

“Master, Speak to My Brother”

On one occasion, when Jesus addressed His disciples and others, a certain listener interrupted, saying, “*Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,*” Luke 12:13. This man evidently had been listening to the words of the Savior without personally applying a thing spoken. He apparently felt that he had been unjustly treated with reference to “*the inheritance,*” and wanted Jesus, Who came to “*seek and to save*” lost souls, Luke 19:10, to help intercede in his financial behalf!

Herein we find an insight as to why the word preached does not profit some hearers. They do not listen as in view of eternity. They do not give the rapt attention of one who knows he is hearing heaven’s message to lost and dying, eternity-bound mortals. They do not listen with the attitude that “I can personally apply and profit from these truths.” Nay, they listen, thinking to themselves, “brother so and so really needs this lesson; I hope **he** is listening!

Jesus “turned the tables” on this man. He did not (so far as we know) speak a word to his “*brother,*” instead He spoke to the one making the request! He said, “*Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you.*” By this reply, Jesus showed that this was not His purpose in coming to the earth, that other things were more important, and that He was not going to assume a different role than that for which He came. He then told this man to “*take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth,*” Luke 12:14-15.

Jesus knew that the one to whom He spoke was as guilty of sin (the sin of covetousness) as his “*brother*” to whom he wanted Jesus to speak. Herein we find a problem all too common; the tendency to condemn in others what one allows in himself. Cf. Rom. 2:1. It is so easy for one to “*think more highly of himself than he ought to think,*” Rom. 12:3, while at the same time possessing a censorious, highly critical attitude toward everyone else. This results in mote pulling and speck picking (cf. Matt. 7:1-5), but not in the improvement either of self or the one critically censored.

How can we know whether or not we are like this sinner who was so critical of another sinner? Perhaps the following statements and questions will help: (1) I believe my brother in Christ should pray regularly and fervently. **Do I** pray regularly and fervently? (2) I believe other members of the church should assemble for worship on every occasion possible. **Do I** assemble as often as I can? (3) I believe my fellow man should diligently study his Bible. **Do I** diligently study my Bible? (4) I believe you should be generous with your time and money to help advance the cause of Christ. **Am I** generous with my time and money in said cause? (5) believe you should be open-minded and willing to change if you are found to be in error. **Am I** open-minded and willing to change when I have shown to be in error? (6) I believe your faith should be strong and that you should press on in face of discouragement and opposition. **Is my** faith strong, and do I press on “*in season and out of season?*” (7) I believe you should love me and that you should not gossip about me. **Do I** love you, or do I run you down with my tongue? (8) When you differ with me I believe you should tell me before you tell anyone else, and that you should seek opportunity to discuss the matter with me. **Am I** willing to treat you in the same manner? (9) I believe you should have read this article with a sincere non-censorious spirit. **Would I** read the same article with a sincere, noncensorious spirit if you had written it?

Brethren, let us think soberly along these lines. When Paul addressed the elders of the church at Ephesus, Acts 20:28, he revealed a principle that we would all do well to heed; namely before we *“take heed”* to others, let us first *“take heed”* to **ourselves!**
—Bobby Witherington