

DON'T ADVERTISE IF YOU CAN'T DELIVER THE GOODS

"And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Luke 6:46.

This question is not addressed to those who are out and out against Him. He is not speaking to His avowed enemies, nor to those who ignore Him. Neither is He speaking to those who are wholeheartedly for Him. Rather He is speaking to people like many of us. He is speaking to people who admire Him, who honor Him to the point of calling Him Lord, and yet who are not willing to follow Him. They give Him intellectual assent, but have failed wholeheartedly to give themselves to Him.

And the principle laid down in this verse and its context is that our conduct indicates our true character. In other words, we prove what we are by what we do. Therefore, in the light of our subject "Don't Advertise If You Can't Deliver The Goods", and upon the basis of our text, "And why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?", we may well think of people as being in one of three classes.

I. Those Who Advertise and Deliver The Goods.

In this class are to be found those who have believed in Christ as their personal Saviour, confessed their sins to Him, been forgiven by Him, professed their faith in Him, been baptized in His name and into the fellowship of the church, found pleasure and profit in prayer, relished the study of the Bible, prayed for others, sought to bring others to Christ, aimed to please the Lord, had a growing desire to be like Christ, been active and zealous in service for Christ, been loyal to Christ and been loyal to the church. For that matter, it is impossible to be loyal to Christ and indifferent to His church. Those who are loyal to Christ show and prove it by their loyalty to the worship, work, officers, membership and good name of the church. With them church attendance is not merely a matter of convenience. They do not stay away from church services because it looks like it might rain. They also support the church financially. So they can truthfully say, in the words of the song writer,

"I love Thy kingdom, Lord,
The House of Thine abode,
The Church our blest Redeemer saved
With His own precious blood.

I love Thy Church, O God!
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be giv'n,
Till toils and cares shall end."

You know there are such Christians because you have seen them. You respect them; and you reverence the gospel because they show what it can do. The things which would be offensive to Christ they put off; and they put on the graces of His character. Their rule is that of exact obedience. You believe in them, and you believe in the sort of religion which they represent, and in your own inmost hearts you know that you would do wisely to possess it.

With regard to this class which advertises and delivers the goods, or calls Christ, Lord, Lord, and does the things which He says, it ought to be said that all that can be said against it is that it is not large enough. There ought to be many others join this class and continue in it. It is the finest class in which to hold membership and with which to be associated that can be found anywhere.

II. Those Who Advertise But Do Not Deliver The Goods.

In this class are to be found those who have said they believed in Christ, claimed to have repented of their sins, professed to have accepted Christ, been buried in the baptismal waters, united with the church, called Christ their Lord, received many blessings from Him, but have not been obedient to Him. They have not obeyed Him when He has bidden them to repent of sin, trust Him, love His Word, delight in prayer, love one another, pray for each other, help each other, win other souls to Him, be loyal to Him and be loyal to His church. It is the will of Christ that all who profess faith in Him and unite with His church support that church with: --

1. Their prayers.

The church was born in prayer and it must be kept alive and moving through prayer. He wants us to pray for the pastor, the officers and the members of the church. It requires a stronger character and more Christianity to sympathize with them, to pray for them and to support them than it does to criticize them and to find fault with them. And you can be sure of this, when you hear one criticizing and finding fault with them that there is a person who never prays for them. Complaining and praying never go together.

2. Their purses.

It costs money to run a church although a lot of church members do not know it. Many church members accept the blessings and privileges of the church, but never contribute a cent toward its maintenance. They let others do all the paying and then they talk about how much our church gave or failed to give last year. One woman said she had been a member of the church for twenty-five years and it hadn't cost her but twenty-five cents. Another who knew her quite well remarked, "Well, in view of her religion she paid too much for it, after all." Complaining and paying do not go together either.

3. Their presence.

The non-church-goer is a great liability to and a black spot on any church. Many have their names on the church books, but that is all it amounts to. They have a church home but they never come home. Oh, occasionally they will come to church if there is a corpse there, but they wouldn't dare to otherwise. They remind one more of a buzzard than they do of a Christian. And they stay away because they are determined to avoid all responsibility, or they dread to behold their own faces in the gospel mirror, or they have no interest in their spiritual welfare and in the Lord's work.

"Some stay at home because it's cold,
And some because it's hot;
And some because they're getting old,
And some because they're not.

Some stay at home to entertain
And some to cook the dinners;
And some because they're good enough
And some because they're sinners.

Some stay away because their hat
The milliner's not finished;
And some because their liking
For the minister has diminished.

And some declare they don't enjoy
The singing of the choir;
And others 'cause their fellow saint
Aroused their wrathful ire.

Some stay at home, because they say
The weather's cold or rough
And some to vent a little spleen
Because they've got a "huff".

Some stay away because they've long
In single harness tarried;
And some because as they protest,
They're settled down and married.

Some keep from church because they find
The members "cold and funny",
"Who never clasp them by the hand
Unless they're after money."

And some bewail with pious face,
"The worldliness and sin
That find a lodgment in the church"
So never enter in.

Alas! Alas! excuses grow
To drive our thoughts from God,
And turn us from the house of prayer,
The place our fathers trod."

Instead of professing to be Christians and offering such flimsy excuses for not going to church, we ought to go to church to worship God, to be instructed for if we do not go to church to get religious instruction we are not going to get much of it, to be comforted, and to help maintain the church, which is the best teacher of righteousness which we have.

It is sad but true that many people would like to have Jesus as their Saviour but do not want Him as their Lord and Master. But this is an impossibility. The faith that accepts Him as Saviour must also submit to Him as Lord. Jesus claims lordship over us. He demands of us unhesitating obedience. He expects us to put His claims ahead of father, mother, brother, sister, houses, lands, and even ballgames. He expects His children to be in His house instead of at a ballgame when a choice is to be made be-

tween the two, and those who are faithful to Him will be. Christ expects a Christian to accept His Word and to obey His will. The need today is for Christians who will acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, and faithfully obey His will.

Two things in our text are very obvious, namely, profession and practice. Profession is defined in the terms "Lord! Lord!", a form of address which Jesus approved. Practice is defined in the terms "doing the things which I say." The religion in which they do not go together has a lamentable limp in it.

Because Christians have not walked the way of Christ, they are not impressing the world as the early Christians did. They made such a profound impression on the social, moral and spiritual life of their day that they were accused of turning the world upside down. And so they did! And the reason for it was that they did what Christ said; they obeyed His will; they walked in His way. The record of Christian history gives abundant proof that the sort of Christianity that has impressed the world and won respect has been the kind that has done what the Lord has said instead of being content to say what He has done.

The philosophically-minded tell us to "Think it through." That is good and important, but it is not enough. The mystically-minded tells us to "Pray it through." That is imperative, but it is not enough. If we are to become Christ-minded followers of the lowly Galilean, we must begin to "Live it through."

Following an address to a group of young people in India, a world-famous missionary said, "If you will, I wish you would stand up and tell me why you are not Christians. Why will you not become Christians and follow Christ?" A young Indian replied, "Your Christ is wonderful, but you Christians are not like Him." Don't you see what is holding back Christ's conquest of men's hearts? It is the fact that you and I do not "live it through." If we are going to impress others, we must be obedient to His will and walk in His way. For it is the Christian's walk, and not his talk, that counts with the world.

Our deeds must confirm our words. If the two diverge, deeds will always be taken as the credible self-revelation. The testimony of works is always far more reliable than that of words. Mere profession and lip-service is abominable because it dishonors the Lord, degrades the soul, wounds the faithful children of God, and pleases Satan immensely. Active obedience to the Lord is the surest mark of a genuine believer in Christ. It is an absolute test and the necessary fruit of a real Christian life. If Christ is truly your Lord you will obey Him; then, if He is not your Lord, don't call Him such. Just be truthful. If you advertise, then, deliver the goods.

III. Those Who Neither Advertise Nor Deliver The Goods.

There are many to whom the preaching of the Gospel is as music in the ears of a corpse. They simply shut their ears and refuse to hear, though the testimony be concerning God's own Son, life eternal, and the way to escape from everlasting wrath. They appear to be entirely satisfied with themselves, their character and their conduct, and act as if they think that they do not need any pardon for sin or the favor and blessings of God upon them. But, because of your present and future need of Christ, you ought not to refuse to accept Him. By all means, you should repent of sin and trust Christ for salvation now, then confess Him as Saviour and Lord, and thereafter live consistently with your profession, strive to be like Christ, labor for Him, and obey Him zealously.