

The Ministry of Christ, Part 11

The Lord is laying before us guidelines for a successful Christian life. As He concludes the sermon, we are challenged to live a dedicated life. The Lord tells us there are two paths in life.

Two Ways – Matthew 7:13-14

Matthew 7:13–14 NKJV Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

One gate is wide and unavoidable while the second gate is narrow and few people find it. One leads to destruction and the other to life. They lead in opposite directions. What is the destination of the two ways? Beyond life and destruction, Jesus' message shows the reality of the afterlife. One of these days everyone will come to the end of the way they are traveling.

What is the wide gate and broad way? Why is it wide and broad?

The wide gate and broad way is the normal path that is easy for people to follow without thought. The wide gate and broad way is so easily accessible that it seems to be unavoidable. It is immediately before them and no decision for entrance is necessary. All that must be done is walk in the way that seems right or desirable. The narrow gate requires a decision to turn from the customary and usual path of life and requires commitment, determination, discipline, and self-denial. To walk the narrow way, a person must be on guard and alert at all times. It is not natural to follow the way to eternal life and few will choose it.

In Jeremiah 21:8, God said, “I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.”

In Deuteronomy 30:19 God said, “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live..”

Jesus is presenting the way to life that God has offered. There is a way that seems right to man, but the end thereof is the way of death, (Proverbs 16:25). This wide gate and broad way is wide enough to include all philosophies, beliefs, appetites, passions, liberties, sin and selfish ambitions. To enter into the narrow gate, we must turn from the wide gate and diligently seek out the narrow gate. Committed discipleship is represented as a narrow gate and difficult way that requires discipline, commitment and alertness at all times. The broad way offers many attractions that appeal to the carnal mind and fleshly desires.

Why is discipleship to Christ difficult?

To enter the path of life, a person must turn from their old ways and usual

path. We must repent of our sins and confess that Jesus is Lord and be born again. Jesus said, *“If a man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me,”* (Luke 9:23).

John 3:3 NKJV Jesus answered... “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Luke 13:22–24 NKJV And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

According to Jesus, few find this path or way. Although the Christian life is difficult, it will be worth it all when we see Jesus and are changed into His likeness. Eternal life and all of God’s blessing and favor can be found and enjoyed through the narrow gate.

True and False Prophets- Matthew 7:15-23; Luke 6:43-45

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addressed false prophets (vv. 15-20) and false commitment (vv.21-23).

Matthew 7:15 NKJV Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

According to Jesus, false prophets and teachers look like the people of God. Jesus says they look like His sheep and to discern their true identity we must look deeper. We should take this warning very seriously for the deception of false prophets and teachers can lead the elect astray. Jesus’ warning indicates that they will be among the believers and will take on the appearance of His sheep and messengers of light, but inside they are ravenous wolves.

How do we detect them? (vss. 16-18)

Matthew 7:16-18 NKJV You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

It is impossible for a good tree to bear bad fruit. Notice the character and nature of a good tree, it cannot bear bad fruit. Something truly happens in us when we are transformed by the power of God and become His children. A bad tree cannot bear good fruit because it is filled with evil. Jesus just finished teaching about judging one another, now He is telling us to examine the fruit of those among us.

James 3:12 NKJV Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

The conduct and fruit of false prophets betrays their character for they appear to be harmless sheep but promote the broad way.

How can we determine the character of false prophets and teachers?

Jesus said we need look no further than the fruit of their lives. Righteousness includes speech, conduct, motive and attitude. Jesus said, “every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” Pay attention to what is said, done and a persons behavior and nature. Jesus also warned that “*many false prophets will rise up and deceive many,*” (Matthew 24:11). This is a sober warning to believers to pay attention to the speech, conduct, motive and attitude of those who have any influence over their lives. Then the Lord gave a severe warning to the false prophet and false teacher.

Matthew 7:19-20 NKJV Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

The fruit is more important than the claim.

Matthew 7:21-22 NKJV “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. Many 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?’

They called Jesus ‘*Lord, Lord*’, prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name and did many wonders in His name. From this verse, we learn that not all miracles and wonders are from God. Since there are lying signs and wonders that are supported and implemented by Satan, we need the Holy Spirit to come to our aid to give the gift of discerning of spirits. This warning is important for everyone. We should examine our own heart and spirit in this matter. Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is Jesus’ response to their claim? (vs. 23)

Matthew 7:23 NKJV And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

Although they prophesied in His name, cast out demons in His name and did many wonders in His name, Jesus will declare, “*I never knew you..*”

Why are these individuals rejected and shut out from heaven?

They call Jesus Lord and labor diligently in His name, but something is wrong. Listen to what they say. When they say, “I have done all of these things...” their emphasis is on their own works. They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof, (2 Timothy 3:5). They are trying to please God through self-righteous works. It is impossible to be saved and go to heaven based on works or the things done without knowing Christ. Jesus said, “*I never knew you.*” These people were never truly saved, even though they call Him ‘*Lord, Lord*’ and did great things in His name.

Two Builders – Matthew 7:24-27, Luke 6:47-49

The Sermon on the Mount concluded with a parable about obedience and

how to survive the pressures of life. Jesus was not teaching salvation by works, but was showing us that righteous actions are closely linked to our salvation.

According to verse 24, what makes a person wise?

Matthew 7:24 NKJV Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:

Matthew 7:25 NKJV and 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.

Matthew 7:26 NKJV “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand:

Matthew 7:27 NKJV and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

A wise builder is contrasted with a foolish person. The wise man builds and establishes his life on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ. This firm

foundation is a result of putting into practice what the Word of God teaches.

James 1:22–23 NKJV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;

James 1:24–25 NKJV for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

The person who hears and does what the Lord says will be able to stand when difficult days come. What benefit is it to know the word of God if one does not do what it says? Jesus said that person who hears and does not walk in obedience is like a house built on sand. When the storms of life come, they will not be able to stand.

Jesus illustrated personal righteous in these three parables.

- The two gates, (vv.13,14) show the way we walk.
- The two trees, (vv.15-22) show the fruit of our life.
- The two foundations, (vv. 24-28) show the obedience to the Word.

By these parables, Jesus indicated that few will be saved. He made it clear that profession of righteousness must be accompanied by obedience. Much of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount refers to the day of judgment. What benefit is it if we do wonderful works in the name of Jesus but practice lawlessness and disregard His commands? Our ultimate goal is eternal life and reward in heaven.

- Going down the wrong path leads to destruction. The narrow way leads to life.
- Bearing bad fruit or no fruit leads to separation and fire. Bearing good fruit is

a sign of being connected to Christ. Saying Jesus is Lord and doing great signs and miracles in His name is not the same as really knowing Him.

- Anyone who builds on the wrong foundation is destined to destruction. Being built on Christ is the only way to stand.

According to Jesus, the only way to “be right” is by “doing right.” Hearing the truth is not enough. Even prophesying, casting out demons, and doing miracles is not enough.

Matthew 7:2 AMP And then I will say to them openly (publicly), I never knew you; depart from Me, you who act wickedly [disregarding My commands].

Jesus Authority – Matthew 7:28-29

Matthew 7:28–29 NKJV And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

The multitude responded this way because Jesus taught with an authority the scribes did not possess. They taught the traditions of other teachers. Jesus spoke and taught with the authority of God and in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.