



July 4th, 2010
Morning Service

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Teaching Elder

Training our Minds to Prune our Lifestyles

As we continue our study of Jesus' words in Matthew 18 we can see a theme that recurs throughout the Bible. The concept of pruning to produce good fruit. Jesus delivers this instruction in the form of a parable as he often did. Our Savior used parables to invite the hearer to think and ponder over what was said. Christianity is a cerebral endeavor, make no mistake about it. We are to dig and pursue the Truth daily because the way is narrow. In fact the followers in the early church were called follower of "The Way".

Jesus mentions cutting limbs and plucking out eyes. These, of course, are not literal instructions. They are statements designed to cause a strong reaction and to explain the importance of the situation. Much like a gardener, we are to actively prune our lives so that we might produce the best fruit. The Christian walk does not stop with acceptance rather it starts with it. The nature of fallen man is in opposition to obedience. Sinful thoughts and habits are always springing up like weeds, tares, or bad branches. Our study of scripture and repentance is our only remedy against this.

As you listen to this message, ask yourself the following;

- Am I actively looking for stumbling blocks in my life?
- Do I realize this sin may cause others to stumble?
- Are my associations causing me to stumble?
- Is my life fertile soil for the Gospel to flourish?

Notes

There has been much discussion to the Parables of our Saviour, which is as designed. We must be careful to keep them in context and not make them say what they don't. However, we can see the mention of Eye, Foot, and Hand can help us draw attention to various locations in our lives.

Eye – This relates to our knowledge and perception.

- Am I rightly receiving the message in the Scripture?
- Can I Biblically perceive the difference between Godly behavior and disobedience?

Foot – The Foot is our path and our habits

- Do I understand how narrow the path is?
- How hard am I trying to stay on the path?
- What methods do I use to keep my path straight?

Hands- Represents what we produce.

- Do the things I do create or remove stumbling blocks?

Scripture References

Matthew 18:1-35 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and said, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (2) And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, (3) and said, "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (4) "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; (6) but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. (7) "Woe to the world because of *its* stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes! (8) "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. (9) "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell. (10) "See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven continually see the face of My Father who is in heaven. (11) ["For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.] (12) "What do you think? If any man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and search for the one that is straying? (13) "If it turns out that he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. (14) "So it is not *the* will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish. (15) "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. (16) "But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that **BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED.** (17) "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. (18) "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. (19) "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. (20) "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst." (21) Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (22) Jesus *said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. (23) "For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. (24) "When he had begun to settle *them*, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. (25) "But since he did not have *the means* to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. (26) "So the slave fell *to the ground* and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.' (27) "And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. (28) "But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and *began* to choke *him*, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' (29) "So his fellow slave fell *to the ground* and *began* to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' (30) "But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. (31) "So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened. (32) "Then summoning him, his lord *said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?' (34) "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (35) "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

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

Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.

Proverbs 22:3 The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, But the naive go on, and are punished for it.

Proverbs 20:1-30 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, And whoever is intoxicated by it is not wise. (2) The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life. (3) Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man, But any fool will quarrel. (4) The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, So he begs during the harvest and has nothing. (5) A plan in the heart of a man is *like* deep water, But a man of understanding draws it out. (6) Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, But who can find a trustworthy man? (7) A righteous man who walks in his integrity-- How blessed are his sons after him. (8) A king who sits on the throne of justice Disperses all evil with his eyes. (9) Who can say, "I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin"? (10) Differing weights and differing measures, Both of them are abominable to the LORD. (11) It is by his deeds that a lad distinguishes himself If his conduct is pure and right. (12) The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The LORD has made both of them. (13) Do not love sleep, or you will become poor; Open your eyes, *and* you will be satisfied with food. (14) "Bad, bad," says the buyer, But when he goes his way, then he boasts. (15) There is gold, and an abundance of jewels; But the lips of knowledge are a more precious thing. (16) Take his garment when he becomes surety for a stranger; And for foreigners, hold him in pledge. (17) Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man, But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel. (18) Prepare plans by consultation, And make war by wise guidance. (19) He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, Therefore do not associate with a gossip. (20) He who curses his father or his mother, His lamp will go out in time of darkness. (21) An inheritance gained hurriedly at the beginning Will not be blessed in the end. (22) Do not say, "I will repay evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you. (23) Differing weights are an abomination to the LORD, And a false scale is not good. (24) Man's steps are *ordained* by the LORD, How then can man understand his way? (25) It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" And after the vows to make inquiry. (26) A wise king winnows the wicked, And drives the *threshing* wheel over them. (27) The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, Searching all the innermost parts of his being. (28) Loyalty and truth preserve the king, And he upholds his throne by righteousness. (29) The glory of young men is their strength, And the honor of old men is their gray hair. (30) Stripes that wound scour away evil, And strokes *reach* the innermost parts.

Proverbs 4:10 Hear, my son, and accept my sayings And the years of your life will be many.

We are glad you have chosen to listen to this sermon and pray that it gives you strength, the want for obedience, and a desire to have God's abundant Grace mortify sin in your life. If you have any questions or comments please email chuck_ezell@yahoo.com.