

## –J.C. Ryle *Expository Thoughts on Matthew* || Matthew 15:29-39 - 16:1-12–

### I. Introduction:

- A. In this passage we see a microcosm of Christ's entire ministry on earth. We see a variety of Christ's miracles, especially healings, his compassion for his followers, interactions with the antagonistic religious leaders of the day, and a light parable for his disciples. If we selected any random day of Christ's ministry, this is roughly what we would expect to see.

### II. Matthew 15: 29-39 Ryle gives us 3 focus points to consider about this passage:

- A. *How much more pains people take about the relief of their bodily diseases than about their souls.*

1. People then and now would sacrifice much for the sake of their physical health. We would travel great distance and perhaps spare no expense if it meant relief from a disease or discomfort.
2. Physical health is a very real thing, it is not merely a state of mind. It is a gift from God, and truly a grace, for we do not deserve health.
3. We've never been more in tune with our physical health than in these last 13 months. Our concern and our care and our precautions are at an all time high. Can the same be said for our spiritual health? Do we seek the help of the Great Healer with as much frequency and determination as our concerns for physical needs? Do we pray for the spiritual health of ourselves and others as much as we pray for relief from physical ailments?
4. When we have a modicum of spiritual health, how well do we maintain it? Do we attend upon the means of grace as intently as we care about our physical health? Do we sacrifice our spiritual health for the sake of our physical health? We need to consider this balance.
5. 3 In 2. Another juxtaposition of physical health in relation to spiritual health. John seems to indicate that there is a desirable balance to be found here. His well wishing is contingent upon the soul being well.
6. *Our souls are afflicted with a malady far more deep-seated, far more complicated, far more difficult to cure than any ailment that flesh is heir to.*

- B. *Let us remark at the marvelous ease and power with which our Lord healed all who were brought to him.*

1. The miraculous healings were clear, and wonderful, and caused many to believe and all to glorify God. Contrast this with today's "faith healers".
  - a) Christ healings were 100% effective, immediate and irrefutable.
  - b) These healings caused people to repent and be converted.
  - c) The healings resulted in glory to God alone.
2. The miraculous healings of Christ are a parallel that we can draw for our souls healing. There is no bodily ailment that Christ could not heal, and there is no ailment of our soul that he cannot heal in us. Do we recognize our need for this healing?
3. There is no better place to turn, there is no worldly remedy to our ailment, there is no replacement for Christ the Great Healer, though we try mightily to find one.
4. These healings display for us the heart of Christ, the same heart of love, mercy and compassion that he shares with us in our time of need.

- C. *Let us remark at the abundant compassion of Christ towards his followers.*

1. Christ fed his crowd of followers out of compassion, not obligation, not mercy.
2. No emotion of Christ is mentioned more in the gospels than compassion. We should never fail to highlight this attribute of Christ. Is it the first thing we think of when we think of Christ? Is it the first thing others think of about us?
3. Impacts of Christ's compassion extend to unbelievers and believers alike.
  - a) It should encourage those who are hesitant to follow Christ. He will be gracious and forgiving. He will supply every need and be merciful.
  - b) It should comfort believers that Christ is full of compassion, and that despite our failures and weaknesses, his compassion never fails.

- III. Matthew 16: 1-12 - Ryle gives us an anomaly and two main points to focus on:
- A. The anomaly is that we see the Pharisees and the Sadducees working together against Jesus.
    1. Normally these two religious sects stayed busy arguing with each other but found common ground against Jesus. Ryle warns not to lose sight of this.
  - B. The first observation is *the repetition which our Lord makes of words used by him on a former occasion*. See Matt 12:39
    1. Christ was not content to bring forth the truth only once, to impress the truths more deeply on his disciples, and by extension, on us.
    2. Christ knows our forgetfulness and our weakness in spiritual matters. We need to hear it again!
    3. Christ also uses repetition to further confound the Pharisees in this case.
    4. Ryle extends this idea to counter the concern for harmonizing the gospels. Essentially, similar stories of slightly different wording or context does not mean that the gospels contradict one another. With Christ's penchant for repetition, any seeming discontinuity could simply be two similar yet completely separate events.
  - C. The second observation is *the solemn warning which our Lord takes occasion to give to his disciples*.
    1. First, we must admit that this was not the brightest moment for the disciples. After quite some time as followers of Jesus, this was the response they came up with.
    2. Ryle gives us a couple aspects of this warning to consider:
      - a) To whom was the warning given? Directly to his disciples, the apostles, the first ministers of the church. Their preceding blunder notwithstanding, if this is a warning worthy of the chosen 12, then it is a warning we must heed as well.
      - b) What does Christ warn about? The doctrine of the pharisees. The pharisees were self-righteous formalists, and the Sadducees were sceptics, freethinkers and half infidels. The disciples surely knew not to trust the teachings of the pharisees, but this warning extends to any false teaching.
      - c) What imagery does Christ use? He compares the false doctrine to leaven. Gal 5:9  
Like leaven, these doctrines may seem minor compared to the whole body of truth. But they work secretly and noiselessly to disrupt the truth. Once it gains purchase, one false doctrine can change the whole character of the truths in which it was mixed. It's not just bold heresy that we must watch for, but the little seeds of false teachings.
    3. This is a truth for all time. So long as sinners are involved in churches, the danger of false doctrine exists. This is seen most commonly in subtracting from or adding to the Word of God. Mainstream Christianity struggles mightily with this! Even in reformed circles, the danger exists. Legalism is alive and well in reformed churches. We must always be on guard. Many false teachings have a slow and seemingly harmless beginning.
    4. *It would have been well for the church of Christ, if the warnings of the gospel had been as much studied as its promises.*
    5. This warning is for all the church, at all times. The false doctrines of the pharisees would be a disease upon the church. Their doctrines still exist today, in different name and in different form. Take heed and beware.
    6. Before false doctrines take hold in the church, they take hold in our hearts. May we stay in accord with scripture, by being saturated with scripture. Let us focus on our spiritual health to help us. *Let us not add or subtract, but may our principle always be, the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.*