

Session 20 Being Wise and Great in God's Eyes (Mt. 7:13-27)

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

- A. Those who profess to be believers seek Jesus in two very different ways.
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 broad way:*** Many argue for this way. It is popular because it has few restrictions, giving much room for compromise. There is room for various opinions about morality. Those on this road can follow their desires and not have to leave anything behind (lusts or pride, etc.). It is the road of tolerance and permissiveness. Many are proud of being very tolerant and broad-minded.
- C. ***The narrow way:*** Few choose this because it is difficult on our fleshly desires that must be denied (Mt. 16:24). It has clear boundaries defined by God. To walk on this road we must leave everything behind that is not in God's will—our lust, pride, covetousness, etc.
- D. Jesus demands that His servants be faithful witnesses to this glorious message of life on the narrow way. It is unpopular so there will be opposition. Those who proclaim this will be called an extremist or fanatical. People want to live without restraint and without conviction of their sin.
- E. ***Easy yoke:*** This statement in no way contradicts Mt. 7:13. 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 meekness. We are to be yoked to Jesus and His lifestyle—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...I am lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy...” (Mt. 11:29-30)
- F. What is *difficult* to our flesh is often an easy yoke to our heart (spiritually, emotionally). What is *easy* to our flesh is often difficult on our heart (spiritually, emotionally). Some believers seek in vain for an “easy” path for their flesh that is also “easy” for their heart.

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

- A. Jesus warned His people to beware of false prophets or teachers who claim to speak for God.
¹⁵Beware 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. Jesus compared false teachers to wolves because their ideas are extremely dangerous. They are dangerous to people's spiritual life because they convince them that the narrow way is much broader than Jesus taught. They present the broad and easy way as the “narrow way.” They contradict the words of Jesus by presenting the broad road as the way of grace.

- C. ***Know them by their fruits:*** We can only test or know a ministry by its fruit—words and deeds (Mt. 7:16, 20). We do 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.
- D. Most false teachers are not aware they are false because they do not read the Scriptures enough to understand their error. Do not be dazzled by their popularity, charm or stories.
- E. Scripture requires God's people to take a stand against compromising trends or doctrines in the Church 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 all 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 that has leaders who uphold biblical doctrines and practices; and maintaining a teachable spirit—that receives instruction and correction from others.

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

- A. Many who profess Christ do not seriously embrace obedience in their private lives (Mt. 7:21-23). Jesus went from talking about false prophets (v. 15-20) to false professors (v. 21-23).

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 that which earns 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 (Ti. 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?..."
¹⁷Faith 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.
- 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 in 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 financial lack of integrity, etc.
⁹Do 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:*** Jesus emphasized the popularity of the broad way with its distorted message of grace (Mt. 7:13, 22; 24:5, 11, 12). It is alarming to know that so many professing believers live this way.
²²Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord..." (Mt. 7:22)
¹³Broad is the way that leads to destruction, and...many who go in by it. (Mt. 7:13)
***⁵For 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 consistent obedience (Mt. 7:24-27). He summoned us to renounce the values of secular culture that are so popular in the Church. Nothing can substitute for our consistent obedience. Even a popular ministry cannot camouflage disobedience in one's private life (that is not repented of). Tragically, there are many in the Church who are deceived. We live in the fear of God knowing that our obedience will be tested.
- B. Jesus contrasted the two types of professing believers in His parable of the two builders. One was wise because he took the trouble to build his house on a rock foundation. The foolish one built it on sand. A casual observer cannot see the differences because foundations are not seen.
- C. Jesus tells us that the way to be wise and great in God's eyes is by doing or obeying His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:24-25).
²⁴"Therefore 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)

- D. Jesus invites 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.
- ¹⁹Whoever 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)***
1. Jesus revealed a new paradigm for greatness. We focus on being great in His sight rather than in man's sight. This greatness will be fully manifest in the age to come.
 2. Jesus warned that if we minimize the least of His commandments and teach others to do so, we will be least in His kingdom in the age to come. Many, in the name of teaching on grace, promote spiritual laziness and a lack of commitment to Jesus.
- E. ***The storm:*** Our love of Jesus must be tested and proven as genuine under the pressures of life. There is a two-fold application of storms that test our spiritual foundations. First, personal pressures in this life reveal the genuineness of our faith. Second, the evaluation of our life at the judgment seat of Christ will reveal the true character of our faith (1 Cor. 3:11-15).
- F. Jesus tells us that the way to be foolish in God's eyes is by neglecting to obey His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 7:26-27).
- ²⁶Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, 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)***
- G. Jesus did not describe Christians with non-Christians, but only those who heard His sayings or teachings. Both groups read the Bible, went to church, listened to sermons and listened to Christian music. We cannot always recognize the differences between them because the “foundations” of their private lives are out of view. The main issue is whether they diligently sought to obey Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount.
- H. C. S. Lewis wrote of *resistance thinking* that is *against the world yet for the world*. Our message is both world-affirming and world-denying. We proclaim *what God has called the world to be* in its dignity and destiny, while at the same time proclaiming *what the world has become* in all its depravity. (see *Prophetic Untimeliness* by Os Guinness).
- I. The idea of blending into the secular scene with music, fashion, movies, etc. to win people *by becoming like them* is a great mistake. Jesus taught that believers who are indistinguishable from non-Christians are useless in bringing real change to the world.
- J. Jesus' message is very serious and must not be ignored in light of its sober warnings.
- K. Which road are we going to travel? On which foundation are we going to build?
- L. What type of message will we proclaim? The biblical message calls forth humility, poverty of spirit, and makes people cry to God for mercy and to hunger for Jesus and righteous lifestyles.