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable"—John 16:29.

DURING the ministry of Jesus, it was his prevailing custom to speak to the people by way of parable. But there were times when he was fearlessly plain spoken, as in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. There were also times when he spoke to his disciples in such a manner that explanations were required. But, as a general rule, his form of speech with them was unmistakably plain.

Of all the memorable recorded occasions on which Jesus talked with the disciples, there is none greater than that which took place the night in which he was betrayed. At no time had he ever talked to them in such an intimate and absorbing manner, for it was at that time they said to him—

"Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no parable. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God"—John 16:29-30.

Plain talk has been the guiding principle in our monthly messages, because we are fully convinced that it is the only settled rule or ground of action that should be employed in a magazine that is devoted wholly to the exposition and defence of the Faith.

Personal opinions are avoided as much as possible in order to permit the irresistible force of the Word of God to have free course in its action when dealing with our conduct from either a doctrinal or moral point of view. One of the first things we should do when confronted with any candid statement of Jesus is to ask ourselves *how we stand related to the subject*. Here is one of his first (Matt. 5:20)—

"For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The duty of the scribes was to care for the Law, and make transcripts of it. Gradually, it developed into a profession, whose members expounded the Law, and taught its doctrines. They became consulting lawyers, and authorized expounders of Moses and the prophets. In the days of Jesus, the scribes were a body of high state officials and members of the Sanhedrin.

The Pharisees were the most powerful party among the Jews, both in politics and religion. In the latter, they adhered strictly to the letter of the Law. They were highly educated, and possessed an intimate knowledge of the Law. But in their eagerness to administer it, they omitted the weightier matters such as judgment and mercy. Therefore, said Jesus—

"If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless"—Matt. 12:7.

What did these two groups lack that made their righteousness deficient? They believed that there was but one God; they boasted of their allegiance to Moses as their law-giver; they observed with faithfulness the various feasts required by the law; and they were extremely careful not to do anything unlawful on the Sabbath day. Jesus supplies the answer to our question in his words directed to the scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 15:7-9—

"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain they do worship Me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The extreme to which these people carried their lip-service is almost unbelievable. They denounced Jesus for healing on the Sabbath day; they criticised him for not washing his hands before eating; but the utmost length to which they went is revealed at the trial of Jesus when he was taken into the hall of judgment—

"They themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover"—John 18:28.

Those who have become Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, must develop a form of righteousness that will excel that of those who sat in Moses' seat. There is no secret about it for Jesus has made it clear at the very outset of his teaching. Belief in God is the foundation of all true righteousness, but by that only we cannot attain salvation. There must be a superstructure built upon it. Paul supplies this information in Heb. 11:6—

"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that **diligently seek Him.**"

Those who *diligently seek Him* are defined in the Apocalypse as those "who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). This is in harmony with the teaching of Jesus in Matt. 7:21—

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH THE WILL OF MY FATHER which is in heaven."

This is the form of righteousness that will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees for, said Jesus, "They say, and do not."

On that memorable occasion, when Paul neared Damascus, a light came from heaven which was above the brightness of the sun, and he fell to the earth. When Jesus made himself known, the first question asked by Paul was (Acts 9:6)—

"LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

That should be our question daily, and it can be answered by Jesus in the words addressed to his disciples in Matt. 6:33,

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

In this act of seeking the kingdom of God, our guiding principle must be "doing the will of the Father." And that will is expressed in the commandments of His Son. Here are some of them that constitute plain talk by Jesus,

1. "*Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.*"

The words "without a cause" are not in the original. We might have a just cause of being angry with a brother, but we must be extremely careful that it does not lead us into some unrighteous action. The divine course by which we are obligated appears in the next commandment.

2. "*If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*"

Although this refers to a section of the Mosaic ritual, it is equally binding upon all believers because it comes within the instructions of Jesus "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded

you." Therefore, being angry with a brother constitutes a barrier in our approaches to the Father either in prayer, or at the table of the Lord until reconciliation has taken place.

3. *"Why beholdest thou the mote (a chip) that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the chip 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 chip out of thy brother's eye."*

This is a heart-searching statement, and requires pitiless introspection. If we think it is a hard saying, let us fully comprehend the fact that,

"The Word of God is quick (living) and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword . . . and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do"—Heb. 4:12-13.

4. *"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."*

If we desire, with all our hearts, to meet with the approval of the Master at his appearing and his kingdom, then this commandment must be an established and universally accepted rule or principle among us. The mind of the flesh must be crucified and set aside to make room for the mind of the Spirit to operate in our lives that we may, by our walk and conduct, reverence God and glorify His Name.

—G. A.

Gibson
