

"GOOD AND BAD RELIGION"

Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount here
2. Christ deals with common errors here
3. It is a problem in all ages of the Church: good v. bad Christianity

1. GOOD AND BAD RELIGION ARE ALWAYS IN CONFLICT

- 1) The way God reveals this conflict to us:
 - (i) Cain and Abel: Genesis 4; 1 John 3
 - (ii) The episode of the Golden Calf: Exodus 32
 - (iii) The period of the Kings
 - (iv) The reason for exile in Babylon
 - (v) Christ v. the Jewish leaders
 - (vi) Paul v. teachers of errors
 - (vii) The final conflict – Revelation ("Babylon")

OBSERVE: All through history there is this struggle
- 2) So possible to be self-deceived; our Lord here gives this warning to us all.

ILLUSTRATION: Reformation > "High Churchism"
Covenanters > Moderatism
Disruption > Liberalism

APPLICATION: What is lost is the power of grace

2. HOW LIGHT IN US CAN BE DARKNESS

- 1) By "light" our Lord means true religion
- 2) By "darkness" He means false religion
- 3) How "darkness" can be thought to be "light"
 - (i) orthodoxy without the New Birth
 - (ii) zeal without knowledge
 - (iii) religion without brotherly love

- 4) Things to watch against:
- (i) pressing any doctrine too far:
example: the Sabbath (Pharisees)
 - (ii) not seeing truth in right balance:
example: justification
 - (iii) expecting to understand mysteries:
example: salvation offered to all
 - (iv) those who aspire to church power:
example: Diotrophes; Antichrist
- OBSERVE**: If we go too far at any point we distort the truth: good religion becomes bad

3. HOW WE ARE TO "TAKE HOLD" IN THIS MATTER

- 1) We have no true light if we are not truly converted. We are still dead.
- 2) Bad religion always persecutes the good:
the Spanish Inquisition; Mary Tudor; James VI...
- 3) Watch your heart + check your motives:
ILLUSTRATION: Cain and Abel (1 John 3)
- 4) True religion is full of good fruits and brotherly love:
Galatians 5:22, 1 John 2
- 5) The way we see faults: Matthew 7:1
- 6) The murder in man's heart: Galatians 4:29-30
APPLICATION: Does your heart go out in love to all God's people?

CONCLUSION

1. Nominalism is a reality
2. Only grace makes us love
3. Only true religion is pleasing to God

PSALM

24: 1 – 6

42: 8 – 11

19: 12 – 14