

Being Wise and Great in God's Eyes (Mt. 7:13-27)

I. REVIEW: ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE (MT. 7:13-14)

A. Jesus gave a sober and weighty conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:13-27). He defined two contrasting messages and lifestyles, which are today being proclaimed worldwide by millions of people who profess to be loyal to Jesus. The true message is the call to the narrow way. The distorted message is the call to the broad way.

¹³***“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many [it is popular] who go in by it. ¹⁴Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few [it is unpopular] who find it.” (Mt. 7:13-14)***

B. The two messages are similar in proclaiming Jesus' ***promises of blessing***. However, they are opposite in emphasizing His ***requirements*** (spiritual disciplines and denying the flesh, etc.) and ***warnings*** (rebukes and judgments). The distorted message has disastrous consequences in giving people confidence to live a life of compromise, rather than feeling sorrow for their sin, hungering for righteousness, and going deeper in their relationship with God (fasting, prayer, etc.).

C. ***The broad way***: It is popular because it has few restrictions, giving much room for compromise. Those on this road can follow their fleshly desires. It is the road of tolerance and permissiveness. This message emphasizes Jesus' promises of blessing, but dismisses His requirements (spiritual disciplines and denying the flesh, etc.) and warnings (rebukes and judgments).

D. ***The narrow way***: Few choose this way, because it is difficult on our fleshly desires, which must be denied (Mt. 16:24). It has clear boundaries defined by God. To walk on this road we must leave behind many things that are not in God's will—lust, pride, covetousness, etc. The narrow way is unpopular and is opposed. Those who proclaim this message are seen as extremists or fanatical by people who want to live without feeling conviction for their sin. They want to feel good about their relationship with God without needing to deny their fleshly desires and plans.

E. The Holy Spirit is raising up those who commit to being faithful witnesses to the true message. At this time, the distorted message is far more popular in the Body of Christ than the true one.

F. ***Leads to life***: This life includes delighting in the supremacy of Jesus, which brings us into deep fellowship with God that lasts forever and makes our spirit vibrant in this age, etc. Jesus desires relationship with His people, flowing from mutually loving each other with all of our heart. The distorted grace message promises blessing and forgiveness without repentance, and thus without a deep loving partnership that begins in this age and last forever.

G. ***Easy yoke***: Rest in this context is a spiritual rest for our soul or heart (not a physical rest for our flesh). Taking Jesus' yoke is not about receiving forgiveness, but embracing a life of meekness. We are to be yoked to Jesus and His Sermon on the Mount lifestyle of meekness—it is difficult on fleshly desires, but easy on our heart, as it fills us with peace and contentment.

²⁹***“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am...lowly in heart [meek, humble], and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Mt. 11:29-30)***

II. FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS (MT. 7:15-20)

- A. Jesus warned His people to beware of false prophets and teachers. Most of the New Testament writers also warned of and exposed false teachers. Thus, we must give this same warning today.
- ¹⁵“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits... ¹⁷Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit... ²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Mt. 7:15-20)*
- B. ***Wolves***: Jesus compared false teachers to wolves, who only come among sheep to *take* from them. They bring harm to people’s spiritual life by convincing them that the narrow way is much broader than Jesus taught. They actually present the broad way as if it were the narrow way, thus contradicting Jesus' teaching on the necessity of self denial and bearing their cross (Mt. 16:24).
- C. Most false teachers are not aware that they are false, because they do not read the Scriptures enough to understand their error.
- D. ***Know them by their fruits***: We can only test or know a ministry by its fruit—words and deeds (Mt. 7:16, 20). We must not treat others based on what we discern is wrong, without evidence of fruit. In this way, the Lord protects the Body of Christ from a culture of accusation and slander.
- E. Scripture requires God’s people to take a stand against compromising trends or doctrines in the Church. But we must do this without dismissing the whole Church as participating in them. There are millions of faithful believers worldwide who boldly refuse compromise.
1. There are times to bring judgment to ministries that have destructive doctrines and behavior (Mt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-11; 2 Cor. 11:12-15; 1 Thes. 5:14, 21; 2 Thes. 3:6-14; Rev. 2:2, 14-15, 20). We must do this in the right way and with a right spirit.
 2. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus identified compromise in five of the seven churches. We must take a stand against issues that Jesus took a stand against, without assuming that entire denominations or “streams” in the Body of Christ are in error.
 3. Loving the Church is not the same as agreeing with the practices of each local church in the Body of Christ. It is a biblical expression of love to identify major compromises that are hurting the Church (but without criticizing specific ministries by name, unless going through the biblical process; Mt. 18:15-17).
- F. Practical ways to avoid deception include regular, prayerful Bible reading; setting our hearts to obey the Lord; staying in close relationship with others; regular involvement with a body of believers (Heb. 10:25) that has leaders who uphold biblical doctrines and practices; and maintaining a teachable spirit that receives instruction and correction from others.
- ²⁵...not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. (Heb. 10:25)*
- G. What type of message will we proclaim? The message of the narrow ways calls forth humility and poverty of spirit; it causes people to hunger for Jesus and for a righteous lifestyle.

III. THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE (MT. 7:21-23)

- A. Many who profess Christ do not seek to consistently obey Him in their private lives (7:21-23). Jesus went from talking about false prophets (v. 15-20) to false believers (v. 21-23). Obeying and loving Jesus are synonymous. All of His commands are based in His love to enrich our lives. And our obedience to His commands is an expression of our love for Him (Jn. 14:15, 21).

²¹*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. ²²Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’”* (Mt. 7:21-23)

- B. ***He who does God's will:*** Obedience to Jesus does not earn our salvation, but gives evidence that our faith is genuine (Jas. 2:14-17). We express our faith with works of obedience to Jesus. To exalt works as earning God's love greatly undermines the grace of God. However, to exclude good works as unnecessary is to deny the life-empowering influence of grace (Titus. 2:11-13). Salvation by works and salvation without works both rob Jesus of His glory.

¹⁴*“...if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can [that] faith save him?...”*
¹⁷*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (Jas. 2:14-17)*

- C. ***They say:*** Many boldly profess allegiance to Jesus publicly by calling Him their Lord, but they lack the saving faith that must be expressed in the lives of all who genuinely love Jesus.
- D. ***Supernatural ministry:*** They assume their popular ministry will be sufficient proof of their genuine faith. They have many testimonies of their prophecies, exorcisms, and healing miracles. No one can camouflage their consistent disobedience behind the popularity of their ministry.
- E. ***Depart from Me:*** These will be the most shocking and terrifying words that they will ever hear. Their focus is mostly on their ministry and not on cultivating a life of obedience.
- F. ***You who practice lawlessness:*** These are not mass murderers, but simply people who embraced lifestyles of immorality, drunkenness, lying, and a lack of financial integrity, etc.
- ⁹*Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)*

- G. ***Many:*** It is alarming to know that this deception affects so many who profess to believe in Jesus (Mt. 7:13, 22; 24:5, 11, 12). Jesus emphasized the vast numbers who embrace the broad way.

²²*“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord...’”* (Mt. 7:22)

¹³*“Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and...many who go in by it.”* (Mt. 7:13)

⁵*“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many...¹⁰Then many will be offended, will betray one another...¹¹Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many...¹²The love of many will grow cold.”* (Mt. 24:5-12)

IV. BEING WISE AND GREAT IN GOD'S EYES (MT. 7:24-27)

- A. Jesus ended the Sermon by calling us to a lifestyle of seeking consistent obedience (Mt. 7:24-27). Jesus contrasted the two types of professing believers in His parable of the two builders. The wise one built his house (life) on a foundation of rock. The foolish one built his house on sand.
- B. Jesus did not contrast Christians with non-Christians; He was comparing two groups who “heard His sayings.” Both groups read the Bible, went to church, and were involved in ministry to others. His main point was that nothing can substitute for seeking consistent obedience to Him.
- C. ***Foolish***: Jesus defined the foolish person as one who does not seek to obey Him (7:26-27). The “house fell” refers to these foolish people eventually drawing back from their faith in Jesus. This is a sober warning that must not be ignored by any who profess to believe in Jesus.
²⁶“***Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine [Sermon on the Mount], and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.***” (Mt. 7:26-27)
- D. These foolish ones were enthusiastic about publicly verbalizing that Jesus was their Lord (7:21a) and they had a dimension of God's power in their ministry (7:22), but they did not develop a personal history of seeking to obey Jesus in their private life (7:21b; 26).
- E. ***Storms***: Our love for Jesus is tested by storms or pressures in our life—to be proven as genuine. This gives us opportunity to repair the deficiencies in our love for Him before the age to come.
- F. ***Wise***: The way to be wise in God's eyes is by obeying the Sermon on the Mount (7:24-25).
²⁴“***Whoever hears these sayings of Mine [Sermon on the Mount], and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.***” (Mt. 7:24-25)
- G. ***Great***: Earlier, Jesus emphasized both “doing” and “teaching” His message (Mt. 5:19). He invited everyone to be great in His sight, without regard for their outward achievements or the size of their ministry. It will be based on the size of their heart in obedience and love to Him.
¹⁹“***Whoever breaks [consistently] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does [consistently] and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.***” (Mt. 5:19)
- H. Jesus revealed a new paradigm of greatness. We are to focus on being great in His sight rather than in man's sight. This greatness will be fully manifest in the age to come. Jesus warned that if we teach others to minimize His commands, we will be least in His kingdom in the age to come.
- I. Jesus exhorted us to live in such a way that is ***wise and great in God's sight***—this is the most successful lifestyle. This ultimate success is available to anyone regardless of their gifting, education, ministry impact, social standing, economic situation, or life circumstances, etc.