

CHAPTER SEVEN

SERMON ON THE MOUNT PART 3

Concerning judging others

Matt. 7:2; for in the way you judge, you will be judged.

Up to this point we can see that Jesus has the desire to change people's hearts, that is, He wanted to change who they were as a person from the inside out. He was not so much concerned about their works, because He knew that if the disciples would have a change in heart a change in their attitude toward their works would follow. So He taught them how to pray, how to have new attitudes of trust in God for all of life's needs and now He wants them and us to examine their attitudes. ***Matt. 7:1-5; Do not judge lest you be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, let me take the speck out of your eye, and behold the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.*** These words can be very confrontational, first to His listeners of Jesus' day and to us who are hearing it today also. But when Jesus confronts us with a truth He never does it in a harsh or parental finger shaking, pointing gesture. The nature of truth is that, indeed, sometimes it is confrontational just by its nature. If we, in our hearts, hear these words with harshness or anger, it is an attitude that we *have supplied* to the text and we should not apply it to Jesus' character. It is in our human nature to close our ears when we hear a truth presented in an accusing or parental way. This way of teaching would not accomplish anything for Jesus or for us for that matter. Jesus is always very gentle and understanding in His teaching. He was probably the Genesis of the saying to "teach it the way that you want to hear it." So let's magnify verses 1-5 to try to get a more concise understanding of the attitude He used in this teaching and possibly a better understanding of the words that He used, by searching out the full Greek meaning in a deeper translation of His words: *Do not form or express an unfavorable opinion, after separating and considering the particulars about any person, that is, your fellow man, so that you will not be having unfavorable opinions formed in decisions about you. Because according to the state, condition, or manner in which you act on these opinions is the means by which you are acted upon while you form unfavorable opinions about a person; and also, the state, condition, or manner which is your measure of determining your conduct toward this person is the same measure that will be acted upon toward you. And in addition consider for what cause you discern that your fellow man has a figurative little splinter of wood that dims the light in your fellow man's eye of the body, but, at the same time do not consider the figurative rafter that is blinding the light to the eye of your own body? Or, how, I wonder, will you declare to your fellow*

man, "Let me take the figurative little splinter of wood that dims the light in the eye of your body, when lo and behold there is a figurative rafter blinding the eye of light to your own body?" If you conduct yourself in this way you are, then, a pretentious counterfeit of a man; if you do not want to be considered a hypocrite you must first then extract the figurative rafter that is blinding the light of the eye to the body out of your own eye, and then you will see fully by what means to extract the figurative splinter of wood that in his fellow man's eye dimming the light to his body. The point of this verse is that to point out faults or weaknesses in another person while maintaining that you have no faults of your own is the epitome of hypocrisy. Or, to only consider a person's worth by the magnitude of his faults, as you consider a fault, is equally a hypocritical position. Whenever we evaluate a person it should be on their potential to be redeemed. So, how do we evaluate a person's potential to be redeemed? We must assume that everyone and anyone has the potential to be forgiven of their sin because God shows no partiality when a person requests forgiveness; therefore, we all have the potential to be redeemed.

Now, if we are going to consider a person for a leadership role in the church, we then must use some discernment. We don't just let anyone, who has a desire to lead, to just automatically take such a position without checking his credentials or making sure that he has been properly disciplined. Timothy and Titus have given us guide lines for such discernment. What Jesus is talking about is a person, for example, that wants to make his own self look good by pointing out faults in others, or he is the kind of person that is using the perceived righteousness of one person, by what he can see in their works, to measure his own righteousness

This section on judging immediately follows our Lord's provocative teaching concerning earthly riches. The connection between these two themes is important. It is an easy temptation for the Christian who has forsaken all his earthly possessions to criticize wealthy Christians. Conversely, Christians who take seriously their duty to provide for the future needs of their families, have a tendency to downplay the literalness that some place on Jesus' teaching in the past chapter. Since no one completely lives by faith, such criticism is out of order.

This command not to judge others includes the following areas: we should not judge motives; only God can read them, nor should we judge a person by their appearance either, ***John 7:24; do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment. James 2:1-4; My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly (or, synagogue), with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,"***

have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives, (or, reasonings)? It is interesting to me that in our society if we are of a lower income we have a temptation to judge those that wear fine clothes by saying that they probably did not work for their money; but rather it was inherited by them or they somehow unscrupulously attained their income. And if we are of a higher income and we see people dressed in well worn clothes we make the judgment that they are lazy and would rather live off of the government than work for what they possess. Both of these judgments can be entirely wrong, especially if we associate a person's faith with their income.

We should not judge those who have conscientious scruples about matters that are not in themselves right or wrong, ***Rom. 14:1-5, Now accept the one who is weak in faith, but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables only. Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master, (or, literally "lord"), he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man regards, (or, judges), one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind.*** We all have our own reasons for doing the things that we do in the way that we do them, just because it is not the way you would accomplish something does not make give us the right to judge it as wrong, it only makes it different.

We should not judge the service of another Christian, ***1 Cor. 4:1-5; Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me it is a small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court, in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore, do not go passing judgment, (or, judging anything), before the time, (or, the appointed time of judgment), but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.***

And we should not judge a fellow believer by speaking evil about him, ***James 4:11, 12; Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother, or judges his brother, speaks against the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law, but a judge of it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and destroy; but who are you to judge your neighbor?*** We all are a part of God's creation and even more than that we all have been created in His image. With this kind of attitude toward our fellow Christian, or anyone for that matter, it is obvious why we should not destructively criticize anyone, which amounts to criticizing God's handiwork. The proper attitude to take is to see

their potential for redemption and to remember that where they are in their spiritual walk may be from whence we came.

Sometimes these words of our Lord are misconstrued by people to prohibit all forms of judgment. This may partly be due to the English language and the way that we have *chosen* to interpret the Greek. There are places in Scripture where the word “judge” would be better interpreted as “discern.” We as Christian believers are called upon to be discerning, that is, get as many facts as we can in order to make a good decision, whereas judging in some verses would be better translated as condemning; which none of us are called upon to do. So the context of the verse is very important when we see any form of the word “judge.” We should then study at least the word and how it is being used in context with what is written before and after the verse.

Jesus is not teaching us that we should not be undiscerning Christians. He never intended that we abandon our critical faculty or discernment. The NT has many illustrations of legitimate discerning of the condition, conduct, or teaching of others. In addition, there are several areas in which the Christian is commanded to make a decision, to discriminate between good and bad or between good and best. Some of these include:

1. When disputes arise between believers, they should be settled in the church before members who can decide the matter instead of taking the matter to a worldly court. ***1 Cor. 6:1-8; Does anyone of you, when he has a case, (or, matter), against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts, (or, try the trivial cases)? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life? If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges, who are of no account in the church? I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? Actually, then, it is already defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that your brethren.*** Rather than to let a worldly court decide a brother’s fate, why not just trust God that He will do the appropriate thing, both in bringing justice to you and to the other brother. It doesn’t make sense for us who are going to eventually judge the world to let the world first judge us!
2. The local church is to judge serious sins of its members and take appropriate action, ***Matt. 18:17; And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he***

refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 1 Cor. 5:9-13; I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. But actually I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? But those who are outside, God judges, (or, will judge). Remove the wicked man from among yourselves. We, as believers, should not have any involvement or concern in judging those outside the church, that is, those who are not Christians. That would certainly be a waste of time because we should not think that they will accommodate us as having Christian values and attitudes toward anything. But, we do have a responsibility to care after those who claim to be a believer but their conduct is a contrast to and doesn't match their words.

3. Believers are to judge the doctrinal teaching of teachers and preachers by the word of God, **1 Cor. 14:29; And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 1 John 4:1; Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.** We should not rely on the words of another solely. We and we alone, are responsible for receiving the truth and the discernment of the truth from hypocrisy.
4. Christians have to discern if others are believers in order to obey Paul's command; **2 Cor. 6:14; Do not be bound together, (or, unequally yoked), with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?** This admonition applies to more than marriage; it should apply to every aspect of our life.
5. Those in the church must judge which men have the qualifications necessary for elders and deacons, **1 Tim. 3:1-13; It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, (or, bishop), it is a fine work he desires to do. The bishop, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, (or, quarrelsome), but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil, (or, of the devil). And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. Deacons likewise must be men of**

dignity, not doubled-tongued, (or, given to double talk), or addicted to much wine, not fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women, (or, either deaconesses or deacon's wives), must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

If we are not able to manage a small (by comparison) family by blood, how are we going to manage a church family that is much larger?

6. We have to discern which people are unruly, fainthearted, weak, etc., and treat them according to the instructions in the Bible, for example, ***1 Thess. 5:14; And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, (or, undisciplined), encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men.*** Very simply put, we must be Christ-like, that is, take on His character and attributes when dealing with every sort of people.

The notice and awareness of judgment is struck clearly and strongly in the very first words of this new paragraph and thus marks a new point of Jesus' sermon. The very fact of having a righteousness that is far better than that of the scribes and Pharisees might lead the disciples into the vicious fault of the scribes and Pharisees who set themselves up as judges over all others, glorified in their own false holiness and despised by others. This same caution can be applied to those who are chosen as elders and deacons of the church today also. It is true that these chosen individuals should display some spiritual maturity, but we must always remember that we are still just sinners like everyone else, subject to the same Judge as everyone else. What Jesus forbids is the self-righteous, hypocritical judging which is false and calls down God's judgment on itself. Here we are reminded of the teaching that Jesus gave to us as recorded in ***Luke 6:37; and do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon and you will be pardoned.*** The Pharisees acquitted each other and condemned the rest; they were wrong in both verdicts.

This judging that we are being taught not to do is to be understood as the use of rash judgment, interpreting men's words and deeds in the worse sense, and expressing our disapproval toward them in a very severe manner; even passing sentence on them with respect to their eternal state and condition. It would be well if a person that had a disapproving heart would put themselves in the case and circumstances of the person that they feel compelled to judge. And then consider what judgment they would choose to have others pass on them!

Jesus warned His disciples and so warns us that unrighteous judgment would be repaid in kind. This principle of reaping what we sow is built into all human life and affairs. The Apostle Mark applies it to the principle in his Gospel referring to the appropriation of the Word, **Mark 4:24; And He was saying to them, take care what you listen to. By your standard of measure it shall be measured to you; and more shall be given you besides.** And Luke applies it to our liberality in giving, **Luke 6:38; Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.**

Jesus substantiates His command by establishing its fairness and its justice. God would be unjust if He judged these false judges in any other way, **Luke 19:22; He said to him, by your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow?** The justice of God's application of the false standard of these judges to themselves is made clearer by the parallel statement regarding the measure with which they measure. That very measure shows their falseness; hence by that very measure God justly condemns them as being false.

The Jews had several sayings that were likened to this verse; "when you see a man to judge as to his being righteous or unrighteous, inclining to neither part, nor is it not clear from what he does, judge it as righteous. That is, his intentions are not good nor evil, righteous or unrighteous. Yet when you see him do a thing which may be interpreted either to a good or a bad sense, it ought to always be interpreted to the best." This was the usual proverb among the Jews.

In their examples of a person being judged by God they gave these instances of "with what measure a man measures, they measure to him;" when the woman was suspected of adultery, she adorned herself to commit sin and God dishonored her. She exposed herself to iniquity, God therefore stripped her naked. The same part of her body in which her sin began her punishment did also. Sampson walked after his eyes, and therefore the Philistines plucked out his eyes. Absalom was lifted up in his mind, with his hair, and he was therefore hanged by it. Because he lay with his father's ten concubines, they therefore pierced him with ten lances. And because he stole away three hearts, the heart of his father, the heart of the Sanhedrin, and the heart of Israel, he was thrust with three darts.

But as it goes with condemning judging so it also goes with respect to the good things; Miriam waited for Moses for an hour, therefore the Israelites waited for her seven days in the wilderness. Joseph, who was greater than his brothers, buried his father. And Moses, who was the greatest among the Israelites, took care of the bones of Joseph and God Himself buried Moses.

Jesus exposed our tendency to see a small fault in someone else while ignoring the same fault in ourselves. He purposely exaggerates the situation (using hyperbole) to drive home the point. Someone with a plank in his eye often finds fault with the speck in the eye of another, not even noticing his own condition. It is hypocritical to suppose that we could help someone with a fault when we ourselves have a greater fault. We must remedy our own faults before criticizing them in others.

The splinter mentioned in this verse is thought to be a small moral fault, and the beam a fault correspondingly greater. Of course faults, from our point of view are very subjective. But why are the splinter and the beam placed in the eyes? Why not other parts of the body? Jesus is not speaking of faults or sins in general, one being tiny, the other immense, but of moral perception which is slightly wrong in the one man's mind and totally wrong in the other. The one who is devoid of all truly moral judgment pretends to aid another who is slightly wrong in his judgment. The very idea is a farce—yet men do act this way.

To compare the sin of one person as one being greater than another is always a dangerous thing to do, as far as our pride is concerned. God is repulsed by all sin no matter what degree we as humans in our society or culture put on the sin. But Jesus is not justifying small sins as being not as bad as great sins; He merely desires for us to take caution before we criticize someone for their sin. It is very possible that the sin that bothers us so much in another person is merely a reflection of our own sin. The smaller speck that Jesus is pointing out could be compared to that little bit of straw, or small splinter of wood that flies into the eye. It does its damage by hindering the sight and giving pain. In a spiritual sense this could be things in our life that are of the world but we are reluctant to let go of completely and we are slightly blinded by our desire to possess it. These that He is describing could be compared to youthful follies, human frailties, and infirmities, inadvertencies and imprudence; these could be said to be light faults, though not vindicated, not to be continued in, yet also not to be severely looked upon and chastised for, they just require a little bit more work of submission on our part. To scrutinize, dwell upon, and reprove these faults would be a conduct that is objected to and condemned by Jesus.

The beam that Jesus refers to could be the things that the "Pharisees" lifestyle was more familiar with, such as; pride, arrogance, a vain opinion of themselves, confidence in their own righteousness, hypocrisy, and covetousness. These are the things that the Pharisees never considered about themselves when they protested against lesser evils in others. These "beams" block our spiritual sight by only have one-way vision. They believe that their social status or status in the synagogue gives them the right to excuse their wrongs while insisting that there is no excuse in others who are of a lesser degree socially and dare not speak against their accusers.

The pretense that the scribes and Pharisees, although not limited to this group, was that somehow they could provide spiritual aid to a person that was suffering from a little inconvenience of the eye while they themselves were completely blinded in the eye. This eye is the same eye that Jesus referred to as being the “eye of the body,” which could also be referred to as our sense of moral righteousness or our “moral compass.”

The Lord calls “a spade a spade,” in verse 5, calling all who point out the splinter in their brother’s eye before examining their own eye, hypocrites! This may seem harsh to some, but I don’t believe that the Lord meant to be offensive by calling such men hypocrites. He was merely pointing out a truth about a person that they may have been reluctant to see of themselves by this description. Sometimes it takes the harsh reality to get us to see the truth. In our words today we would say that “if you’re going to talk the talk then you have to first walk the walk.” The thought is not that one should first correct his own grave faults before he tries to correct his brother’s minor faults, but that one should clear his own eyes of judgment before he tries to lend aid to another in making a correction in his judgment. The scribes and Pharisees were eye doctors who had beams in their own eyes of which they were not aware or were in denial. The point that Jesus is making is that His disciples are not to trust in their own righteousness and thereby make a beam of it for their eye and then judge others in blind folly.

So very rightly does our Lord call such a man a hypocrite; one that seems very free to remark and reprove another man’s sin, while covering his own similar sin. Indeed one end of his critical observations, rigid objections, and rash judgments is so that he will be thought of as being holier than the other person. It’s very obvious that our Lord is pointing to the scribes and Pharisees who were men that conducted themselves in this way, and of whom He often referred to in this way, but His warning goes out to everyone. Our Lord was teaching to the disciples, when He says that their righteousness must exceed these men; a man should first begin with himself, take notice of his own sins, reprove his own self of them, and then reform from them. Then will he, and not before, be a proper person to reprove others.

The language of the Jewish nation has such expressions as verse 5, that are very common and long standing. In the generation that judged the judges one said to another, “cast out the splinter out of thine eye,” which comes the response, “cast out the beam from thine eye. Also, “thy silver has become dross,” which came the response, “your wine is mixed with water!” These phrases were used just as Christ used the phrases of these verses. Some other proverbs that were similar that were used by the Jews; “a vice which is in thyself, do not speak of to thy neighbor,” (or, tongue lash him with it). And again, “adorn thyself, and afterwards adorn others.” They also had these remarks as a part of their culture, “inquire first into your own blemishes, and then inquire into the blemishes of others.” The sense of all of these is that

a man should reform himself first then attempt to counsel others. He that finds fault with others should be blameless himself.

Using discernment and discretion

Matt. 7:6... do not give what is holy to dogs

Jesus wanted His disciple's to be able to discern what was morally wholesome for them and what was not; ***Matt. 7:6; Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.*** Unfortunately this verse has been used as an excuse for us to not even try to evangelize some people as we make judgments about their moral character. Is that what Jesus is teaching us in this verse? Let's break it down and see what we can learn from it: *Do not continually commit to giving power or possession of anything that is set apart from a common use to a sacred use, to those who will spurn and pervert it, as the Sodomites would do, that is, those who are wickedly immoral in every way. And also, do not cast what is precious to you, such as Biblical doctrine, the gospel, and the like, before swine, that is person's who will only use your teachings for the punch line of blasphemous jokes, because at some time or other they will tread them underfoot by not giving it any value whatsoever, and they will eventually turn about towards you and tear into you with hurtful lacerations, either physically or verbally, just as a stray pack dog would do.* Verse 6 proves that although Jesus taught against condemning judgment He did not invalidate our discerning mind. He warned His disciples not to give things that are considered holy to dogs, a slang word that was commonly used for the morally decrepit, which had an even stronger meaning then than it does now! Or, to not cast your pearls before swine. Under Mosaic Law dogs and swine were unclean animals and here the terms are used to depict wicked people. When we meet vicious people who treat divine truths with utter contempt and respond to our preaching of the claims of Christ with abuse and violence, we are not obligated to continue to share the gospel with them, unless we are prompted to by the Holy Spirit, perhaps at a later date. To press the matter only brings increased condemnation to offenders.

Needless to say, it requires spiritual perception to discern these people. Perhaps that is why the next verse takes up the subject of prayer once again, by which we can ask for wisdom.

As we go on deeper into Jesus' sermon it may seem like Jesus is just throwing out a bunch of eclectic new thoughts as they spontaneously come to Him that aren't really connected to the first 2/3's of His sermon. But, as we keep the whole of the sermon in mind, and look at the whole sermon as being one instead of bits of many little sermons it becomes obvious that every statement is connected to the previous one. After giving us the teaching of

wrongful use of judging He is now telling us how to use our gift of discernment, which, if left unsaid, would truly be a disconnection.

To the Jews dogs and hogs represent the height of uncleanness. In the Orient the dogs acted as scavengers, and no Jew was allowed to possess swine. The parallelism of the statement that refers to certain men as dogs and hogs shows that only one type of man is being referred to and not two. These cannot be the Gentiles as such, although the Jews did call them dogs. Nor can this giving to dogs refer to the preaching of the gospel to the Gentiles or to publicans and sinners; for Jesus Himself did this and commands His disciples to do it also. Dogs and swine are those who, after the gospel has been duly preached to them, retain their vicious, filthy nature and have no desire or see no need to have a change of heart.

The “holy things” and “your pearls” are also identical, being first viewed as a unit and then made up of different parts. Jesus has in mind the holy truth of the gospel and the pure and precious doctrines of which this gospel is composed. “To give” and to “throw before” means to expose the gospel and its precious truths to the vicious and vile treatment of such men. The “treading under foot” clause refers only to the action of the swine which would trample the pure and precious pearls in the mud and then in rage might even turn upon the disciples to tear them to bits, either physically or verbally, for offering nothing that suits their swinish taste. Examples of persons such as these are preached throughout the Bible, here is but a sampling: ***Acts 13:45, 46; But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming, (or, reviling). And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, “it was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.” Rom. 16:17, 18; Now I urge you brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances, (or, occasions for stumbling), contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Jesus Christ but of their own appetites, (or, belly); and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. Phil. 3:18, 19; For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.***

This verse to me personally relieves me of a troubling mind when I try to teach or speak of things concerning the gospel and either they don’t get it or they don’t want it. It would be just like me to blame their rejection on my presentation of the gospel, as if this presentation was done in my power only. There are some people who just don’t want to hear the gospel for whatever reason and we should not blame ourselves for their self-condemning attitudes. It is important that we get Godly wisdom before we try to give instruction in the ways of our Lord,

but we shouldn't mistake that as being a guarantee that everyone we talk to is going to agree with us and be saved. Satan would love nothing more than to put me into a self-condemning frame of mind in order to stop my efforts at evangelism.

Dogs were considered as unclean creatures by the Jewish law. The price of one would not be permitted to be brought into the house of the Lord for a vow, such a sheep, or a dove would. The dogs were not even admitted into several temples of the heathens either. Things that were profaned and determined to be unclean, such as flesh that had been torn by beasts, were ordered to be given to the dogs. But nothing that was holy was to be given to them, such as meat used in sacrifices, or drink, or anything else that was consecrated to holy use, which is what Jesus is alluding to in this verse as an analogy.

It was a common saying among the Jews that "they do not redeem holy things to give to the dogs." Here the phrase is used in a metaphorical sense and is generally to be understood of not delivering or communicating the holy word of God, and the truths of the gospel, which were compared to valuable pearls, to persons that were notoriously vile and sinful. These men, who were violent and furious persecutors, impudent blasphemers, are compared to dogs. Likewise these men, who were scandalously vile, led impure lives in their living style and conversations, were compared to swine, both terms having the same meaning. The Jews had a similar saying as the one used by Jesus in His teaching "do not deliver wisdom to him who knows not the excellency of it; for wisdom is better than pearls, and he that does not seek after it, is worse than a swine."

Encouragement to pray

Matt. 7:7... ask and it shall be given to you

Verse 7 of Jesus' sermon wants to assure us that God the Father is available to us and through Christ. He knows that this new lifestyle that He is teaching to His disciples is not an easy transition to make. It calls for change of heart, that is, we must establish new values and attitudes in life. On our own this is an impossible task. Each one of us probably knows first-hand how far we get if we try to do something in our own strength. It usually ends up in disappointment, heart-ache, frustration, and our good intentions go on being misunderstood. Jesus knows this about us and our Heavenly Father knows it too and He has made Himself available to us to help us accomplish this regeneration of our heart. Here also in the 12th verse we get introduced to the "golden rule of life." ***Matt. 7:7-12; Ask, (or, keep asking), and it shall be given to you; seek, (or, keep on seeking), and you shall find, knock, (or, keep knocking), and it shall be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it, shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, when, (or whom), his son asks him for a loaf, will give him a stone, (or, he will not give him a stone will he?). Or, if,***

(or, also), he shall ask for a fish, he will not give him snake will he? If you then, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him? Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat, (or, you too do so for), them, for this is the Law of the Prophets. If we think that we can live out the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount by our own strength, we have failed to realize the supernatural character of the life to which the Savior calls us. The wisdom or power that is necessary for such a life must be given to us from above. So here we have an invitation to ask and to keep on asking for what we need to carry out this life; to seek and to keep on seeking; to knock and to keep on knocking. Wisdom and power for the Christian life will be given to all who earnestly and persistently pray for it, so let's amplify this verse to get the full meaning: *As a brother in Christ that is lower in stature than God he should be prepared to make any request and keep requesting until it shall be given to him according to his need and with good will; strive to find and keep on striving and you shall find; rap at the door for entrance and it shall be opened again and again. Because all brothers in Christ who make a request and keep requesting receive what is given, and he who strives to find and keeps on striving finds; and to him who raps at the door for entry and keeps on rapping it shall be opened to him. Or, if what I have told you is too great of a statement for you to handle right now, what man is there of you, who when his son shall request of him a piece of bread, will give to him a stone. Or also, whosoever, if his son shall beg for a fish, would put a serpent in his hands? Since you, being of the sort of character that is evil that corrupts others, are able to give of your own accord and good will beneficial gifts of good character to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give of His own accord and free will that which is the gift of son-ship to those who request it of Him! Accordingly, in whatever manner you want men to do for you, do for them, because this is the divine teaching of the prophets.*

There is a danger here, and I have experienced hearing it from persons who have entitled themselves as Christian, to take this verse 7 and 8 out of context and make these verses out to be a blank check, that is, that we can get anything that we ask for, even our worldly desires. But this is simply not true. Our Father would never give us anything that He knows is not good for us, even if we don't intend our request in that way. The verse must be understood in its immediate context and in the light of the whole Bible's teaching on prayer. Therefore, it seems like unqualified promises here are actually restricted by other passages. For example, from ***Ps. 66:18; If I regard, (or, had regarded), wickedness in my heart, the Lord will not, (or, would not), hear, (or, have heard),*** we learn that the person praying must have no unconfessed sin in his life. Unconfessed sin is a sign of continued rebellion to God. A believer must always pray in faith, ***James 1:6-8; But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not the man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways,*** and he must pray in conformity with the will of God, ***1 John 5:14; And this is the***

confidence which we have before Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. Prayer must be offered persistently, **Luke 18:1-8; Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, there was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, Give me legal protection, (or, do me justice), from my opponent. And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, (or, do her justice), lest by continually coming she wear me out. And the Lord said, hear what the unrighteous judge said; now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and He will delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?** and he must pray sincerely, **Heb.10:22; let us draw near with a sincere, (or, true), heart in full assurance of faith.** Our prayers are not mechanical. The Lord does not want to hear mechanical prayers anymore than we want to hear mechanical requests of us. Do these things that we have learned for appropriate prayer, they should be done in faith, sincerity, persistently, conforming to God's will, and from a clean heart that has no unconfessed sin.

In order to keep this verse in its proper context we must remember that these verses are connected with verses 1-5, where in lies the teaching for us not to judge others; Jesus bids us to judge ourselves. While we must, indeed, realize that we are evil because of our sinful nature, God has, nevertheless, made us His children and by His grace He is ready to bestow upon us all that we need. Such is His judgment of us now, and such it ever will be, whether it is provision to survive this physical life or the provision for our service to Him. He tells us to go on again and again asking, seeking, and knocking. The use of these three verbs indicates intensity; and to seek is more fervent than just to ask, and to knock is still more fervent. We ask for what we need; we seek what we earnestly desire; we knock when our desire becomes importunity or to a point of begging. Each of these injunctions carries with it a direct and an unequivocal promise which shows how God regards us. Faulty though we are, He is eager to bestow His good gifts upon us, as He mentions in verse 11 and we should not forget this when we are judging ourselves.

The verb "ask" is used with reference to humble asking, with reference to petition on the part of an inferior when speaking to a superior, and is thus used only with reference to us and never with reference to Christ. When Jesus promises that He will give us what we ask for this always implies His grace is involved. "To seek," means to seek from God, and "you shall find" means that you shall never ask in vain but shall obtain the good gift that you desire. "To knock" means to seek entrance into His heavenly kingdom and Jesus assures us of admittance.

This verse, we should be safe in assuming, is aimed at appropriate ways and means to ask God for our needs, whether those needs are of temporal nature, such as food or clothing or a spiritual nature. We must keep in mind what we learned from the last chapter though, that is, we need to ask in moderation and without being anxious. In the spiritual realm it is appropriate to ask for grace and wisdom, for example, to conduct ourselves in an appropriate manner, that which is approved by God, towards God as well as toward men. We must ask according to the will of God as we truly understand His will. He will, of course, not answer our request for things that will harm us, either physically or spiritually, even if at the time we truly do not see any harm in our requests. We need to ask in the name of Christ, that is, in the righteousness that we have obtained through Christ as rightful heirs to everything that Christ has possession. They should be asked with the same appropriateness as if Christ Himself was making the request. These requests should also be made under the guidance, direction, and influence of the Holy Spirit. However if we should make our requests known to Him with a spirit of doubt, we shouldn't expect to receive anything from Him, so those who are requesting in faith and reverence with submission to His divine will shall have what they ask for, not because they deserve it, but as a free gift from God and His benevolence. So we need to seek God in prayer, in the name of Christ and with our whole heart, mind, and soul. Faith is the key that opens the door and this is by the design of our Lord so that He has the opportunity to respond and express His nature and favor toward us, those whom He loves, and to remind us of the appropriateness of the constancy of prayer, which will encourage us to keep Him foremost in our mind and heart.

It is important to point out that in verse 8 Jesus teaches us that “everyone” who follows His instruction will receive what he is asking for; this is a strong incentive to pray, but the point that Jesus is making is pointing out the necessity of appropriate prayer. He makes no exceptions, if you do this, you will receive this. This not only points to His ability to supply our needs in spite of the obstacles that the world presents to us, but also the importance of having a relationship with Him built on faith, trust, and reliance on Him for everything. He that seeks for God in Christ, the grace and mercy of God, the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, His grace and glory shall be sure to find them. ***Proverbs 21:21; He who pursues righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness and honor.***

When the conditions for prayer are met, the Christian can have utter confidence that God will hear and answer. This assurance is based on the character of God, our Father. On a human level we know that if a son asks for bread, his loving father will not give him a stone. Neither would he give him a serpent if he had asked for a fish. An earthly father would neither deceive his hungry son nor give him anything that might inflict pain. If we, whose motives are tainted with sin, on a human level will do these favors, how much more will Christ, who does not have any sin to taint His motives, do for us?

When we read verse 9 in its true Greek context we see Jesus starts out verse 9 by saying “or” which can be amplified to “or, if what I have told you seems too much for you to handle right now.” The true translation of the Greek word of what the son asks for should not be “loaf,” but “bread,” which seems to make more sense when you think about how the bread was baked. It was made into flat cakes, a piece of which could well resemble a stone. This helps us to understand why Jesus chose to compare bread with a stone. Both bread and fish was a common staple for the people who lived in this region where Jesus called His disciples to follow Him. Every man that has a son, and has his right mind, would not do such a thing.

Verse 10 has the second ‘or” which merely repeats the first “or.” It indicates that the son may ask for something to eat with the bread, which in the neighborhood of the Sea of Galilee would most likely be a fish. A snake may resemble a fish, but it is unfit to eat. Some commentators have added in the idea that the snake was harmful to the boy, but that is not implied in the text. It makes sense that the snake would not be alive because if it were it would have struck the father’s hand first, even before it struck the son. The point of this double illustration is the deception practiced by the father, reducing his fatherhood and thus the sonship of his child to an illusion. God, as our Heavenly Father will never deceive his children, the nature and character of God prohibits such conduct. His very nature precludes Him from lying and deceiving. If this were not so He would be an ally of Satan and not his enemy.

The Lord draws this conclusion then, from what He has taught His disciples, looking at it from a point of lesser (man) to a greater (heavenly Father). If human parents reward their children’s requests with what is best for them, how much more will our Heavenly Father do whose thoughts and actions are not tainted with sin? When Jesus used this illustration as Luke records it, Luke names the Holy Spirit as the sum and source of all “good,” ***Luke 11:13; If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*** This is the judgment that they must pronounce on themselves; they can’t out-give the Lord and His love is greater than the love that they have for their own children. This is a truly humbling statement. This will help them while they are being tempted to self-righteously judge others. But when judging themselves as thus, their need for the Holy Spirit and of His good gifts, and the assured promises of their Father in filling this need, should keep them in the consciousness of their being children of God. By every good spiritual gift that we receive the Father acknowledges them as His dear children, born anew by His grace.

The Holy Spirit designs these gifts and graces for everything that is necessary for the spiritual and eternal good of His people. But to obtain these things we must ask and seek after, and Jesus is giving them the encouragement to do so by demonstrating to them the love that the Father has for them and the assurance that they will receive what they are requesting. It is

a small requirement, “ask and you will have.” But this begs the question, “If our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask, why doesn’t He just give it to us without this asking, seeking, and knocking, requirement?” The intention and purpose of the requirement is to remind us that we are a person in a lesser, helpless, stature than God and it keeps us humble to keep reminding ourselves that all good comes from a greater source than ourselves. If we got what we needed without asking our pride and arrogance would tell us that we don’t need God. The source of our good gifts would either remain unknown to us or we would in our arrogance begin to think that we are the source of all good things in our life. Even if God told us once, (which He has more than once), that He is our Provider, we tend to have short memories and we would rather believe that we are in charge of what we receive in our own lives. The conduct of the Israelites coming out of Egypt is a great example of this human weakness.

When Jesus calls His disciples, and the Jews that were there just for informational purposes, evil, He is speaking of all mankind in general. We are evil both in our nature and by practice. We were conceived in sin and shaped by iniquity; evil from our youth and transgressors from the womb. These men, and all men, do abominable things and only respect the evil of the covetousness to which they are addicted. The only way this can be changed in a man is to have the gift of a heart that is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, sent from the Father. This regeneration will motivate us to ask, seek, and knock, because we will spontaneously see what is good for us and ask for it appropriately.

The immediate connection of verse 12 with the preceding verses seems to be this: since our Father is the giver of good things to us, we should imitate Him in showing kindness to others. The way to test whether an action is beneficial to others is whether we would want to receive it ourselves, or if it is a verbal test, “did I say it the way that I would want to hear it.” The “Golden Rule” had been expressed in negative terms at least one hundred years before this time by Rabbi Hillel (what is hateful to thyself do not do to thy neighbor; for this is the whole law, and all else is exposition). However, by stating the rule in positive terminology, Jesus goes beyond passive restraint to active benevolence. Christianity is not merely a matter of abstinence from sin; it is positive goodness.

This saying by Jesus “the Law and the Prophets,” is a summary of the moral teachings of the Law of Moses and the writings of the Prophets of Israel. The righteousness demanded by the OT is fulfilled in converted believers who walk according to the Spirit, ***Rom. 8:3, 4; For what the Law could not do, weak, (or, wherein it was weak), as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit.*** If this

verse were universally obeyed, it would transform all areas of international relationships, national politics, family life, and church life.

The “Golden Rule” rests on the judgment that we, although by nature are wicked, are yet by grace God’s children, acknowledged as such by our Father who bids us to ask for the good things we need and grants them to us without fail. The consequence of this must be that, instead of judging others falsely, we shall do to them what we would want them to do for us. To be children of God we must prove it by faith and prayer; then act as such children consistently and not merely while in contact with others.

Among the good gifts for which the Father’s children pray daily is the power to overcome the promptings of their flesh so that by grace for Christ’s sake they may love their neighbor with a truly spiritual love and thus heap upon them all of the kindness that they themselves would like to receive.

Once again we learn that the Jews already had such sayings and prayers as our Lord speaks of here in this part of His sermon. Of course they were included in His Ten Commandments and taught by the Israelite Prophets, some of these were; “All things that a man would not take to himself, it is not fit to do them to his brethren.” “All things whatsoever you would that others should do to you; do the same to your brethren.” There seems to be a restriction though in the way that the Jews pronounced these phrases when it comes to the word “brethren.” The Jews perhaps, meant that this law only applied to other Jews; whereas Jesus’ rule reaches to all men without exception. Let them be who they are, whether brethren, kinsmen, according to the flesh or not, there are no qualifications in Jesus’ teaching for demonstrating God’s love toward them.

The narrow way

Matt. 7:14 ...the way is narrow that leads to life.

Jesus Christ warns us that the gate of Christian discipleship is narrow, that is, there is a strict direction and instruction that we must follow to stay on the path that Jesus walked and we have to keep both feet on this path. We cannot have one foot on the path to life while trying to keep the other foot in the ways of the world. We could use the analogy of walking a path into a deep dense jungle; as long as we stay on the narrow path we’ll be just fine, but if we were to stray off the path, either accidentally or purposely, we leave ourselves open to the stalkers of the jungle that are seeking to kill or maim us. Such is our spiritual life. Jesus is teaching His disciples that there is only one way to spiritual life and there are no short cuts or alternate routes. He lays out the path which could be compared to a spiritual road map. ***Matt. 7:13, 14; Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow***

that leads to life, and few are those who find it. The Lord now warns His disciples and us, as His disciples, that the gate of discipleship is narrow and the way can be difficult if we do not stay focused on the prize, that is, our eternal life through faith in Him. But those who faithfully follow His teachings find the abundant life. On the other hand, there is the wide gate—the gate that opens to self indulgence and pleasure, the way that has no discipline. The end of such a life is destruction. Let’s apply this verse to get all that Jesus intended to teach us: *You ought to enter into a life that satisfies, being indwelt by God, but not necessarily favored by circumstances, by way of the symbolic straight passage way and narrow gate that leads to eternal life; because the symbolic gate that is wide, and also the passage way that leads to it is spacious and leads to separation from God and the effects of His moral attributes, and many persons symbolically enter to their final existence by this way. O how straight is the symbolic path to the gate to eternal life that is made small and the passage way is narrow that leads to the life that satisfies, being indwelt by God but not necessarily favored by circumstances, and only a small number of persons discover it.*

These verses also have an application to the gospel by depicting the two roads and destinies of the human race. The wide gate and the broad way lead to destruction, ***Prov. 16:25; there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*** Then there is the narrow gate and the difficult, disciplined, way that leads to eternal life. Jesus is both the gate and the way, ***John 10:9; I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. John 14:6; Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.*** We can see by these verses that Jesus Christ Himself is the gate that He is referring to. But while this is a valid application of the passage, the interpretation is for believers. Jesus is telling His disciples that to follow Him would require faith, discipline, and endurance. But this difficult life, which is made difficult because it denies the flesh of its lusts, is the only life worth living or to look forward to. If you choose the easy way, you will have plenty of company, but you will miss God’s best for you. When we say that this life is a difficult one, it must also be said that the difficulty is proportional to our willingness to submit our lives entirely to Him. This life is made more difficult if we are unwilling to give up the ways and means of our old life. It is true that there can be a lifetime of habits, beliefs, and worldly things that we have identified ourselves with that we think give us our worth that we will either have to give up entirely or change to be suited for His kingdom. But if we truly understand the value of the life that Jesus is promising us, it makes it easier for us to follow His direction and instruction to this new life.

In these verses Jesus gives us a further more elaborate conviction by which to apply to ourselves and to judge ourselves. Let us judge ourselves according to the gate we are approaching and the way we enter into it. We have a choice between two. The contrast is not

between entering or staying outside, we will all enter one of the other, but the emphasis is on the “narrow gate.”

Jesus does not tell us why one is narrow and one is wide, after reading the passages in context we can appropriately deduce that for ourselves. He states only to where they will lead and leaves us to deduce why the one is necessarily narrow, and the other most naturally broad. Repentance, faith, and a Christ-like life are like a narrow portal and passage. We cannot enter into this narrow passageway metaphorically, carrying extra baggage that makes our self bigger than the door will allow passage. This baggage is our sins, self-righteousness, false notions, vices, and follies. However the broad portal and spacious passage are different. There we can bring in all the baggage we want to. There is more than abundant room that grabs our attention and looks inviting for us to enter into. But this gate, with all of its allurements, leads to destruction. The NT uses this negative term (destruction) to refer to our state after our physical death and onto another “death” that refers to a separation from God and an end to experiencing and/or awareness of all of His attributes. The sad thing is that so many look only at the wide, broad, easy entrance, the spacious passage and not what it leads to; and thus they enter. They follow the crowd rather than the conviction of their own heart, somehow justifying that the majority choice is always right choice. They have violated the first commandment by creating a god that will accept their life as a righteous life; but the problem is that this god that they have created has no life or substance.

But, we know, even from our own experiences, here in the present evil age, that the majority can be wrong. Which leads us to another point, as believers we are sanctified, that is, we are set apart from the majority. This at times can put us into a very tough position as we see the ones that we love being a part of the majority. We want to be with them, fellowship with them, and be a part of what they are a part of, but this is why Jesus warns us to “hate” those that have a family connection to us and to even hate our own life, ***Luke 14:26; If anyone comes to Me and does not hate, that is, in comparison to His love for Me, his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.*** This verse is one of the most problematic sayings of the Lord. The word for “hate” ought to be understood in the light of ***Matt. 10:37; He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*** The word for “hate” is to be understood as loving one’s relatives less than the Lord. Jesus Christ should never be placed on the same level as a human relative, He should always be above any human. The word for “life” in the Luke passage should be translated and distinguished from the spirit to mean “our animalistic instincts.”

By the narrow gate in this verse is meant Christ Himself, who in other passages refers to Himself also as the “Door.” This door or gate is the opening in which we can come to the Father

and have communion with Him. Here we are entitled to participate in all of the blessings of grace. He is the gate to heaven, through which we have the boldness to enter into the most holy of places of all by faith and hope today and also in the hereafter; an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of God through the blood and righteousness of Christ.

Of course, this “life” begins here in regeneration, but in the present imagery Jesus contemplates the final destinations at which men arrive by means of the two portals and the two passageways. When Jesus says that only a few find the portal and passage way to life He says it with a sad voice and the very sadness that He uses increases the warning. The wide portal does not need to be found, it stands with a gaping wide entrance that men can easily just drift into. The narrow portal, however, needs to be found, we need to “ask, seek, and knock.” This portal is not found by our doing something that we have accomplished on our own, it is wholly by the grace of Him who placed the portal of life there for us. God’s grace draws those who find it by its attracting power, ***John 6:44; No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.***

The Jews understood this verse about roads and the differing sizes of roads as they applied what Jesus was teaching to the roads in the cities of their time. The public and private roads measurements were fixed by Jewish canon. They say that a private road was to be only four cubits wide, a road that went from a city to another city was eight cubits, a public road was sixteen cubits, and the way to the city of refuge was to be thirty-two cubits. So, when Jesus used the metaphor of the roads or pathway they clearly understood what He was saying.

Behaviors and belief

Matt. 7:21... Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven.

From an ethical point of view, we are told in Scripture that we should not judge others according to their appearance, ***John 7:24; do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment, (or, judge the righteous judgment).*** Or, judge according to the flesh, ***John 8:15; You people judge according to the flesh, (or, a carnal standard), I am not judging anyone.*** The reason why we should not judge others is because our judgment, at best, can only be based on partial knowledge, and in addition, that knowledge that we do have has a view that is tainted by sin, so we cannot have a clear picture of the situation or circumstance. We are not entirely aware of the inner lives, motives, and principles, of other people. We are not acquainted either with the antecedent (or, determinate), conditions of their actions, or the possibilities of justification, progress, or amendment that their future may contain. God has this knowledge and fore-knowledge so the judging is best left to Him.

Both of them, Christ and Paul, clearly expressed caution in one man judging another even if the outward evidence seems convincing, ***John 8:10, 11; and straightening up, Jesus said***

to her, “woman where are they? Did no one condemn you?” And she said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you; go your way. From now on sin no more.” 1 Cor. 4:5; therefore do not go on passing judgment, (or, judging anything), before the time, (or, the appointed time of judgment), but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God. This is the reason why we are advised to exercise patience and forbearance in the interest of an individual and also of the church.

This teaching is incorporated in the parable of the tares and the wheat, **Matt. 13:24-30**; **He presented another parable to them saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to, a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares, (or, darnel, a weed resembling wheat), also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then, (or, where from), does it have tares?’ And he said to them, an enemy has done this and the slaves said to him; do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, no; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, first gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up, but gather the wheat into my barn. Matt. 13:36-43; Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying; explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. And He answered and said, the one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end, (or, consummation), of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore, just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end, (or, the consummation), of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, (or, everything that is offensive), and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place their shall weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, He who has ears, let him hear.** And also in Paul’s teachings we are urged to have patience, this is evident in his letter to the disciples in the book of Romans, chapter 14. It does not, however, mean that we should not properly exercise the grace of discernment and proper evaluation of people. How do we know not to give that which is holy to those who are like dogs if we do not evaluate them properly? Or how do we guard ourselves against false prophets or false disciples? Our judgment of others must never be for the purpose of a comparative self-elevation or entertainment of a Pharisaic attitude of self-praise.

Matt. 7:15-23; Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them, (or, recognize them), by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles, (or, works of power)? And I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. Jesus is making some eye-opening statements in these verses; these words should really grab our attention, so let's get a Greek translation of what His words translate to be with a deeper explanation: *Be careful, apply your mind to, and pay attention to those who falsely assume the work of a prophet by teaching false doctrine in the name of God, who, metaphorically, come to you in the dress of docile sheep, however, are internally persons that are predatory, wolf-like, violent persons. So knowing this, and not wanting to falsely judge a person, how do we guard ourselves against false prophets or disciples? You will know them fully from what proceeds or is derived from their conduct and deeds. A cluster of grapes are not collected or derived from a briar bush that abounds with thorns, nor are figs derived from the many injurious points of the thistle, are they? So then, discern the grapes and figs as being righteous brethren that produce good deeds and conduct that abounds for the account of the kingdom of God and the briar bush and the thistle as false prophets that only cause injury by being self-seeking hypocrites that lead persons to being separated from God. So, relative to what I just taught you, discern that all trees that are distinguished as being good in a physical sense, yield constitutionally good fruit, expressed in beauty as a harmonious completeness, balance and proportion; however, the rotten, putrid tree yields an external quality and condition that is evil fruit. A metaphorical tree of good quality and character will not continually and actively cause that which is evil in the quality of its fruit in a physical sense to exist; neither can a metaphorical tree that is bad, rotten, or putrid cause fruit of good character, in a physical sense to exist. In these metaphors the tree represents the quality of the man and all trees that do not bring forth a good quality and character of fruit, in a physical sense, is to be cut down and broken off, and cast off into the literal fire, which is a metaphor for the place of punishment and the abode of demons and the souls of wicked men. Therefore then, you will recognize the false prophets and disciples by the quality and character of the fruit that they cause to exist. Pay close attention, not all who address Me using significant, flattering words, as you would address a person of dignity and authority, will come into the state of glory that exists in the everlasting eternal kingdom of heaven, just because of the words he uses to address Me; however, the one who does not judge others for the exclusive reason of wanting self-elevation and brings about*

what the Father, who is in heaven, wills to have done on earth, I will not deny entry. Many persons will declare to Me, and address Me as a person of great dignity and authority, on that great day of judgment; they will say to Me have we not, even though we were as prophets and as such foretold of things to come, as Your representative and by Your authority, and also as Your representative and by Your authority did we not expel demons who exercised demonical violence in the body of people and as Your representative and by Your authority did we not do mighty deeds, wonders, and miracles? And for this reason I will cite these expressive words in response to them, "Because I did not ever acknowledge you to be what you profess to be, that is, a person who called upon the name of the Lord but who never came to know Me experientially, I did not foreordain you or specially consider and chose you in eternity past, so remove yourself from My presence, you who practice iniquity as a way of living." The ways in which the false prophets used to fool the people on earth will not work when speaking to our Lord. He can see their hearts and their intentions, He can see the inner man which was not visible to those of us here on earth. This is why He warns us to look at their conduct and check the spirit of their teachings.

In the NT, the redeemed human life is presented as a field with God being the owner, in expectation of fruit or produce to be rendered and shared with Him. Paul reminds us that we are His husbandry, field, or farm, **1 Cor. 3:6-9; I planted Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward, (or, wages), according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.** This recalls the parable of the vineyard spoken by the Lord Jesus to the Pharisees and the priests, **Matt. 21:33-44; Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine growers, (or, tenant farmers), and went on a journey. And when the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. And the vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another; and stoned a third. Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing, (or, likewise) to them. But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, they will respect my son. But when the vine growers saw the son, they said among themselves, "This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and seize his inheritance." And they took him, and threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore, when the owner, (or, lord), of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine growers? They said to Him, He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine growers, who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons. Jesus said to them, Did you never read the Scriptures, the stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from**

you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it. And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.

Christians, individually and collectively, are expected to produce good results, “fruit unto God,” ***Rom. 7:4; Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God.*** Also those who are His overseers, those who plant and water, naturally look for produce and the reward of their toil. Thus Paul hopes, as he looks forward to his visit to Rome, that he may have some fruit among the people of that city as he had in Corinth and Ephesus, ***And I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you, (and have been prevented thus far), in order that I might obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.***

The fruit of a branch is the evidence of its being attached to the true vine, ***John 15:1, 2, I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes it, (or, cleanses), that it may bear more fruit.*** The fruit of the new life is regarded as sanctification. The fruit of the Spirit is equivalent to the good works that follow faith. The fruit of righteousness is an OT phrase where righteousness or conformity to the highest moral standards is described as the peaceful fruit or discipline patiently endured. We must never forget that the word “righteousness” refers to the rights of God clearly desired by the child of God in whose heart His righteousness dwells. One who does not produce fruit in his life is unfruitful. Those who walk in darkness are spoken of as unfruitful. Paul describes these persons of the un-regenerated life as producing fruit unto death.

It is evident, from reading and doing even just as very minor study of John 15, that Christ expects much fruit from His branches. If there is no fruit on a branch, that branch is not truly attached to Christ. He is not satisfied with a little, but demands that our fruit may be commensurate (or proportional) to His investment in us as indicated by ***Luke 12:47, 48; and that slave who knew his masters will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but a few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.*** Wherever the stern demands of discipleship are taught, there are false prophets who advocate the wide gate and the easy way. They water down or sweeten up the truth, much like we do medicine that is hard to swallow to the point where the medicine has lost its effectiveness. These men who profess to be teaching God’s Word come in sheep’s clothing, giving the appearance of teaching from the Scriptures, but inwardly they have their own agenda. These can be vicious, unbelievers, who prey on the immature Christian, the unstable, and the gullible, just so, they

themselves might receive the applause of men and be held in high esteem by men, being noted as men of great wisdom and insight; Jesus Christ will not be impressed on Judgment Day.

This verse is really a warning against being enticed to looking for and entering through the wide gate, as mentioned in the previous verses. Jesus expands on the warning of verses 13 and 14 when He adds verse 15, paraphrasing: “beware of false prophets that are not who they seem to be and are seeking only to satisfy their fleshly desires in you.” The literal Greek translation of the word for “beware” means literally “keep holding your mind from,” or “watch out for.” The false prophets that Jesus warns us about are those who declare to be saying what the Lord had said to them and are passing it on to others, while other prophets are those who teach. The only difference between the two is that one of them claims to be announcing God’s divine will while the others expound or apply God’s teaching from Scripture. Both of them announce that “this is what God says!”

When Jesus tells us that “inwardly” they are wolves, the “inwardly” refers to their real nature which means that their appearance is a lie. They are inwardly “wolves” in the same sense as the word “wolves” is used in this verse; ***John 10:12; He who is a hireling, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, beholds the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees, and the wolf snatches them, and scatters them. Acts 20:29; I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in amongst you, not sparing the flock. Rom. 16:18; For such men are slaves, not of the Lord Jesus Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting. Eph. 5:6; Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Col. 2:4; I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument.*** Some teachers have taught that when Jesus refers to wolves He had in mind the Pharisees and the scribes alone, and although He more than likely includes them I don’t believe it was intended for them alone as verse 21 seems to allude to. He is, by the evidence of the verse 21, thinking of the future also and all of the false prophets that will try to mislead His disciples. Many of these false prophets can be seen and heard on our communications media today. The most unfortunate thing is that although many of these prophets may have started out with good intentions the allurements of “success” and the money that comes with it seems to dictate the direction of their teaching rather than the Word of God. They are guided by the pressures of the network bosses rather than by their heavenly boss. If we say “thus says the Lord,” when He did not say it, or to say “God did not say,” when He actually did, is to utter false prophecy.

What about when we are in a position of being a teacher and we teach something that after a few years we realize that what we taught was not valid? Are we the wolves that Jesus is pointing out to the disciples? No, it is very plain to see that the contextual intent of the

teaching is not including someone who teaches with correct intentions but falsely out of ignorance. The wolves that Jesus is talking about have an agenda to cause harm or self promotion through their teachings. If this is not a part of your invalid teaching than you are not considered one of the wolves referred to in these passages. However, as soon as the mistaken teaching is realized it should be corrected or amended to speak to the truth, if at all possible.

The innocent appearance of all false prophets is a necessity for them; if they were to reveal who they really were they could not get an audience. The innocent appearance of their person and their prophecy induces many to receive what they offer; but the real nature of what they are in their prophesying always becomes evident sooner or later. A lie cannot stand alone as the truth can. A lie always needs support from another lie and this will go on until it becomes absurd. Thus the clothing of sheep used by the wolves is their conduct and preaching that are by outward appearances in harmony with God and with His Word but in reality are in conflict with both. **2 Pet. 2:1; But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who brought them, bringing swift destruction among themselves. It is our responsibility and ours alone to check out what we have heard or read as being the scriptural truth.** In this verse Jesus drastically tries to picture for us the effect that false teaching will have on us. It rends and tears our spiritual life like the fangs of a wolf tears after a victim; a victim who is for him a fresh meaty meal. But, in spite of this drastic language men still persist in considering deviations from the true word, the word of God as it really is spoken by God, as being quite harmless, but necessary for life.

It is possible, by what follows this verse, that Jesus used the “wolf in sheep’s clothing” reference, to refer to those who used His name and claimed to come in His name, though they were not really sent by Him. They called Him Lord and prophesied, cast out demons and did many wonderful things in His name. So that they might get the good will and affections of the people they clothed themselves not in garments made of sheep’s wool, but in the very skins of sheep, with wool on them, trying to imitate the true prophets and good men of the older times. They pretended to have great humility and self denial and so wore a rough garment to deceive, **Zach. 13:4; Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive.** These men were inwardly greedy dogs, grievous wolves of insatiable covetousness and when an opportunity presented itself they did not spare the flock to satisfy their devouring appetites. The Jews speak of a “wolfish humility”, like that of the wolf in the fable that put on sheep’s skin. There are some men, they say, who appear to be humble, and fear God in a deceitful and hypocritical fashion, but inwardly lay in wait. This is the humility that our men call “wolfish humility” and this could possibly be what our Lord is telling us to be aware of.

Verses 16-18 deals with the detection of the false prophet; “you will know them by their fruits.” Their sensual lives and destructive teachings betray them. A tree or a plant produces fruit according to its character. This principle is true in the natural world and in the spiritual world as well. The life and teaching of those who claim to speak for God should be tested by the Word of God, ***Isa.8:20; ...if they do not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn.*** The dawn, in this case, is the light of day and a reference to Jesus Christ being the Light of a new day, or age.

When we read verse 16 and it tells us that we “will know them by their fruits” it assures me that there will be such a contrast between what the false prophets are saying and what the Word of God is teaching us, that they will make themselves very evident. This of course requires us to know Scripture. Scripture tells us what these fruits are that makes them so identifiable and indeed it should be evident, in addition to Isa. 8:20 we should consider these verses; ***1 John 4:3; “every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God...; Heb. 13:9; do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings...; 2 John 9-11 I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church. Brethren do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God. Matt. 15:9; ...teaching as doctrines the precepts of men; Titus 1:10-12; ...rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of circumcision...upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach, for the sake of sordid gain...saying Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.*** In general the fruits of the false prophets are the doctrines that they teach. True prophets often manifest sins and faults of their own lives; false prophets often have the appearance of holiness as a part of their sheep’s clothing. God alone is able to judge men’s hearts and to distinguish hypocritical from genuine works, so it is important to us that while judging a person’s doctrinal teaching that we pray to have God lead our discernment.

Fruits do not mean so much their external works in their life or in their conversations, because a false prophet can be deceptive in these parts of his life just so he’s not discovered as a false prophet. It would be like the Pharisees that outwardly appeared to be righteous before men, and false Christian teachers that can have the form of godliness and keep it up also. But the emphasis in this teaching is more focused on the doctrines that they teach and the effects that these teachings have on other persons. When doctrines are contrary to the perfections of God and are incompatible with the Scriptures of truth, tending to depreciate the person, office, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ in order to lessen the glory of God’s grace to exalt themselves and to fill men’s minds with notions of purity, self-sufficiency, and the

ability of the human nature; these are the doctrines that cause them to be false prophets. When their teachings are calculated to feed the pride and vanity of men, to get money, and to gain applause, to serve their own interests and gratify men's lusts and passions, they may be easily discerned who they are and from where they have come.

The Jews have a proverb that is pretty much like this verse; "a gourd is known by its branches." It is, as they would say, from the time that it buds forth, and goes out of the branch, it is known whether it is good or not. The goodness of the gourd is known by the fruit its branches bear. So it goes; a good preacher is known by the good doctrines he teaches and a bad one by his unsound doctrine or what goes out from his mouth. In a summation the meaning of the Lord's teaching is that from false doctrines of men comes no good fruit of faith, holiness, joy, peace, and comfort. Their doctrines are like thorns, which prick and pierce, give pain and uneasiness and like thistles, choke, and are unprofitable, afford no solid food or nourishment. Yes their words eat away at your spirit and are contrary to vital powerful godliness.

Galatians 5:22, 23, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control; against such things there is no law. These verses give us a list of what we should be hearing as fruit from the doctrinal preaching of a prophet. His message should be filled with the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control; that regenerates our hearts and comes from a relationship with God. If a message contains anything contrary to this fruit it is worth our checking into the character of the teacher and compare his teachings with what Scripture teaches.

As is the tree, so is its fruit. If the tree is good it will bring forth good fruit. The tree that brings forth good fruit is a good antecedent to the fruit it produces. It is first good, and then it puts forth good fruit. It is not the fruit that makes the tree good, but it is what makes it appear to be so, but it is the goodness of the tree that makes the fruit good. As a good man does, and will do good works, but his works don't make him a good man. He is so before he performs good works, or he would never be able to do them. These works make him appear to be a good man and so it is with a preacher of God's Word that has experiential knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel. He will deliver sound doctrine if he is made so first by the gifts and graces of God and by searching the Scriptures and examining his doctrines by these Scriptures. He will be known and appear to be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and good doctrine. And he is such a good minister of the Gospel, out of the good treasures of Gospel truths put into his earthen vessel. This will bring forth from time to time good and excellent truths to the edification and profit of those that hear his preaching.

It can also be compared to fertilizing and watering the earth to cause the fruit tree to be a good tree that will bear good fruit. Sufficient and clean water causes the nutrients from the earth to be palatable for the nutrients to spread throughout the tree. Along with the water and soil keeping the tree healthy It can also be said that the tree needs the soils good nutrients to become a good tree to bear good fruit. The origin of the good fruit is actually the good soil and water. I believe that this is one of the applications that Jesus Christ was making when He taught us this teaching; ***John 6:53-57; Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh I true food, and My blood true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he shall also live because of Me."***

But a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. If the tree is corrupt, then the fruit will be corrupt and so it goes with the preacher and his doctrines. If he is a corrupt preacher, that is, if he refuses to confess his sins or if he is a man of a corrupt mind, destitute of the truth, his preaching will be as such and will have a tendency to corrupt both the principles and practices of men. For such evil men and seducers are out of the evil treasure of false doctrines. And so, the analogy of the good tree bearing good fruit is being contrasted with the same applications in opposite.

Jesus goes on to teach us the analogy of comparing a teacher, or prophets to trees and as He does He presents us with an undeniable fact and then the undeniable of the impossibility. This analogy applies to all men who are either good trees or worthless tress, and Jesus has in mind here the false prophets. They are judged not according to some exceptional rule pertaining to them only, but according to the universal rule which applies to all. Also, without expressly saying so, all who follow false prophets and their false doctrines may include themselves in their judgment.

The contrast can also be seen in being between kinds; not between sound and healthy trees and others that are rotting and decaying, because rotting and decaying trees probably will not produce fruit of any kind, but between trees of excellent variety and trees of worthless variety. We could say that the good apple tree produces good apples that are good for baking and resist diseases and insects while the bad tree produces plenty of fruit, but the apples taste awful and tend to be full of insects, and therefore they are worthless. Both kinds might look appealing and be fine as ornamental trees, but the fruit that they produce invariably reveals what they are worth. When Jesus describes the fruit as being either good or bad, He really touches the realities which underlie the analogy, for these are adjectives which are used

regarding man's works when they come to judgment before God. They may have works but their works are filled with wrong motives.

A man whose principles are lead by the grace of God has an experiential acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ and is guided by the Spirit of God into all truth, as it is in Jesus. A man such as this cannot knowingly deliver, maintain, and abide by any doctrine that is contrary to the glory of God's grace, and the person of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, or the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, or what is alien to the experiences of God's people and prejudicial to their souls.

A corrupt preacher, that is, one who is destitute of the truth of the gospel, unprincipled concerning the faith, who never had any experience in the doctrines of grace and denies them in the theory of them, can't give to people what he does not have in himself to give, being consistent with himself and his own principles, he cannot deliver or preach good doctrine or that which tends to produce any good fruit in the lives of men. It is actually impossible for a tree to bear fruit that is contrary to its constitution and nature. Jesus adds this in order to assure us all the more in regard to our ability to judge men in general and false prophets in particular. Just as it is impossible for Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, to lie, so it goes with someone who is filled and influenced by Christ in his teaching.

The destiny of these false prophets is that they are to be thrown into the fire because they have proved by their rebellion to the truth that they have no desire to exist in the presence of God; just as a tree that cannot fulfill its created purpose by being of benefit to God's created purpose is cut down and thrown into the fire. The doom of the false teachers and prophets is "swift destruction," **2 Peter 2:1; But the false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction among themselves.** These preachers and teachers can be known by their fruits. They may appear as a tall lofty cedar, and have carried their loftiness with a high hand against Christ and His gospel; they may have spoke with great swelling words of vanity and behaved with much loftiness and haughtiness, but the time will come when he and all others will bow and be made low and the Lord alone is the only exalted One. Such as these are either cut off from the churches of Christ or hewn down by death and cast into the fire along with the others who have made the choice to not accept Christ and His teaching.

Jesus now brings His analogy to a conclusion; what was stated only as a fact in verse 16, (you shall know the quality and character of the prophet by the quality and character of his teaching), is restated here as the conclusion that is to be drawn from the analogies. We shouldn't judge a prophet by his ability to speak or his charisma, but by the content and motive of what he is speaking. Too many people are drawn in by a person's appearance or their ability

to manipulate the language without checking their sources, or in this case, the One and only source. A perfect example of this is in Genesis when Eve allowed Satan to manipulate what God had told her and he used his charisma to entice her into sin; and not just her, but us also. This restatement, in verse 20, emphasizes the fact that we can indeed recognize all false prophets as just exactly what they are, liars trying to entice men away from Christ. By listening carefully and then checking for ourselves the veracity of the teaching we can make a valid discernment.

Christ here is not necessarily speaking about men who live bad lives and have bad conversations, or who take it upon themselves to teach others, because there wouldn't be much reason to caution good men against these, they are easily detected and generally discarded. But of men that put on sheep's clothing, those who pretend to be holy and lead holy lives, speaking holy conversations and strictness of disciplines. And under their disguises they deliver out of their mouth the most corrupt and unwholesome of doctrines. They tend to depreciate the need for Christ in our life along with His grace, damaging the souls of men. These men use Satan as their mentor in the same way that we use Christ as our mentor.

Jesus next warns us about persons who falsely profess to acknowledge Him as their Savior, but have never given their life over to Him by putting themselves under His rule and authority in every aspect of their life. He tells us that just by the act of saying the right words to Him will not allow us permission to enter into His kingdom of heaven. It's not a matter of knowing the correct password. Only those who demonstrate that they have put themselves under His rule and authority and have demonstrated that by doing His will according to the fullness of their capacity, shall enter in, ***John 6:29; Jesus answered and said to them, this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.*** It is important for us to realize that as we read this verse and we see this very important word "believe," that we understand what this word means and how it fits under "His rule and authority in our life." When we say that we "believe" it means much more than acknowledging His existence, the true meaning is that we "trust in, rely on, and have faith in Him" for everything that constitutes our everyday life. Obviously before we could even consider doing that definition we would want to know as much about Him as we possibly could, so in addition this word means that we must establish a relationship with Him. We need to get to know as much about Him as possible and all that we can possibly know and is necessary to know, about Him is in His written Word. Before we can give Him rule and authority in our lives we must be able to know that we can trust Him. This trust is not natural and can only come to us supernaturally.

Verse 21 is an expansion of Jesus' reference on judgment of those who do not produce the good fruit. The statement is general and applies to all who would see the kingdom of heaven as a desirable place to live out their existence. However, Jesus tells us that "not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will be allowed to enter." This obviously means that some

who address Jesus as “Lord” will indeed enter the kingdom; some; but not all. Saying the right word is not a guarantee that your ticket will be punched that allows you entry. Saying “Lord, Lord,” means to claim the relationship with Jesus that is expressed in the title “Lord.” The duplication of the word “Lord” is for the purpose of expressing urgency in prayer and worship. Lord is often used to mean as little as a title of respect, like we would use the word “sir.” The point is not merely the content of this word as used by them but their claim of a relationship with Him which does not exist beyond their imagination.

Not everyone that calls Christ his Lord and Master professes subjection to Him including those that call upon His name, or are called by His name, i.e., Christian, or makes use of His name in public ministry. There are a lot of people who desire to be called and accounted for as Christians, for various reasons, and even make mention of His name in their conversations, but this can be seen as a mere attempt to cover up their lack of sincerity in their belief and a cover for themselves as doing what their designation requires rather than what their heart desires, just to get into the good will of the persons to whom they are conversing. But they have no hearty love for Christ, nor do they have true faith in Him. They are not concerned about preaching His gospel, advancing His glory, or promoting His kingdom. They have nothing on their mind but their own selfish, flesh based, agenda. Their focus is on pleasing men so as to get their admiration, elevating themselves, and setting up the power of the human nature in opposition to the grace and power of God and the righteousness of Christ. Jesus teaches us that none like these will enter into His heavenly kingdom.

We can see the name “Lord” used as more than just in their imagination when we see the evidence in “doing the will of My Father” as it is added at the end of the verse. “We do what we believe.” This “doing” proves that a real relationship with Jesus exists, one in which Jesus here acknowledges because He can see the sincerity in their heart to have relationship with Him. So to get this from our imagination and into our hearts we have to know what the will of the Father includes. First of all, it includes “repentance and faith;” not the perfection of “sinlessness” but the righteousness of the remission of sin and thus the power to practice our works that result from our faith and doing the ministries that are pleasing to God and commanded by Him, such as His admonition to “go and make disciples.”

When Jesus adds the words “My Father” He relates Himself as being in a perfect union with the Father; that whoever does the Father’s will is in a true and saving relationship with Him as is the Son. With the words “in heaven” joined to “My Father” it emphatically points out His heavenly greatness. These Christians that live their life according to this heartfelt subjection to Him do not just do outward obedience to the will of God. Nor do they just do the minimum as far as following His ordinances, but they have faith in Christ for life and salvation, which is the source of all evangelical obedience and without which nothing is acceptable to God. He that

sees the Son looks to Him, lives his life according to His teachings, commits his life to Him, trusts in Him, relies on Him, and believes in Him for the righteousness, salvation, and eternal life, that He offers to us as a gift. This is the person that is doing the Father's will and only him.

Only those who maintain a disposition by which they can faithfully dispense the word of God shall enter into the joy of the Lord. These are the people who are doing the will of Christ who is the exact representation of and is in union with the Father and so also do His will; They are of one and the same will. These people declare the whole counsel of God and keep nothing back that is profitable to the souls of men.

On the Day of Judgment when non-believers stand before Christ, that great and famous day that is fixed by God but is not known by men or angels will be a terrible day for some and a day of rejoicing for others. Many will remind Him that they prophesied, or cast out demons, or performed many wonders—all in His name. Not just one or two or a few, but Jesus teaches us that “many” of them will want to discuss their eternal existence when they hear the pronouncement of their judgment. But their protesting will be in vain. Jesus, who will be their judge, which He was ordained to be by the Father, will declare to them that He never knew them or acknowledged them as His own, which is really a reference to their lack of acknowledging Him relationally. Their only motive it seems in referring to Him now as their Lord would be to avoid the impending suffering and spiritual death that awaits them. They really still do not have a desire to know the Lord relationally. They want the benefit of knowing Him in eternal life that is available through Him but they are not willing to engage in paying the cost and they think that they have manipulated Him into this position of receiving the prize but they do know of the impending doom that awaits them.

The word “Lord” is repeated to show their pleading to avoid the danger that they see themselves in, the confusion that they will be in, and the terrible disappointment they will experience, not for a while, not for a week, month, year, but eternally. And so, in their last attempt to perform for the Lord they will act amazed and confounded that they are not receiving the same result of “justice” that those who know the Lord relationally will get from Him; having expected that they would be the first to be admitted into the kingdom. In their sheep's clothing they have gotten accustomed to being able to fool people and have put their confidence in their works, but Jesus Christ, the Omniscient One, can see through the clothing and knows of their trickery. He is already many steps ahead of their attempts to bring their wardrobe into the kingdom of heaven and it will not work for them here. They preached God's Word in the name of Christ pretending that their mission and authority was from Him, but their motive in doing so was to exalt themselves and not Christ.

What an awful feeling it must be to have devoted time to casting out demons and to at last be cast out with them. This reinforces the truth that works alone will not bring salvation,

because if preaching the word, which takes so much study, care and labor, to make sure it is done right, alone in itself, will not be a prevailing argument for entry into heaven, how could it even be a consideration that reading, hearing, or any other external performance of religion could bring a different result. The kingdom of heaven is no place for trickery, illusions, or pretending. It will be the purist form of truth and trust in all that takes place.

The verb “declare,” (or confess) in verse 23 literally means “to know as one’s own,” hence to acknowledge. The Lord knew all about these false prophets and their doings but He never had known them in a way that they bore any relation to Him. Now that they desire to enter His kingdom of glory He orders them away from Him. He will only allow those who have a relationship with Him to enter into eternity with Him. The false teachers have nothing in common with Him or His kingdom that could be construed as a true desire to be relational. This command and address to the false prophet is a quote from ***Ps. 6:8; depart from Me all of you who do iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping.*** Literally these people are referred to as there character identifies them, “those who always do iniquity.”

What Christ means when He says “I never knew you” is that I never had any love or affection for who you are as a person. I never esteemed you, made any account of you as being Mine, that is, as belonging to Me. I never approved of you or your conduct. I never conversed with you, had anything in common with you, nor had any relationship with you. I never knew you to exalt My person, blood, righteousness, and sacrifice. You spent your time talking of all of the great things that you have done, but I never knew you to do one good work in all your life that would give glory to Me; therefore I never heard from You nor saw you; consequently I will have nothing to do with you in eternity.

In the public judgment, at the Last Day, works are being decided according to the open evidence of the inner relation of the heart with God. The greatest and most fatal work of lawlessness is to pervert the Lord’s word in the Lord’s own name and to work in this perversion upon others. That is why the “antichrist” is called the “man of lawlessness.” The result of this central perversion is that all works radiating from this center of thought are likewise perverted.

This awful sentence pronounced by Christ, the Judge, which is banishment from His presence, is as terrible as a judgment could be. For it is His presence that makes heaven what it is; it is what makes heaven so attractive to us that we want to spend our eternity there. It is His absence that makes hell the place that we all want to avoid. This hell is the place where He is sentencing the wolves in sheep’s clothing. It is described as a place of fire and brimstone, which describes the pain and suffering, the frustration and the eternal temper that will be experienced. This is the place that is prepared for the devil and his angels to spend eternity.

The last part of verse 23 describes the character of the persons that He will send there and in that description also the reason that He has to send them there. They were workers of iniquity. Iniquity can be described as *acts of injustice, to do wrong, injure someone, to hurt, damage or harm. To do that which is out of harmony, disobedience to divinely instituted law.* This includes whoever commits sin on a continual basis; which is an obvious sign of lack of repentance for their sin. In a nutshell it is sin and unrighteousness. These persons that Jesus is pointing to in His Sermon are the ones who did the work of the Lord deceitfully, preached themselves instead of Christ. They sought for their own welfare instead of the welfare of those they preached. What they did, they did with an evil intent and with a view to their glory instead of His; they pleaded on their own behalf for admittance to heaven. Every part of the definition for iniquity was also a part of their character.

The two foundations

Matt. 7:26... everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man...

If people are to benefit from the teaching of Jesus, not only in this Sermon on the Mount, but in everything that He taught, they must do more than just listen and understand what He has to say; they must be prompted to act upon what they have learned. ***Matt. 7:24-27; Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts, (or does), upon them, may be compared, (or, will be compared), to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. And the rains descended, and the floods came, (or, rivers), and the winds blew, and burst against the house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, (or, do them), will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, (or, rivers), and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.*** After Jesus informs us of the eminent judgment that is coming for those who practice lawlessness He tells us what we must do to avoid being put in the position of being judged to condemnation; so let's take these verses from the Greek translation to get the full meaning of this very important set of verses: *As I have said before, every one of you and whoever else that understands and comprehends these preceding declarations of Mine, that catches the analogies in order to be instructed, and also practices and fulfills them continually, shall be made like a wise Christian brother who has the mindset of being prudent, sensible, and wise in relationships with others. He constructed a house on the security of a rock. And when the rain descended from the clouds and the rivers were swollen and the torrents came toward the house and the winds blew upon it and assaulted that house it did not fall into ruins because it had a foundation upon the security of a rock. And everyone that understands and comprehends these preceding declarations of Mine, catches the analogies in order to be instructed, and does not practice the*

fulfillment of the precepts of the Father or the Son, shall be likened to a man of foolish character, who built a house upon the instability of sand. And then the rain descended, and the rivers were swollen and the torrents came toward the house and the winds blew upon it and assaulted his house; and it fell to ruins, and what a violent fall it was! Jesus is telling us in this parable that if we want any kind of stability in our lives and we do not look to Him to find it we are headed for a great fall; not only in the sense of being continually disappointed, frustrated, angry, and unfulfilled in this present evil age, but in the Day of Judgment also.

Jesus Christ is our rock or “the” rock! This is an old Christian saying that has withstood the test of time. If we think of a mountain of granite, as Jesus uses in His analogy, we can see the stability and durability of it. While objects of lesser stability are easily washed away in a flood, or hurricane, etc. the mountain is still standing in the same place that it was before the storm. It has stood there probably since creation; just think of all of the weather conditions through which this mountain has stayed strong and endured and would appear that it will stay that way forever. The same can be said for Bible Scripture. Probably no other book has been scrutinized like the Bible, yet it still stands, basically unchanged, because truth has lasting value and it has proved and changed people’s lives for centuries. Anyone who cannot see this parallel is like a very foolish man indeed and is headed for a great fall.

Jesus closes His sermon with a parable that drives home the importance of obedience. It is not enough to hear these sayings and think to ourselves that they are a great idea while we have someone else in mind that they must be intended or applied; we must also put them into practice and know that our Lord is speaking to us directly and personally. The disciple who hears and does Jesus’ commands is like a wise man that puts his faith and trust in the rock of life, that is, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This life has a solid foundation and when life batters us with turmoil and persecution we will not fall to ruin.

The word “therefore” connects this conclusion with everything in His sermon that precedes these concluding statements as Jesus refers back to “these words of mine.” Both here in verse 24 and in verse 26 the “hearing” and the “doing” are clearly distinguished, and since the difference lies in the “doing” or the “not doing,” these two become emphatic. That is, they are the emphasis of the verses. The Word comes to us and thus we hear it. Then the results are completely dependent on what we do after hearing the Word, i.e., how we put it into action and what it tells us in the way that it affects us personally. But this never means that after hearing the Word we step in with our own ideas and natural powers and do that Word. That’s how we respond to what we hear from humans when they say something that pleases us; with our own natural power we respond to them with a little bit of our own opinion. But in regard to what we hear spiritually in our own power we are helpless, unable to respond. The words of Christ have a life of their own; they are spirit and life, they carry their own power with and in

them and thus move and enable us to put into action what they say. To act upon these words in and by the power which they themselves have inherently in them is not merely outward compliance with certain requirements. This would only be a repeat of the folly of the scribes and the Pharisees, the old error of works-righteousness. To act upon these words is to let them bring us into the condition described in the Beatitudes. Then what follows is the true evidence of repentance and faith indicated in the Beatitudes and in the body of the rest of the Sermon. This acting on the words of Christ is the whole life of faith and the confidence of the heart or regeneration.

Such a man could be “likened” or what these words really mean “shall be made like” or “put in the same class as” the man that acts upon Jesus words, the rock of salvation and life. The analogy would fall apart if we just said that a man built a house on a rock, this does not take special wisdom, until we add the final outcome and the house withstands the worst that the present evil age has to offer. The sensibleness of this builder’s mindset of being prudent and wise in relationship with others, and practices and fulfills the words that he has heard Jesus preach as a part of his everyday living, lies in choosing this as his foundation for living.

The subject of this comparison, which is also used in **Luke 6:47; everyone who comes to Me and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like**, this verse is referring to those who are all the persons that are given to Christ by the Father, which He will do sooner or later. These are the ones that He encourages to come to Him; they that labor and are heavy laden; those that come in uprightness; those that come as poor perishing sinners. These are the ones that believe in Him and give themselves up to Him, to be saved by Him with an everlasting salvation; all of which is owed to an everlasting grace that is efficacious to all who desire it as a free gift. These persons hear His sayings as doctrines, not merely externally, but internally at the core of the person and his character. They have “ears to hear” so as to understand His words and lessons having a desire to live their life accordingly, believing in them, feeling their power, tasting the sweetness, and are delighted by them.

This person is not a hearer only but a doer also of the word of the gospel. He exercises his faith through them by the confidence that he displays in his living them out to the fullness that he is able. They recognize God’s grace and righteousness that are communicated in what He teaches us. He does more than merely call himself a Christian, he puts his words into action as Christ would do, at every opportunity; not for the applause of men, but to give glory to God and all that He has done and for all that He is.

Every believer is a builder, like the one described in these verses. The house that he builds is his soul and his salvation of it. He digs deep until he comes to the bedrock which will make the foundation firm. That is, he searches and digs diligently into the word and inquirers of those whom he respects as being a person who has also built on a rock as to which way is the

way to salvation. After having found this rock he lays the whole stress of his salvation on the Rock of Ages, which is Christ. He makes Him the foundation of all of his hopes of eternal life and happiness. This foundation, which is the person, blood, and righteousness of Christ, is as a rock, firm and strong, and it will bear the weight of whatever pressure this present evil age puts on it. It will never give way; it is immovable, everlasting and a house built upon it will be safe and secure.

The descriptions that Jesus uses in these verses are highly dramatic while at the same time very simple. The rain came down, the torrents, (or overflowing rivers), the winds blew and beat upon the house's foundation, roof, and sides; all were tested. "Yet, it did not fall," seems to be an understatement. Since this conclusion is an appeal to the hearers and is aimed at their will to become "sensible" like the builder, Jesus, once more, adds the point in which he showed himself to be as a builder, sensible, for it had been founded on a rock. But note that the "rock" saves the house; it receives the credit. The sensible act of the builder is that he saw, when he built, what a rock will do for his house.

It is natural to seek the counterparts for the figurative terms of a simile. The house is best understood as being a man's life, he built or founded his house means that he grounded and founded his life on the words of Jesus. These words are the rock. The nature of the rock is indicated in verse **5:18; until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished**, His teachings will never pass away. Christ is the substance that forms the rock. So we could say the rock is God, or Christ, Himself in His Word and in His grace. The storm could refer to the ordeal of death and not just merely the indecisive trials of this life. While one of these trials may wreck a life that is not built on a rock, it may or may not. Death alone is the complete, decisive, destroyer, both in a physical sense and in a spiritual sense.

These metaphors that Jesus uses for a storm may be the temptations of Satan, the persecutions of the world, the corruptions of man's own heart and the errors of false doctrine, taught by false prophets. Through all of these storms a man can keep himself safe and secure if his house is built on his life's foundation of the rock of Jesus Christ. This does not mean that he will never be tempted again with great force and violence, but it will keep him from being beat down; he will be able to bear the whole force of it. The gate of hell shall not prevail against him. The floods of persecution may pursue him but they won't carry him away. The streams of corruption may lap up against him, but it will not knock him over. The wind of diverse and strange doctrine may blow hard against him but not carry him away. He may receive some damage from these storms of life, but never damaged beyond repair. He may be shaken, but not moved off of his foundation. The reason for this is because he is founded on the rock of

Jesus Christ, which is sure and immoveable. When it appears that such a man acts like the wise man's part and does the prudent thing, he truly, then, can be called a wise man.

The persons who hear Jesus' sayings but then does not do them, that is, those who hear from God through His word and has their conscience quickened to act upon what they have heard but are not obedient to what they hear, are like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. This man will not be able to stand against the storms of adversity in this present evil age; when the rains descended and the winds blew, the house fell because it did not have a solid base; his faith was like a limp rag, unable to perform or save himself.

If a person lives according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, the world calls him a fool; Jesus calls him a wise man. The world considers a wise man to be someone who lives by sight, who lives for the present, who lives for self; Jesus calls such a person a fool. It is legitimate to use the wise and the foolish builders to illustrate the gospel. The wise man puts his full confidence in the Rock, Jesus Christ, as Lord and Savior. The foolish man refuses to repent and rejects Jesus as his only hope of salvation; this man puts his confidence in banks, stock markets, and possessions. But the interpretation of the parable actually carries beyond salvation to its practical living out in the Christian life.

This foolish man Jesus places in the same class with the builder who is dull, ignorant, and thus foolish, no matter how sensible he may be in the other affairs of his life; business, family, politics, friendships, etc. For after hearing the words of Jesus, after being told all about the rock and the sand, he built his house, his whole life with all the bells and whistles that would show him to be worldly successful in his society on nothing but sand or on things that could change overnight. No spiritual foundation or appreciation for the One who provided the things that he has ever considered important to him. Of course this was the easier way; the rock was higher up and more difficult to reach than the smooth sand at the bottom of the valley that took no effort on his part to obtain, and many others have also chosen these building sites.

The "sand," in this parable is as definite as the "rock." A simple definition of sand is all teachings that "are not these words of mine." "*All other ground is sinking sand.*" Some of these sandy sites are very attractive and are easily sold constantly by the real estate agents mentioned in verse 15, the false prophets, and they are extremely popular, beach front properties. What makes these sites popular and attractive is that they don't require the builder to do anything; they can hear the words of Jesus by merely attending church, treating the righteousness that God requires as civil righteousness, work righteousness, i.e., living a moral life according to common moral rules. They leave out true repentance and rely on historical faith, or modernistic faith, which alters vital doctrines of the gospel, etc. Sometimes these sandy sites are quite near the rock, the houses on them may also be very pretentious. All is well

while the sun shines. Some of the preliminary floods of adversity and the moderate winds of trouble may be safely endured, adding to the false sense of security. Of course, sometimes these light storms cause sad wrecks among the houses on the sand, but this could be a good thing if it serves to expose their folly and drives them to seek the rock.

The foolish builder has no trouble with the hearing of the words of Jesus, but he has no understanding of what He is saying, probably because Jesus has not said what he is waiting to hear; he is a minimalist and he has convinced himself that the road to salvation is paved wide with only speculative knowledge combined with works. So he doesn't believe the words that Jesus is speaking, he hates and does not approve of them. He understands everything that Jesus is saying as a good idea, but not really necessary. It's fine for other persons that he has in mind, but it's not intended for him. So he doesn't put any faith, reliance, or trust into anything that Jesus says, so he has no faith. If he consistently puts a check into the offering basket each day and hands out bulletins, he has decided that he can be spiritually comfortable with that.

These builders, and there are many like him, are the ones that have built their house on sand, they pretend to make peace with God to satisfy their own self-created guilt. By volunteering for church functions he puts his foot on the unstable sand of God's mercy, as he sees and understands mercy. He believes that God loves him and he has heard and has convinced himself that a loving God would never condemn anybody to an eternity of a fiery hell. This is the only way it can be if he is going to keep up this life-style. But what has he heard about the God of justice and righteousness? Unfortunately he may have heard of it externally, but it never reached his heart; the place where all beliefs reside. These words of Jesus did not fit onto that wide highway that he was waiting to hear about or paving for himself; this is a foolish builder indeed.

The idea that is suggested in verse 27 is that the house on the rock withstood all of the pounding of the winds and the waters while the house on the sand gave way as soon as the storm hit upon its foundation. "And it fell" is the epitome of tragedy. Jesus could not have added the words "for it had been founded on the sand," because who can found anything on sand? He does use a word to impress the full meaning of what He says on His hearers: "and great was the fall." Like a reverberating crash, utter wreck and ruin, swept away by the swirling torrent, the sand on which the structure stood going down. A vision comes to mind of that of the people on the life boats watching the Titanic going down. All that we can do is watch helplessly. With these words Jesus closes His Sermon. Did a hush fall on His audience? Did they expect Jesus to say something more, something to make them feel good as he closed, as so many preachers today do, to close perhaps, as He had begun, with the word "blessed?" As the silence deepened, and all understood that the last word had been spoken, and that this mighty

warning was the last word, the effect must've been exactly like Matthew records it; His words gave them reason to ponder their own lifestyle.

It probably affected many in different ways; an affirmation to some that they see the need for repentance, while a feeling of defeat by others because some of them have trouble standing against Satan's temptations, the flood of the world's persecutions, the stream and rapids of their heart's lusts, and the blowing winds of the heresy of false doctrine that is so attractive to listen to because it leaves you feeling good about yourself. For all it must've meant that a life change was necessary. They are in a most dangerous condition; there is not scriptural support for this life they are living, they will fall, and great will be their fall. Without a change in course their destruction is inevitable and their ruin is not recoverable.

The Jews have some similes that are similar to what Jesus preached; they used to say: "he whose wisdom is greater than his works to what is he like? A tree whose branches are many and its roots few, and the wind comes and roots it up and overturns it." And another simile; "a man who has good works and learns the law much, to what is he like? To a man who builds with stones below and afterwards with bricks, and though the many waters came and stood at their side, they cannot remove them out of their place. But a man who has no good works and learns the law to what is he like? To a man that builds with bricks first and afterwards with stones; and though few waters came, they immediately overturned them."

Conclusion

Matt. 7:29... *He was teaching them as One having authority*

Jesus' teaching, being from the Father, had an authority that was lacking in the traditional teaching of the scribes, ***Matt. 7:28-29; the result was that when Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.*** We, as believers, probably have all dreamed of what it would be like to hear Jesus teach a Bible Study. But this should not cause us to see our Bible teachers in a dimmer light. If our teachers truly are believers and they have diligently studied the Bible for themselves first and then to teach others, they will allow the Holy Spirit to do the teaching for them and it should sound very similar to what Jesus' teachings sounded like, because their authority to teach ultimately comes from the Father also. So let's take these verses apart to see how this chapter of Matthew concludes: *Referring to the preceding discourse, this then was the result as Jesus concluded His sermon; as the time passed and Jesus had entirely finished making His point in the substance of His teachings and instructions, the crowd was struck with astonishment and admiration at His manner and the character of His teaching; because He was putting things in their mind in a manner as being God-man, as one having strength, force, and efficiency and not in the usual manner as the ones well versed in the*

Scriptures. This sermon is a consummation of a description of what the model disciple would look like and be. Jesus leaves nothing to the imagination or to guessing. He is straight forward and gives us full disclosure of what He expects from us and what we can expect from Him. There should not be any surprises on the Day of Judgment.

As our Lord ended His message, the people were astonished. If we read the Sermon on the Mount and are not astonished ourselves at its revolutionary character, then we have failed to grasp its meaning, because it totally goes against everything that the world stands for, the natural world from whence we came.

The people listening to the sermon recognized a difference between Jesus' teaching and that of the scribes. He spoke with authority; the scribe's words were powerless. His was a voice; theirs was an echo.

As long as Jesus spoke every eye and ear were fixed on Him and He had their full attention, dreading to miss a single word. But when that voice that held them spellbound became silent, the tension was relaxed and amazement swept over the crowd. It was the doctrine in this sermon which brought the amazement, the statements that He made and the substance of what He spoke in this chapter and the two preceding, concerning true joy of life. The true sense and the meaning of several commandments in the law became much clearer; less distorted by man's contribution. They now have a better understanding of the appropriateness and the reasons and purpose of alms giving, prayer, and fasting. They can keep a proper perspective of worldly things such as judging and the straight and narrowness of the way to eternity.

These are things that the scribes and Pharisees did not teach, they were not taught because then the people would see them for who they are, hypocrites in search of their own exaltation. These words that Jesus spoke were spoken as if God Himself was talking to them, with His authority and conviction; and He was! They had to acknowledge the truth in what they had heard. For some this was a relief, for others it was outright rejection of what they had heard because this conviction would bring with it a need for a change in lifestyle and some were not willing to change and were comfortable in the status quo. It meant that they had to separate themselves from the ways of those who by majority populate the world which would be, by being a minority, not the popular thing to do.

But, the main thing that shook them to their core, shook their hearts and minds, was the authoritative power of His doctrines. But this made His sermon personal. The deity of Jesus revealed itself in all that He said, whether He spoke directly regarding Himself or not. But this was not an exception for Him, for this is the way He kept teaching through His whole ministry.

The sermons that the scribes taught were not wholly devoid of moral significance; and it was not impossible to find a bit of truth here and there among the debris of their noble thoughts, but they were occupied a thousand times greater by the minutia of mint, and anise, and cumin, and the length of fringes, and the breadth of phylacteries, and the washing of cups, and platters, new moons, and Sabbaths. But, I personally think that we have all been in churches and listened to sermons that majored in the minors, orators that were waiting for the applause of men, wanting to be exalted by men, but the truths of Christ's teachings that may cause a person to get up and leave, is casually omitted. So these warnings, about false teachers are not just a thing of older days, but are appropriate for today and tomorrow also.

Verse 29 says that "Jesus spoke as one having authority," not so much in respect to the subject matter of His ministry, but this chiefly is in regards to the method He used in His preaching. He delivered truths about Himself in His own name and by His authority. He often used words like "but I say unto you," speaking as a lawgiver, as one that has authority from heaven, and not from men. When the rabbis spoke they would say "Our rabbis say" or "our wise men say" so and so. Our Lord spoke boldly about Himself, in His own name, and did not go about supporting His doctrine by the testimony of others. He spoke as having been given this authority from the Father, because that's where His authority came from.

In summary, the whole Sermon on the Mount teaches us how to be citizens of God's Kingdom and as citizens of God's Kingdom we, as believers, are His representatives to the world. Our conduct, values, and attitudes in life should reflect this awesome privilege. ***Deut. 10:12, 13; and now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear, (or reverence) the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all of your heart and with all of your soul, and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? Micah 6:8; He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?***

