

Text: Matthew 7:13-29

Title: Two Ways

Truth: We must choose the way of Jesus to avoid destruction.

Date/Location: Sunday March 1, 2020 at FBC; rev. 8/8,11,15/2021

Introduction

This is a sermon about the conclusion of the most famous sermon ever preached. It was preached by Jesus in the opening days of His public ministry. He spoke his message as he sat among His disciples and a large crowd and it is recorded in Matthew 5–7.

Jesus pronounces heavenly blessings upon those who are humble and meek and desire the things of God. These people do not earn God's favor with such traits, but they do demonstrate that they have exercised true faith in Him and are thus transformed by His grace. Jesus's disciples are those who have repented and recognize their spiritual poverty.

Jesus tells believers that they are salt and light. They must preserve and provide truth to the people around them. Jesus fulfilled the Law of Moses, and expects us to keep His instruction. If our righteousness does not super-exceed that of the Pharisees, we will not have a share in heaven.

Jesus teaches that we are not to commit adultery—even in our minds—or think about divorce, or make oaths. We are to love our *enemies* as well as our family and friends. We are not to give or pray or fast for human recognition. We are not to hoard up wealth, nor concern ourselves about things beyond the end of today because God will provide for us. We are not to practice hyper-critical judgment, but to focus on our own problems. We must seek what we need from God, and do to others as we would have them do to us, which is one way to express the law of love.

It is self-evident to Christians that the truths of the sermon apply to believing people in any age, including the church. These are not moral instructions that can be relegated to another time or place.

The conclusion of the sermon brings it all together and shows us that if we merely talk about the things of God or pretend to be

righteous externally and are hypocrites, we do not know God truly. The summary is that there are two ways you can go when faced with the teaching of the Lord.

I. Two Ways to Walk: Narrow vs. Broad, v. 13-14

A. Narrow Gate, Difficult Way. True salvation comes through the one way of faith in Christ. The entry into that way is narrow because it is one Door, and the way is confined, constricted, and difficult. The fact is that there are few human beings who are on that way. It should therefore not surprise us to find that we are very different than other people if we decide to follow Christ.

Note that Jesus does not talk only about the entrance (it is narrow), but about the entire pathway (it is difficult). It is a way that consumes the entire life, not just a few hours a week. It is a difficult path because the holy conduct required goes against the unholy grain of society. It is also difficult because the Devil is against it. And finally, it is difficult because your own flesh wants to take a side exit all the time. It is a fight internally and externally and spiritually.

But in the end, this path leads to eternal life. The reward is worth all the difficulty and more (2 Cor. 4:17). This life is beyond what we can imagine, though we can understand some things about it because God has revealed those things.

The expectation we have going into the faith is not temporal health, wealth, prosperity, ease, likability, etc. Preaching of the gospel in contemporary charismatic doctrine promises that your problems will disappear, and you will be well if you have enough faith. But this is not the expectation that Jesus the Savior Himself lays down. The “cost” of the gospel is not that it is unavailable or hard to obtain; it is that the life you are choosing in Christ is a difficult one. It is not what the world considers normal. It is not popular. It does not promise prosperity on this side of glory. It is initially difficult, but later it is blessed.

Be careful not to make the narrow way narrower and more difficult than it already is. Adding rules or making people keep the Law or requiring a specific Bible version or like things are wrong too.

B. **Wide Gate, Broad Way.** For those who desire an easier way, there *is* such a way—at least in the short term. It is populous and popular. The pathway is more comfortable, less lonely, less difficult in some ways, more diverse and inclusive. Much of the unbeliever’s life is centered around personal pleasure and happiness. Whatever trips their trigger, they do what they can do to achieve that goal. However, it is still true that “the way of the transgressor is hard” (Prov. 13:15). Sins will bring natural consequences.

If being liked or popular is important to you—more important than your soul—then you will naturally gravitate to the broad way. To come to Christ, you have to say, “forget it” to the world. You need to turn away from the fear of man and instead recognize the fear of God.

C. Life itself offers difficulties that even the broad way cannot eliminate. There are problems common to both the narrow and the broad way, and we do not escape no matter what way we are on. But there is a blessedness even in this life that is unachievable on the broad way. And that is the blessing of knowing you are living for God and doing God’s will.

D. Jesus **commands** us to enter by the narrow gate, *because* the other way, which is the wide-gate-way, leads to destruction. This destruction is eternal death (the “second” death, Rev. 20:14-15).

“Entering” refers to believing in Christ, and the way that is narrow refers to how we thus live in Christ. John 10:7, 9: “I am the door. If anyone enters through me, he will be saved...”

II. Two Types of Fruit: Good vs. Bad, v. 15-20

Fruit is a metaphor for those things that a person does, how they live, their attitudes and actions. For someone who is a teacher, the fruit includes the doctrines that they teach and the kind of disciples that they make. Good fruit is a reference to the godly output of one’s life and truth in teaching. Bad fruit is sin and false teaching.

A. Jesus uses a self-evident proverb in verses 17-18: a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. You know the quality of

the tree by the quality of its fruit—not just how the tree appears to the eye upon a cursory glance.

We know not to take the illustration too far, because sometimes a good tree has a bad piece of fruit here and there.

But if the output is always or almost always bad, then something is unquestionably bad in the root, or under the hood, or behind the scenes. “Everything is fine,” you protest. But I ask, “Then why is your house on fire? Why is your life producing wreckage instead of good spiritual fruit? Why are you not walking with Christ as you should?” Bad fruit inevitably means something is wrong on the inside.

Bad fruit is fixable—by God’s grace through salvation, but if the fruit of your life is consistently poor in an ongoing way over time, then that means clearly that you have rottenness on the inside and need to consider the next section.

Imperfection cannot be used as an excuse for living a pathetic life. Yes, we all know you are imperfect, and you all know that I am a sinner. So let’s get on with living the way we should, not the way we think we can get away with and still maintain enough good fruit to pass the smell test.

Real faith is always fruitful faith, whether or not you are a religious teacher.

- B. Bad Fruit. Thorn bushes and brambles always bear bad fruit. That is inherent to what they are. It is the same way with false teachers. They appear to be nice and harmless (sheep’s clothing) but in fact are extremely dangerous (ravenous wolves). Their teaching leads to Hell. It devours your soul. It kills you. You want nothing to do with them.

The clothing covers the hidden reality and indicates deceit. See 2 Cor. 11:13-14.

You can discern “who’s who” by watching their lives and seeing what kind of fruit comes out of them. That fruit can be doctrines they espouse, people or movements they support, practices they demonstrate, or any combination.

These false teachers, like bad trees, will be cut down and burned by the Lord. This is an unmistakable picture of divine judgment—not human judgment. This is not mere chastisement or “being saved by the skin of your teeth.” It is destruction.

- C. Jesus commands us to beware of false teachers because of their destructive path. Those who follow them will likewise be destroyed. We know them by observing what they say and how they live and to some extent the lives of their disciples, as those match the teaching given by the false teacher. I say “to some extent” because a perfectly fine teacher can have miscreant members who do not follow the teaching that they are hearing. So, you cannot always judge a teacher by the lives of those who claim to follow him. Example: Many claim to follow Christ—the perfect teacher—but they are false prophets!

See illustrations in Deuteronomy 13:2 and 18:20-22.

- D. Connect the prior section, about two ways to walk, with this one. On the broad way there are many bad-fruit-teachers. But they also try to poke their heads over onto the narrow way and entice people that are there. Part of the difficulty of the narrow way is discerning falsehood and keeping yourself from these ravenous wolves.
- E. Examples of false teaching. Divisive race-based teaching that is ubiquitous today; love is love; follow your heart; atheism; communism; hedonism; LGBTQ; divorce is OK; multitude of media examples promoting intimacy before marriage; promotion of fear that encourages disobedience to Christ; promotion of lawless behavior on the streets and in suits (= sheep’s clothing); ecumenical religious movements; the requirement of law-keeping for salvation or sanctification; teaching that hate speech is violence, including calling males and females what God created them to be.
- F. Sources of false teaching: major media (news, entertainment); political talking heads; acquaintances; social media.

III. Two Ways to Try to Get into the Kingdom: Real vs.

Pretend, v. 21-23

A. Some will say, “Lord, Lord...have we not prophesied...cast out demons.....done many wonders...?” Many people will rely upon their religious works, even those done in association with the name of Jesus. “Didn’t we prophesy, cast out demons, or do wonders in your name?” They *did* something and used the name of Jesus, but it was not the works of Christ that they did. Doing those religious works attached to Jesus’s name was bad enough as they wowed the crowds with their “power evangelism.” But they also practiced evil on the side, out of view of everyone else. And this is the key thing to notice: they did some seemingly very wonderful things, but the Lord knows who really belongs to Him, and these ones were also “practicing lawlessness.”

Today, BOTH of these things are a problem—the miracles and the lawlessness. First, on doing miraculous religious works, consider the following.

B. Application to the charismatic chaos: There is a kind of prophecy that is not predictive, but proclamatory. I doubt that these “Lord, Lord” people are thinking of that kind of prophecy—and certainly people today do not so limit themselves.

These people will say that they are prophets—but there are no prophets after the first century throughout the church age. They will say they had cast out demons in the name of Christ—but there is no instruction on that activity in the New Testament, nor proof that there are people who are gifted to do that today. They will claim that they have done many wonders in the name of Christ—but miracles are not done today by any person. Perhaps they suppose by the quantity of so-called wonders they will be vindicated.

See 1 Cor. 13:8 and Eph. 2:20 are about the cessation of these sort of gifts and the foundation of the church.

This undercuts the entire charismatic/Pentecostal agenda where prophecies, exorcisms, and signs and wonders are all the rage. The

focus in that movement is on all those supposed activities rather than upon Christ. In all this religious work, the name of Christ is appended to the activity, but it is not Christ who is doing the work through them. It can't be, because there is no actual thing done. It is all fakery. Perhaps even some is demonic. But the point is this: those works are not good works because they are (a) not real and (b) disqualified in the first place because the people profess to know God, but in works they deny Him.

- C. Not only are the fake religious works a big problem, but practicing lawlessness is also a huge problem. People who claim to be Christians and yet support abortion and are dishonest and deceptive and hide all kinds of other rot in their lives are going to be called out before Christ for what they are. There is no faking Him out.
- D. So not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord..." will enter the kingdom of heaven. But *some* will! Jesus said, "Not everyone," but He did not say, "No one!" The "some" that are not in the "not everyone" category consists of those who are truly Christ-followers, who repent of sins, who turn to Him by faith, and who thus do the will of the Father in heaven. John 6:29 says that this is the work of God, to believe on the One Whom He sent.

Christians are those who call Jesus *Lord* because that title perfectly represents what He is and our relationship to Him. Lord is not merely a *word* that we use; it expresses a *truth* about Christ and a truth about us. The truth about Christ is that He is truly LORD. The truth about us is that we are His servants. We are His subjects. We believe in His Lordship. "Lordship" cannot be removed from salvation as if it is optional. It IS salvation.

The truth about these people is that Jesus *does* know them in a relational way! They know Him enough to call Him Lord, and He knows them so that He will not cast them out into outer darkness.

Those who do the will of God are those who practice holiness and give evidence of true saving faith. These ones who do the things Jesus outlined in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount make it plain that they are true believers in God. The fruit of real life is showing through. Their repentance is obvious. Faith is obvious.

Please pray that God will prevent you from “pretending” while not “being real.” Those who truly believe desire to offer such a prayer and obey God, and God will see to it that they are able to accomplish good works for Him.

E. At the last day, the day of judgment, Jesus will command those who practice lawlessness to get away from Him. Those who do not obey the commands of Jesus in this sermon, or elsewhere in the New Testament and rest of the Scriptures, are not fit to be in His presence. They will be deposited in the Lake of Fire prepared for the Devil and his angels (Matt 25:41). The faithful will be welcomed into the kingdom prepared for them since the creation of the world (Matt 25:34).

F. 2 Timothy 2:19 says that the Lord knows those who are His. But in Matthew 7:23, the Lord will say to those people, “I never knew you.” These are ones whom He does not *know*. Of course, He knows *of* them, but He does not have the knowing of a personal relationship with them.

Remember Peter who denied that He knew the Lord (Matt. 26:74)? There is no way Peter wanted Jesus to return the same back to him! Jesus *did* know Peter. Jesus prayed for Peter. That is why Peter came back around.

G. Those who come to Christ in humble repentance will never be told to depart (John 6:37)!

IV. Two Ways to Live: Hearing & Doing God’s Word vs.

Hearing & Not Doing God’s Word, v. 24-27

A. Hearing and Doing, v. 24-25. This is a very well-known passage of the Bible. The common interpretation is that if you build your life on obedience to the Lord Jesus, then your life (“this life”) will be good and safe and it will not be destroyed. But the focus of this portion as well as the earlier sections is on the final judgment of one’s life. The rain and wind represent the judgment of God. When your life is built upon Christ, then it will withstand divine judgment without a problem, just like a solidly built house will withstand the rigors of the weather. The survival of the house is a picture of

eternal life. Of course you will weather the storms of life better as well, but sooner or later one of those will come along and take your life away through some illness or accident or other tragedy. But your soul will still be standing strong on Christ.

- B. Hearing but **not** Doing, v. 26-27. On the other hand, people have been told a storm is coming, or they know it intuitively because they know God and that He is eternally powerful. Such are without excuse. But when the rain, flood, and wind—again representing the ultimate judgment of God—comes upon them, their house will fall. Only wreckage will remain. This is a picture of divine judgment that results in eternal condemnation.
- C. Note a couple of factors: First, Jesus demands that we hear HIS words (v. 24, 26). It is not generic words of God or what you feel the Spirit leading you to do: it is the words of Jesus. Second, both kinds of people hear his words.¹ It is almost like you have hearers who have some surface connection to Jesus, and you have hearers who have a living connection to Jesus. Because of some doctrine I have been thinking about lately, this reminds me of the view that some hold wherein there are some people who believe but are not disciples, and then there are some people who believe *and* are disciples. The dichotomy is wrong doctrine, but it is held by some because it offers an explanation the mass of people who do not actually follow the Lord while still claiming to believe. Jesus warns that such people will end up in total ruin.
- D. The Lord calls us to hear and DO. Hearing and not doing the things of Christ puts you into an entirely different category. If you think you are fine because you “hear” the things of Christ, then you are truly deceived. You are no more fine than the demons, who also hear/heard the things of Christ, but do nothing about them. Even “believing” the facts of what you hear is all fine and well, but it counts for nothing. True belief is a commitment of not only intellect, but will and affections, to the Lord Jesus Christ. Mere intellectual belief in what you have heard is nothing. Get it out of your head that such a thing is Christian belief, for in fact it is NOT. It is foolish.

¹ These observations came from France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 296.

The same kind of judgment is given to the house on the rock as to the house on the sand. God shows no partiality toward man. Either you have the solidly built house of faith in Christ, or you have the flimsy house of human works and beliefs. The same standard is applied to all houses. But only those in the first category will be saved from destruction because of their construction.

E. Jesus says “everyone” who hears and does not do” is foolish and will suffer a great fall. But “everyone” who hears and obeys is wise and will live. It is your choice: hear and do, or just hear—or even refuse to hear! Which will it be?

For more on truly doing the will of God, see James 1:22-27 and Revelation 1:3, 22:7, and Luke 11:28.

Conclusion, v. 28-29

Jesus taught things directly. He did not mince words, use evasive language, or speak uncertainly or in generalities. He spoke clearly and specifically. He cut to the heart of the matter, not beating around the bush, or stopping short of what is truly needed.

Consequently, the people were amazed. “Just who is this guy?!” He demanded people follow HIS words, not the Pharisee’s words. The audience was not left in the dark. They were unable to “spin” His words in a self-favoring, “do-nothing” sense. They were forced to deal with this. It was clear, unlike the teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes before Jesus came onto the scene.

Their teaching was likely of the sort that we see today: easy-believism, so-and-so says this or book such-and-such says that, or “hath God said?” which attacks the Word of God by questioning it and creating doubt.

There are still people out there who, though inoculated against such authoritative teaching, can still experience a breakthrough case of the gospel and be saved. Millions of souls need direct, soul-saving teaching of God’s word. They are not getting it in the world with all its mish-mash. Fluff teaching kills, my friends, because it lets people live in their own little world and foggy brain. Soon it will be too late. Direct teaching wakes up a soul and could well save it. This we know for sure—if someone does *not* respond to Christ,

they *will definitely not* be saved. And if they are not presented clearly with the truth, *how* can they respond?

Christian faith is life transforming. It is live saving. It is life-preserving. It is the only safe option in the coming deluge of judgment *and* the storms of life. You must be settled on the Rock of your salvation, Jesus Christ, else you will be crushed by the fall of your house onto your head.

There are only two ways to go: narrow gate or broad gate, difficult way or easy way, good fruit or bad fruit, true relationship or pretend, solid foundation or sandy foundation, obedience to God's word or disobedience. *You* must make a choice. *You must* make a choice. Choose life. Choose today whom you will serve.

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