

# Mountains and Molehills

written by Dave McKay

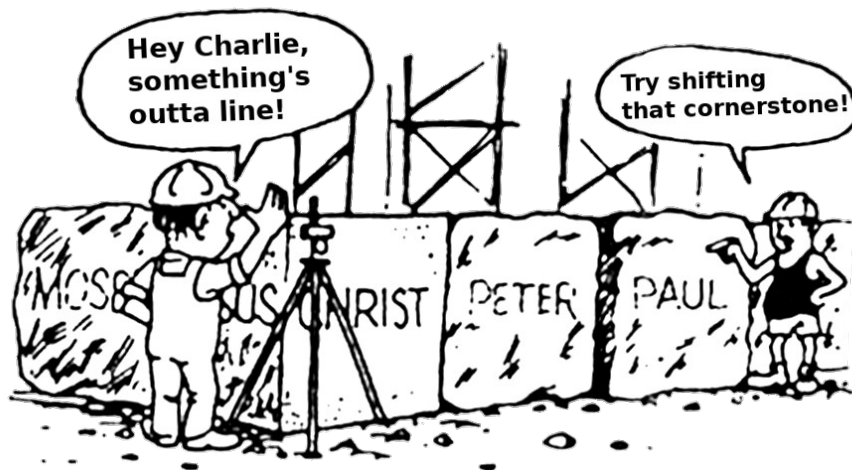
ISBN: 9781005699819

Smashwords Edition

copyright 2020

## A commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.

Christ said his teachings are the Cornerstone on which to build our faith, but that the religious builders would reject his teachings. How many of Christ's commands can you remember?



A general ignorance of what he actually tells his followers to do illustrates just how successful these religious builders have been. Millions of people call Christ "Lord," but refuse to obey his commands. They say they can take his name, ask his Spirit into their hearts, and believe in his divinity without any regard for his instructions to those who say they are his disciples.

This booklet looks at what Christ taught, in his famous "Sermon on the Mount," and compares it to what is being taught in his name in today's religious world.

## LEARNING TO LEAD

**"And seeing the multitudes, he went up a mountain; and his disciples came unto him"**  
(Matthew 5:1).

Only disciples are willing to climb mountains. So when Christ wanted to separate those who were genuine about following him, from the lukewarm crowds, he would simply climb a mountain, or impose some other discipline.

In the modern church, however, everything is measured in numbers. Masses have become the opiate of religion! Multitude mania grips the church, while the disciplines of Christ are set aside as too unpopular.

**"And he opened his mouth, and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:2-3).**

"Blessed are you poor people, but woe to you rich people" (Luke 6:20-24).

The poor of this world will inherit the kingdom of heaven because they are rich in faith; but rich men blaspheme Christ by condemning the poor (James 2:5-7).

Who dares to preach this today? The prosperity gospel of the Western church preaches exactly the opposite. It praises capitalism (the love of capital) while the Bible calls covetousness (the love of money) idolatry (Colossians 3:5), or the ultimate abomination. Christ's first requirement for a would-be Christian is to "give up all your possessions" (Luke 14:33).

If you can't do this, he says you should not begin to call yourself a Christian (Luke 14:29).

**"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).**

First we give our wealth to God; then we give our families to him. It is better to mourn the loss of our families for God, and to have the comfort of Christ, than to try to keep something we will lose one day anyway.

A missionary who was killed by Indians in Ecuador said, "It is wise to give what you cannot keep to gain what you cannot lose." Jesus promised to divide families (Matthew 10:35-37), and he rejected his own family when they refused to accept God's will (Luke 8:20-21, John 7:5). He knew that God's family must be first.

**"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).**

When you pass the material and emotional tests, the next test is physical. After Satan failed to destroy Job's faith by taking his wealth and family, he attacked his "skin" (Job 2:4-5). The word "meek" comes from a word for a horse that has been broken, so that he will work obediently for his master. We too need to be broken, so that we will not give in to the laziness of our flesh, or the fear of pain that comes when Christ tells us to turn the other cheek, or to lay down our lives for one another (1 John 3:16).

Meekness may mean suffering, torture or death, or it may mean giving our time to others. In both cases, we are giving our lives.

**"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).**



When your wealth and family are gone, and your flesh is broken, there is not much you can do except hunger and thirst for something better. You have nothing left to keep. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). When we want God more than life itself, we begin to fight the "last enemy."

"Until we find something worth dying for, we do not have anything worth living for (Luke 17:33). Despair is more than a willingness to die; it is almost a desire to die. It is the last step down before the big climb up. Big spiritual battles can only be won by prayer and fasting (Mark 9:29). Most of us never get around to fasting because we're not really desperate. When we do get desperate, God will come to fill us with his righteousness.

**"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7).**

God's righteousness comes first through forgiveness. And this is always more readily available to those who know what it is to forgive others. Being merciful does not buy forgiveness; but it is a quality in those people whom God chooses to give mercy to. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," says God. Some people could almost be called Christian before they ever heard of Christ. Though lost, they are already "sheep" -- like the Good Samaritan. These are the poor, the mourners, the meek, and those who hunger for righteousness. They could come from any country or any religion; their theology is not as important as their sincere desire for truth. Saving them is as easy as telling them that they have already been forgiven through Christ's sacrificial death.

**"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).**

Forgiveness leads to holiness. Holy means "set apart." Jews set apart one day each week for God. On this day they rested from their labours. It was called the Sabbath (or rest) day. But Jesus taught seven-days-a-week rest, and seven-days-a-week holiness (Luke 16:13, Matthew 11:28, John 6:27).

He gives us a new job, working for him, and we are to "labour to enter into that rest" (Hebrews 4:11).

Because the early Christians lived only by faith, it set them apart from the rest of the world. "We know that when Jesus shall appear, we shall see him as he is. Every man who has this hope purifies himself, even as He is pure" (1 Jn 3:1-3). "Seek holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). But you cannot be pure in heart if you are trying to serve two masters (James 1:8).

**"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).**

Peace does not just happen. It must be made. To be a true peacemaker we must share the peace Christ offers (2 Cor 5:18). "Follow peace with all men" (Hebrews 12:14). "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The parable of the Sower is about evangelism. In it, one group of people accept all that the Sower offers, but do not share it with others. "When they have heard, they go forth and are choked with cares and pleasures" (Luke 8:14). Jobs, building funds, and church socials keep the church from giving God's peace to this war-torn world. Jesus might say that many churchgoers are of their father, the devil! (John 8:44). For God's children are peacemakers. They do not have time for other occupations; for they walk worthy of the vocation to which they have been called. (Ephesians 4:1).

**"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."**

**"Blessed are you, when men insult you, and persecute you and say all manner of evil lies against you, for my sake."**

**"Rejoice, and be glad: for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).**

Forgiveness leads to holiness; holiness leads to evangelism; and evangelism leads to persecution. We cannot alter this pattern. It is programmed into the first seeds of the gospel that we preach. If we are not persecuted, we are not following Christ... for "All who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). If there is more religious persecution in Russia than in Australia, it is only because there is more Christianity there. Many churchgoers make heroes of earlier prophets while attacking present-day critics of the church (Matthew 23:29-38). Everyone wants an easy way to witness, so they won't be criticised or persecuted; but when we can accept that persecution is inevitable, and even rejoice about it, we will get on with the job.

**"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It is good for nothing but to be thrown out, and to be trodden under foot".**

**"You are the light of the world. A city that is on an hill cannot be hidden."Neither does one light a candle, and put it under a bowl, but on a candlestick; and it gives light for everyone in the house".**

**"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).**

The salt has lost its saltiness. Paul says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). But where is the salt in today's bland diet of religious fellowship and respectability? If you take the teachings of Christ out of Christianity (which is just what the organised churches have done) you have a false Christ, and false gospel. "If the salt loses its sting, it's not fit for shi... cah-cah!" (Luke 14:34-35).

Paul was very religious before he accepted what Christ taught. But after his conversion, he said his old religious pride was just a heap of shi... poo-poo! (Philippians 3:4-8) The church today is more upset by the language Jesus used, than by its own lukewarmness. But Christ says, "Look at you! I want to spue!" (Revelation 3:6)

The light of the gospel has been hidden under a bushel of respectability for too long. If you are ashamed of Christ's words, then he promises to be ashamed of you (Mark 8:38). We are trying to put the light back up where it belongs, but we need your help.

"Don't you know that everyone runs in a race, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it!" (1 Corinthians 9:24). Don't wait for someone else to set the pace. Now more than before, the world needs leaders. We can be that, by living our lives as though only one person will be found faithful to Christ's teachings and we want to be that person. "When the son of man comes will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8).



The reply is up to you. You can be salt and light for the world or you can become part of the world's dung heap.

## THE LAW OF LOVE

**"Think not that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses, or the teachings of the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to fulfil."** (Matthew 5:17)

Critics of the church are usually considered enemies. But this is often not true. The establishment saw Christ's improvements to the Jewish Old Testament as destruction. True, when a contract is fulfilled, it loses its value; but fulfilment is what the contract is all about. Total love for God and others is the fulfilment of the law (Matthew 22:37-40).

**"Remember that until heaven and earth pass, not one detail of the Law shall be done away with, till all be fulfilled".**

**"Whoever therefore breaks even one of the least important commandments, and teaches others to do so, will be the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever obeys and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 5:18-19).

Christ's commands fulfil the old commandments. So, do and teach his commandments and you fulfil the requirements of both the Old and the New Testaments.

Modern theology dismisses the commands of Christ as unimportant, saying that anyone who seeks to obey Christ is trying to work his way to heaven. This perverts what Paul taught about grace. Paul wrote about "things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable twist"...(2 Peter 3:16). Paul warned about using his teachings as "an occasion to the flesh" (Galatians 5:13), and yet religious leaders still claim we are free to disobey Christ, at the same time that they preach submission to the disciplines of their denominations. Peter and Jude said of such men, "Certain ungodly men turn the grace of our God into slackness; while they promise liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19, Jude 4).

**"For unless you are more faithful in doing what God requires than the teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 5:20).

Religious zealots appear to be very righteous but they major on all the minor issues. They are big on things like going to church and social customs, but when it comes to love, they are sadly deficient. It doesn't take much to outlove the average Churchgoer!

**"You have heard it was said in the past, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be brought to trial. But I say to you, that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whoever says to his brother 'You good-for-nothing!' shall be brought before the Council: but whoever says 'You fool!' shall be in danger of the fire of hell"** (Matthew 5:21-22).

mountains04 obey stoningMost of us can say we have never killed anyone, but who can say he has never hated? Any desire to hurt or belittle someone comes from the same source that inspires murderers.

Words of condemnation can do great damage whereas words of love can work miracles. The Church constantly reminds people outside its walls that they are sinners. But this is a cruel half-truth. People inside are told that they are forgiven sinners, and they often show dramatic behaviour changes in response to the acceptance they receive from members of the group. Imagine what could be achieved if Christians treated everyone they met in the secular world in the same way!

After all, Jesus never said we had to go to church to be forgiven! It is our job to tell everyone that they are forgiven; it is up to them to accept it.

**"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift"** (Matthew 5:23-24).

God is more concerned with human relationships than with religious meetings; yet differences are rarely talked out in today's church world. Anyone who disagrees is told to go elsewhere and not upset the smooth running of the meeting.

**"If someone brings a lawsuit against you and takes you to court, settle the dispute quickly before you get to court. Once you are there, you will be handed over to the judge, who will**

**hand you over to the police, and you will be put in jail. There you will stay until you pay the last cent of your fine" (Matthew 5:25-26).**

The world has some strong charges to make against the church, but most churchmen smugly dismiss them with cop-outs like, "We never said we were perfect."

**"You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery'. But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).**

Many churches have gone soft on sexual morality, for fear of losing members. But Jesus knew that discipline is a big part of love. Don't try to excuse immorality through some twisted doctrine of grace, used as an "occasion to the flesh". (Galatians 5:13)

**"And if your right eye causes you to sin, take it out and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose one of your limbs than to have your whole body go to hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).**

This passage is often quoted to prove the folly of taking Christ literally. But surely the passage says just the opposite. It is foolish NOT to take Christ literally... even if it means cutting your hand off!

If we took this and other teachings of Christ more seriously, we would not be facing an eternity in which to wish we had... as is very likely the case at the moment.

**"It has been said, Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. But I say to you, that if a man divorces his wife for any cause other than unfaithfulness, he is guilty of making her commit adultery if she marries again; and the man who marries her commits adultery also" (Matthew 5:31-32).**

This slack approach to discipline can be directly linked to the dramatic increase in divorce rates in the western world. If you want a separation, just shed a few tears and you will find a sympathetic shoulder in almost any clergyman. And when you get lonely, the same clergyman will feel sorry for you and say you may remarry.

They use two popular excuses to ignore what Christ says on the subject of divorce and remarriage:

(1) The "innocent" party may remarry. But if neither party has committed adultery, then, by this approach, both parties are "innocent!" Matthew 19:9 says that if they have not committed adultery before they remarry then they have afterwards.

(2) A divorce that took place before conversion does not count. Yet Christ commands, "Let not the wife depart from her husband. But if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband" (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

If separation is unavoidable remarriage is not. (See Luke 14:26 and 1 Corinthians 7:29).

**"You have also heard it said, Do not break your promise but do what you have vowed to do. But I say to you, do not make promises. Do not swear by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by**

**earth, for it is his footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Do not even swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. Just say Yes or No - anything more than this comes of evil".** (Matthew 5:33-37)

Indebtedness is a great hindrance to love, for it forges legal chains and causes a spiritual drain on the soul. When you sign a contract, you swear by all that you possess that you will repay that debt. Debts are a loan on the future.

James 4:13-14 says "You ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall do this or that.' " We have no right to obligate ourselves for the future any further than our word as Christians, with God's okay, will carry us. "Owe no man anything, except to love one another" (Romans 13:8).

**"You have heard it said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek let them slap your left cheek too"** (Matthew 5:38-39).

Justice says crime should be punished. Mercy says the victim may choose to bear the punishment of his mountains 05 stephen stoningattacker.

"Christ died for our sin" (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). "And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16). When we turn the other cheek, we present our bodies as a living example of Christ's love.

**"And if anyone sues you and takes your shirt, let him have your coat as well"** (Matthew 5:40).

Just as we can present our bodies as living examples of God's mercy (Romans 12:1), so we can also present our possessions (1 John 3:17). If Christians would stop fighting over money, half the workload of the courts would disappear overnight.

**"And whoever forces you to go a mile, go with him two"** (Matthew 5:41).

By law, any Roman soldier could require a citizen to carry his pack for one mile. But love goes beyond what the law requires. There are no half measures with love; it is all or nothing.

**"When someone asks you for something, give it to him; and when someone wants to borrow something, lend it to him"** (Matthew 5:42).

The value in giving is not so much what it will do for the one who receives, as it is in what it will do for the giver. There are always excuses (eg. "They'll only waste it.") but Jesus leaves no room for such excuses here.

**"You have heard it said, Love your neighbour, and hate your enemy. But I say, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, pray for those who use you"** (Matthew 5:43-44)

The strategy the church always seems to use when dealing with critics is to snub them, to slander them, or to expel them. When will we discover the power of love to end quarrels?



"Bless them that persecute you... if your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not let evil overcome you. Overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14-21).

**"That you may be the children of your Father in heaven: for he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).**

Everyone wants to claim to be the "King's kids," but few are ready to endure the disciplines that go with such a title. Prince Charles travels the world as a full-time ambassador for his country; and the King of kings expects even greater discipline from his children.

**"Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that!" (Matthew 5:45-46)**

It is easy to love people who belong to our group. All groups do that. But true love goes beyond the organisation. Some would boast that they have learnt to love people from other denominations even. But true love does not stop there either. Who are our worst enemies? Are we prepared to meet those who hate us with open arms, as Christ did?

**"Therefore, be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect". (Matthew 5:48)**

The perfection Jesus teaches is perfect (or "mature") love. (1 Cor 13:4-10) It may not be easy all the time, but if Jesus teaches that love involves discipline (and this Sermon contains plenty of that), then any so-called "love" that refuses to strive for this is imperfect, immature, and not true love at all.

The love of Christ is the perfect fulfilment of the law!

## **RELIGIOUS ABOMINATIONS**

**"Be careful that you do not do your alms before men, to be seen of them. Otherwise, you have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matthew 6:1)**

Handouts to the poor can be good business if you let the right people know what you are doing. Most churches put much more into advertising their goodness to potential contributors, than they do in advertising the services they have available to the people who might need them. They seem ignorant of the fact that God forbids this kind of self-praise.

**"Therefore when you do your alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward". (Matthew 6:2)**

Much fund raising exploits people's pride. Offerings or collections shame most people into giving at least a little. Children are often urged to make competitions out of fund-raising. Public pledges are so popular that the secular world has adapted them to telethons and other charity appeals. For a

large donation, you can get your name on a plaque or window in a church and a smaller gift can get your name on the flyleaf of a hymnal. These donors are buying publicity and goodwill. "They have their reward," and should not expect anything from God.

**"But when you do alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand does: that your alms may be in secret: and your Father who sees what you do in secret shall reward you openly".** (Matthew 6:3-4)

Jesus never told us to be fund-raisers. True charity is a personal thing, not an organisational competition for our financial support. No accounts, no book keeping, no calculations. If you see a need then do something... personally. If others are following Jesus they will be doing similar things. If not, then pressuring them will only encourage more hypocrisy. Organised charities are often cop-outs from personal responsibility.

**"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites! They love to stand up and pray in the houses of worship and on the street corners, so that everyone will see them. I assure you, they already have their reward".** (Matthew 6:5)

People who like to pray publicly in church or elsewhere are hypocrites! What church dares to teach that?

Be honest... you cannot give your full attention to God if you know others are listening to your prayer, and probably assessing you spiritually on the basis of it. The man who prays out loud in church prays only "with himself" (Luke 18:9-11). Jesus called such religious showmen "damned hypocrites" who "for a pretence make long prayers" (Matthew 23:14). "All their works they do to be seen of men. They love the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues". (Matthew 23:5-6)

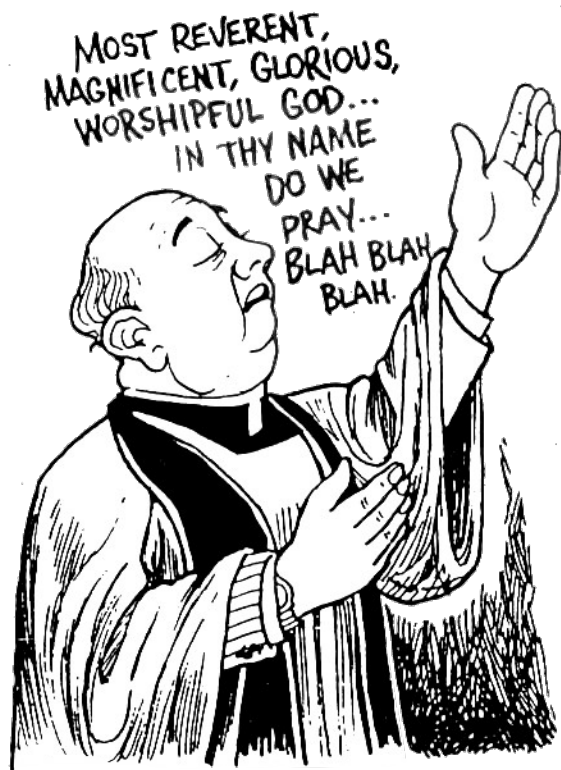
**"But when you pray, go to your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. And your Father, who sees what you do in private, will reward you"** (Matthew 6:6).

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5:17). Prayer is a relationship, not a ritual. Intense prayer is like lovemaking. Christ is the groom (John 3:28-29, Luke 5:34-35, Matthew 25:1) and you are the bride (Rev 21:2-9). It is a perversion of this sacred relationship to make prayer into a public spectacle.

The same problem arises with regard to speaking in "tongues." This experience is very helpful in our private love life with God (1 Corinthians 14:2-4), but it is not proof of spiritual superiority. People who ask, "Do you speak in tongues?" need to be asked in reply, "How often do you have sex?" Both issues are very private.

**"But when you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words, as the pagans do, who think that their gods will hear them because their prayers are long. Your Father knows what you need, before you ask him".** (Matthew 6:7-8)

Catholics reciting Our Fathers as penance are being trained to think of prayer as painful and meaningless. Prayer books and other recitations have much the same effect. If you choose to memorise something, concentrate on the meaning of the passage and not just the words in it. "God" is just repetitious religion to many people, so they reject him. But real communication with God can be a great comfort. Prayer, like good food, is only distasteful when it is crammed down your throat.



**"This is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored"** (Matthew 6:9)

The "Lord's Prayer" is not a magic recitation. The words here differ from those in Luke 11:2-4, but the meaning is the same. Jesus merely summarises the attitudes that will mark a healthy relationship between God and man. First, we should respect God as we would our fathers.

**"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven".** (Matthew 6:10)

Then we should be eager to know God's will. Listening is the most important part of our relationship with God, for that is how we learn what his will is.

**"Give us today the food we need"** (Matthew 6:11).

Requests for material needs are the most popular form of prayer; but Paul tells us to be happy with daily food (1 Timothy 6:8). Most of us could go a whole lifetime without ever even needing to say this part of the prayer, because we wake up every morning with more than enough wealth to feed ourselves that day and many more.

**"And forgive us our wrongs, as we forgive the wrongs that others have done to us"** (Matthew 6:12).

A continual recognition of our need for God's forgiveness will lead to a continual willingness to show mercy towards others. Gandhi once said, "All prayer is a confession of one's own unworthiness and weakness".

**"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"** (Matthew 6:13).

Our desire should be to stay as far away from evil as possible. God will help us to do this. and we should continually give God the praise for all that he does for us. "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord". (1 Corinthians 1:31)

**"For if you forgive others the wrongs they have done to you, your Father in heaven will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others then your Father will not forgive the wrongs you have done"** (Matthew 6:14-15).

This is the third time this thought has been expressed in this Sermon (Matthew 5:7 and Matthew 6:12). Our whole relationship with God centers around learning to love (or forgive) and learning to accept love (or forgiveness) (Matthew 22:37-40). If we do not learn this, then all of our religion is useless, for "he who loves not knows not God, for God is love". (1 John 4:8)

**"Moreover when you fast do not put on a sad face as the hypocrites do. They neglect their appearance so that every one will see that they are fasting. They already have their reward. When you fast, wash your face and comb your hair, so others cannot know you are fasting--only your Father, who is unseen, will know. And your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you openly"**. (Matthew 6:16-18)

Fasting, too, can become a religious abomination if we are not careful.

The motive is all-important. When it is just for self-denial, there is a great temptation to let people know we are on a fast. But it need not be painful. Jesus fasted for 40 days and wasn't even hungry until afterwards (Matthew 4:2). An artist or writer might easily miss meals when deeply involved in creative work. People in love often lose their appetites because they are distracted by thoughts of each other. But these people do not talk about their fasting; they only talk about the object of their love.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" asks God. "To deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house?" (Isaiah 58:5-7)

From this, Christ goes into the central topic of this whole sermon-- the topic of a Christian's relationship to material possessions.

## **LIVING BY FAITH**

**"Do not store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal"**. (Matthew 6:19)

Storing riches means owning more things than you can use in a short period of time. Rich men include more than millionaires; they include anyone who hangs onto things he is not using. "Shame on you rich men. Weep and howl for the miseries that will come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust shall be a witness against you. You have heaped wealth up for the last days!" (James 5:1-3) If we own anything that is collecting dust, sitting in mothballs, rusting from disuse, lying idle in the bank, or rotting in the fridge, it is a curse against us. We must account to God for it on Judgement day.

**"But store your riches in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves cannot break in and steal"** (Matthew 6:20).

**DUST**



**MOTHS**



Whatever we spend on the poor, and on sharing the gospel with them is an investment in the kingdom of heaven.

"Sell what you have and give to the poor, Provide for yourselves wallets which do not wear out, riches in heaven which will not disappoint you, where no thief approaches, neither moth corrupts" (Luke 12:33).

Jesus repeated these orders often. (See Luke 18:22 and Luke 11:41).

**MOULD**



**RUST**



"Whoever does not forsake all that he owns cannot be a Christian!" (Luke 14:33). Western Christians are suffocating spiritually under mountains of accumulated material possessions. Forsake them! Or stop taking Christ's name in vain by calling yourself Christians!

**"For where your riches are, there will your heart be also".** (Matthew 6:21)

Until God has our possessions, he can never have our hearts. This is the heart of Christ's teachings... the corner of the Cornerstone. Your heart is where your wealth is... whether it's in a bank, a new home, or hungry children in India. If you talk of "asking Christ into you heart" but continue to hold onto your wealth, he isn't in your heart at all.

**"The light of the body is the eyes. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are evil, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you is darkness how terribly dark it will be!".** (Matthew 6:22-23)

If we cannot be obedient to Christ's teachings about possessions, we cannot be trusted in any spiritual matter. Jesus said, "If you have not been faithful in unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?". (Luke 16:11) Working for God and money at the same time is double-mindedness. "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways". (James 1:8)

The church today is stumbling blindly in cross-eyed confusion. Is your eye "sound," or is it "evil?" Do you want the truth, or just the bits of Christianity that suit you? "The Love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Tim 6:10). We must smash this source of all evil as John the Baptist did. (Luke 3:9-11)

"No man can serve two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money". (Matthew 6:24)



When Jesus said you cannot work for God and money at the same time, the churchmen "derided him because of their covetousness". (Luke 16:14)

Here are some arguments they give today:

Excuse No. 1: "You can work for money without worshipping it".

But can you work for Satan without serving him? "Don't you know that whoever you obey you are serving?" (Romans 6:16) If your faith is in God, you will work for God. If it is in money, you will work for money. "Show me your faith without your works and I'll show you my faith by my works". (James 2:18)

(NOTE: You may receive money for something you do, without that being your first motive in what you are doing. Just ask yourself if you'd still do it, even if you weren't paid for it, to determine what your first motive is).

Excuse No. 2: "You can love money if you don't love it more than God".

Can you love Satan a little less than God? You must hate one master or the other. Though we all use money, we must learn to recognise its fatal addiction, and hate what it is doing to mankind spiritually. If we try to keep money a close second to God, it's already a clear first.

Excuse No. 3: "You can witness on your job".

True, "slaves" should serve their bosses as though they were working for God (1 Peter 2:18, Ephesians 6:5-8) "But if you have the opportunity to be free, use it... Do not become a slave again" (1 Cor 7:21-23).

Excuse No. 4: "SOMEONE has to support those who preach".

All we must have is God. God makes food, not man. The system robs God's resources and demands that we serve it to be fed. But the King's kids do not owe the evil system anything (Matthew 17:24-27). "The wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just" (Proverbs 13:22) and it's up to God how he's going to feed us.

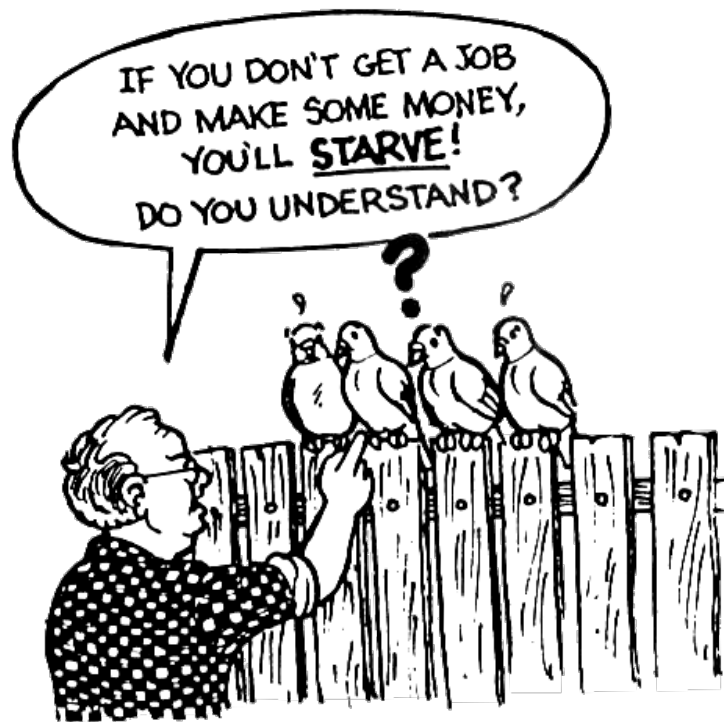
**"Therefore I say, take no thought for you life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or for your body, what you shall wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothes?".** (Matthew 6:25)

We take too much responsibility upon ourselves. Jesus said, "come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Our responsibility is to preach this good news. It is God's responsibility to feed us. "Do not labour for the food that perishes" (John 6:27).

That is a command. Do you dare disobey it and still call yourself a Christian?

"Look at the birds: they do not plant seeds, gather a harvest and put it in barns; yet your Father feeds them. Are you not much better than them?" (Matthew 6:26) Solomon said it is important to sow and reap if you want to eat (Proverbs 10:5, Proverbs 31:16). Paul said the same thing (2 Thessalonians 3:10). But the seeds we must sow as Christians are the words of God (Luke 8:11), and the harvest is one of souls (John 4:35). Paul worked night and day preaching the gospel (1 Thessalonians 2:9) and taught us to do the same.

If God can feed birds without jobs or money, he can certainly feed us!



**"Can any of you live a bit longer by worrying about it?"** (Matthew 6:27)

We act like food would not exist without money. But the miracle of life goes on with or without us worrying about it.

**"And why do you worry about clothes? Look how the wild flowers grow: they do not work or make clothes. Yet not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these"** (Matthew 6:28-29).

Solomon is noted for wisdom, but Jesus' wisdom is far superior (Matthew 12:42). Living by faith sounds foolish, but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men" (1 Corinthians 1:25). Until the church sees money for the fake god that it is, all the world will see in the church is expensive clothing covering bankrupt hearts. Far better to be clothed with Christ's simple beauty.

**"So, if God clothes the grass of the field which is here today and gone tomorrow, burnt up in the oven. Wont he be all the more sure to clothe you? How little faith you have!"** (Matthew 6:30)

Can you make one living cell? Yet God makes billions of them every day. Certainly he can supply the needs of his employees! (Phillipians 4:19) The rich shall be "made low; because as the flower of the grass, they shall pass away". (James 1:9-12) We're the creations, not the Creator. When we become like little children, in total dependence on God for our needs, we are "born again" into a heavenly kingdom where God controls the economy. We are born again by the teachings of Christ (1 Peter 1:23-25), not emotional experiences or recited prayers (John 3:3).

**"Therefore do not worry, saying, What will we eat? or, What will we drink? or, What will we wear? For these are the things the pagans worry about. Your Father knows that you need these things"** (Matthew 6:31-32).

The system today is called a rat race. In the Bible it was called Babylon (literally "confusion"), and we are told to come out of it (Revelation 18:4). It is not enough to have faith -- even the devil has that (James 2:19). The way to tell Christians from the rat-racers is that they've quit the race and are living by faith. "The just shall live by faith" (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38).

"A covetous man is an idolater" (Ephesians 5:5). God HATES idolatry. But i-dollar-try now controls the supposedly Christian churches. We cannot just "cut down" on idolatry; we must forsake it altogether and live by faith!

**"But seek first the kingdom of God, and what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these things"** (Matthew 6:33).

Seeking God's kingdom is not seeking wealth "in his name." Jesus commands us not to seek material needs (Luke 12:29). Seeking God's kingdom means labouring full-time to share the good news with others. If we will do that, God promises to meet our basic material needs (food and clothing). And we have found that he keeps his word!

**"So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings"** (Matthew 6:34).

All Jesus told us to pray for is our daily bread. Tomorrow is not our concern.

"Shame on you who say today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and buy and sell and get gain; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow" (James 4:13-14). Worry mostly concerns the future. But when the future becomes the present it is never as horrible as Satan tries to make it look. Forget about tomorrow, and get busy with the job God has for you today.

"Don't say, In four months there will be a harvest. I say it is time to start harvesting now!" (John 4:35).

"Go to all the world, teaching them to do what I have commanded you to do". (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:20)

## **NOBODY'S PERFECT**

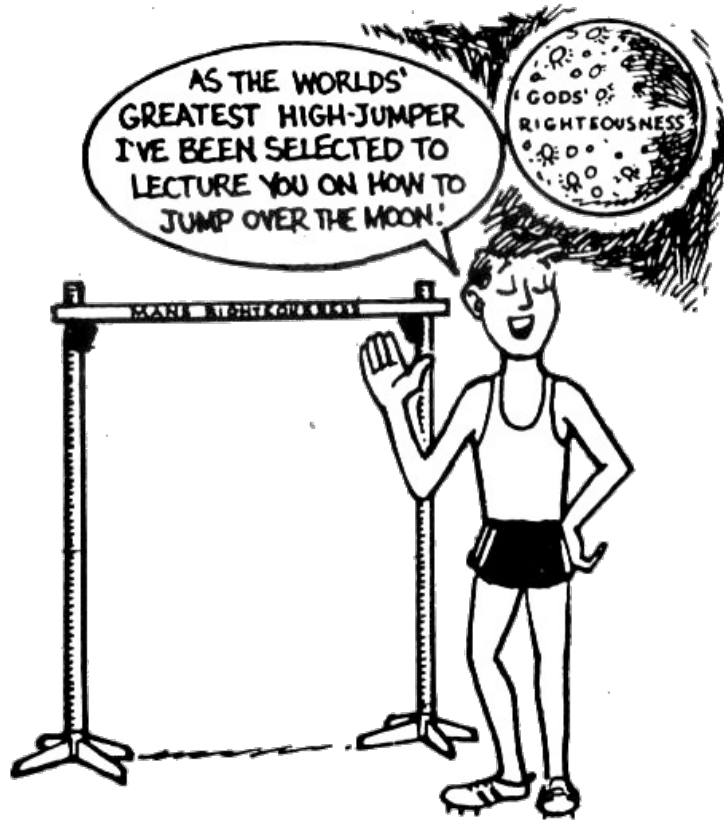
**"Judge not, that you be not judged"**. (Matthew 7:1)

If we do not like to be judged, then we should be careful about how we judge. Jesus said, "Judge righteous judgement". (John 7:24) It is easy to see what is wrong with others, and still be blind to what is wrong with ourselves (Read Romans 2:1-3). Even Christ knew that the only fair way he could judge was to apply precepts (ie. the Truth) fairly and equally to both sides of an issue. (John 12:47)



**"For God will judge you in the same way you judge others and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others" (Matthew 7:2).**

"Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7-9) The teachings of Christ are the Cornerstone (or measuring stick) by which to judge all actions. If we sow only the words of Christ, we will convict and save the world, without merely condemning (John 3:17-21).



**"And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3)**

Looking at others will make us self-righteous if we are better, or depressed if we are worse. Paul warned against congratulating ourselves on the basis of comparisons with other people (2 Corinthians 10:12). Better to compare ourselves with the perfect Son of God. There is only a speck of difference between the best of us and the worst of us compared with the difference between the best of us and Jesus! The best man on earth is like a filthy menstruous rag to God (Isaiah 64:6). When God looked for a perfect man, everyone he found was filthy (Psalm 4:2-4). "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23)."

**"Or how will you say to your brother, Let me take that speck out of your eye; when you have a log in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:4)**

Religion focuses on all the wrong issues. Jesus called it "straining at gnats and swallowing camels" (Matthew 23:24). The church has made mountains out of molehills, while ignoring the great issues Jesus raised. This booklet judges the church (as it judges all of us), but it does so on the basis of Christ's words -- the "glory of God" -- and not on the basis of some presumed righteousness in ourselves. We may be even more sinful than most churches but it will not make what Christ said any less true. Jesus is the "Plank", or "Log" in our eyes. He is the Mountain over which we stumble. He is Camel we try to devour. He is the Cornerstone we cast aside. You and I, and our comparative righteousness's are but specks... molehills... gnats by comparison.

**"You hypocrite! First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:5)**

"The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God" (1 Peter 4:17). How can we judge the world if we haven't learned to judge ourselves? (1 Corinthians 6:2-3) The message of mercy and forgiveness has been reserved for those who fill the offering plates, while the general

public is hit with campaigns against gambling, nudity, and drinking. But Christ is famous for his friendly associations with publicans, prostitutes, and winebibbers. In the light of what Jesus actually did teach, wowsers need converting as much as atheists!

**"Give not that which is holy to dogs, do not throw your pearls before pigs, they will only trample them under their feet and turn and attack you" (Matthew 7:6).**

Jesus said that his teachings about the Kingdom of God are like the greatest pearl in the world, which a man will sell everything he owns to possess (Matthew 13:45-46). But pigs and dogs have no use for pearls. They cannot see the value of Christ's words, so they will twist, contradict, and try to destroy them. "Dogs" are people who put their faith in religion to save them (Philippians 3:2). Such religious pride is a heap of (sorry, we can't say the word Christ would have used here, because religious people invariably throw out everything else we say in this book to register shock at the word... another case of straining at gnats to swallow camels!) Anyway, it's a heap of defecation compared to the teachings of Christ (Philippians 3:5-8). Pigs and dogs have as much respect for Christ's teachings as we have for their vomit (2 Peter 2:20-22). Christianity is not an argument (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Do not try to convince religious people that you are right. Look instead, for the people who are hungry for the truth and not full of their own self-righteousness (Matthew 9:13).

**"Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be open to you" (Matthew 7:7).**

If you are hungry for God's love then all you need to do is ask. I judge people and then do the same things myself; and you do it too. But Jesus knew we couldn't be perfect on our own, so he died as payment in advance for all our sins. You cannot earn this forgiveness. Just ASK for it and God gives it to you.

**"For everyone who asks will receive, and anyone who seeks will find and the door will be opened to those who knock" (Matthew 7:8).**

The world needs love more than anything else. "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Even when we are not loving, God still loves us. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us" (1 John 4:10). Each of us needs this love every day of our lives. "Let him that is thirsty come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). We are ALL filthy rotten sinners, and we are ALL filthy rotten hypocrites before God.

**"Would a father give his son a stone when he asks for bread? Or would he give him a snake when he asks for fish?" (Matthew 7:9-10).**

Parents know what is good for their children, and are pleased to give them good things. But they will not give their children anything that is harmful. So, if you want your prayers answered, ask for the right things. "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may satisfy your lusts" (James 4:3).

**"As bad as you are, you know how to give good things to your children. How much more, then, will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:11)**

Luke replaces the words "good things" with "the Holy Spirit" in this passage (Luke 11:13). Wealth was not the "good things" Jesus offered. God's Holy Spirit of Love is his "good thing." A man once asked, "What good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Jesus replied, "Sell whatever you own and give to the poor and come follow me." If you ask God for faith and love to do that good thing, he promises to give it!

**"Do for others what you want them to do for you: this is the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets"** (Matthew 7:12).

The whole Bible is about love. You don't need much theology to love your neighbour. Even the heretical Good Samaritan showed that (Luke 10:33-37). You will make lots of mistakes, but if you sincerely want to love God and others that's what the Bible is all about (Matthew 22:37-40). And if you do not want to do these good things, you are lost! (1 John 4:20)

**"Go in through the narrow gate, because the gate to hell is wide and the road that leads to it is easy, and there are many who travel it. But the gate to life is narrow and the way that leads to it is hard, and there are few who find it"** (Matthew 7:13-14).

Most people think there is "safety in numbers." The traditional idea of a false prophet is someone on the lunatic fringe, leading a small sect of religious zealots. But Christ saw the popular, respectable, powerful religious establishment as the real breeding ground for false prophets. Orthodoxy is no guarantee of soundness in doctrine (Luke 6:26).

**"Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing but on the inside they are like wolves"** (Matthew 7:15).

"Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). People were easily convinced that Jesus was a devil-possessed madman, motivated by evil desires (John 8:48, John 10:20).

True Prophets tend to be rough on the outside... sheep in wolves' clothing. But false prophets are just the opposite. They have everything going their way, and anything that threatens their privileged positions is labelled "of the devil" (cf Matthew 23:29-36, John 11:47-48). Yet, it is really the establishment that is of the devil (James 4:4). Paul said devilish leaders in the Christian establishment would claim to have the authority of the early apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

**"You will know them by what they do. Thorn bushes do not bear grapes, and briars do not bear figs"** (Matthew 7:16).

Do you want the sweet fruit of love, or the thorny bricks and mortar of the religious system? To the temple caretakers, Christ is a definite threat (Mark 14:58, Mark 15:29-30). And the threat is quite real! (Luke 21:5-6, Matthew 27:50-51)

The lie has been exposed: God doesn't live in those buildings. You can't put God in a box! (Acts 7:48) He lives in people now! (1 Corinthians 3:16) If you want buildings, join a big Church; if you want love, follow Christ.

**"A healthy tree bears good fruit, but a poor tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a poor tree cannot bear good fruit"** (Matthew 7:17-18).

Love and its attendant qualities are the proof of God's spirit in us (Galatians 5:22-23). And sharing your wealth is proof of your love (1 John 3:17-18). Love is not emotional experiences, plastic smiles, or fancy talk; it is action (2 John 6-9).

**"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire"** (Matthew 7:19).

Water baptism, speaking in tongues, church attendance, and evangelical cliches won't save you. John the Baptist refused to baptise religious people without proof of their "repentance" (Luke 3:7-11). He said if they would not share their wealth, they would be thrown in the "fire."

Whenever we get away from the teachings of Christ, we begin to die, and we are headed for hell (John 15:6-8, cf Luke 13:6-10). One day the truth of what Christ said will grind the false religious system to powder, unless they truly repent (2 Peter 2:1-3).



**"So then, you will know the false prophets by what they do"** (Matthew 7:20).

If Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life, then anyone who opposes the teachings of Christ is lost, lying, and dead. Anyone can say "Lord, Lord!" but only a genuine believer can obey Christ (Luke 6:46).

**"Not everyone who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only those who do what my Father in heaven wants them to do"** (Matthew 7:21).

You are not my "brother" just because you say "Lord, Lord!" or go to the same church I attend. I will not defend hypocrisy in churches for the sake of "unity." The teachings of Jesus can be the only basis for unity amongst Christians.

My wife took my name when she married me. If she is faithful, she will share all that I receive from my father. But if she leaves me, she has taken my name in vain, and every time she uses it she will anger my father more. The name of Jesus does not belong to disobedient "Christians," and just saying it will not impress God at all... in fact, it'll only anger him more!

**"When the Day of Judgement comes, many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord! In your name we spoke God's message, by your name we drove out many demons and performed many**

**miracles!' Then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you wicked people!'"** (Matthew 7:22-23).

Paul warned that Satan himself would appear to perform miracles for the benefit of his followers, and that he would do so from inside the apostate church just before Christ returns (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4, 2 Thessalonians 8-11). Charismania, with its emphasis on "prophesying," exorcisms, and miracles, is probably the biggest thing to hit the church this century, But the movement also leads the way in dishonesty and opposition to the teachings of Christ. It teaches people that health and wealth are signs of their god's blessing (2 Timothy 6:3-5), and encourages people to claim they are healed when they are not, supposedly as proof of their faith.

Miracles prove nothing... even if they are genuine. An evil world desires miracles (Matthew 16:4), but all we offer is the truth of God's judgement (Matthew 12:33-41).

**"So then, anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded, and the wind blew hard against that house. But it did not fall, because it was built on rock"** (Matthew 7:24-25).

Traditions can blind people to the Work of God (Matthew 15:7-9). The teachings of Christ challenge many of the traditions of our day. We have sought to "earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). We have dug deep and found in Christ the Rock of Ages. The truth gives us great confidence.

Criticisms bounce off Christ's teachings, like waves off a rock. We are not so smart, but we know who is, and if we stay close to him, nothing will be able to shake our faith.

The false prophets know this. Their commitment is to their own positions and authority. They cannot admit publicly that they oppose Christ's teachings, so they will have to resort to secret attack, lies, and rumours. But none of it alters the Rock on which our faith is built.

**"But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain poured down, the rivers flooded, the wind blew hard against that house, and it fell. And what a terrible fall that was!"** (Matthew 7:26-27)

About 20 years ago, my wife had a dream. In it people were waiting in line to jump through a ring of fire. If they were right with God, they would jump through unharmed, but if they were not, the fire would devour them. While the line was long, we chatted together quite happily, certain that our "born again" experience was sufficient to protect us. But as it came closer to our turn, we became a little more nervous.

What if we weren't ready? What if a religious experience was not good enough? What if our religious leaders had left something out in their formulas for salvation?

After discussing the dream we decided that the risk was too great for us to rely on the opinions of men for our salvation. We had to find proof where Christ himself told people all they had to do was say a little prayer and ask Jesus into their hearts to have eternal life. And as we began to look we were startled by what we found. We had been sold a phoney plan of salvation. We had been building on sand.

These "born againers," with their arrogant boasts that they "know that they know that they know" that they are saved didn't know anything at all. It was all a colossal con job.

One day you are going to stand before God. You can argue that you followed your pastor, that you followed the Pope, that you followed St. Paul, but God is going to ask, "Did you follow my Son?" You can say that you didn't think you had to obey Christ, as long as you believed that he died for your sins, and God will say "Were you 'believing' my Son when you ignored everything that he said? Depart from me, I never knew you!"

"He that says, 'I know Christ,' and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3). What are you doing with the commandments of Christ?