

# Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

September 22, 2024

## I. Introduction

- A. **Matthew 7:13-23**, “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who enter through it. [14] For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. [15] Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [16] You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? [17] So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] So then, you will know them by their fruits. [21] 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 will enter. [22] **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?’ [23] And then I will declare to them, ‘I **never** knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’ [24] Therefore **everyone who hears** these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. [26] **Everyone who hears** these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”
- B. This is Jesus’ conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, and He divides it into five parts. The first, third, fourth, and fifth sections present the same basic truth: (1) Those who live according to the will and word of God are given eternal life, while (2) Those who ignore the will and word of God and choose to be self-ruled (*live lawlessly – contrary to God’s laws*) bring destruction and eternal separation from God upon themselves. And given the context, we can conclude that the will and word of God includes all of Jesus’ teaching in this sermon.
- C. The second section warns us about following misleading Christian leaders.
- D. Pray

- II. Living according to Jesus' teaching brings life, living otherwise brings death
- A. [13] Enter through the **narrow** gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are **many** who enter through it. [14] For the gate is small and the way is **narrow** that leads to life, and there are **few** who find it.
1. It is my opinion that vs **13-14** mean that those who have heard or read the Sermon on the Mount **now know** the difference in thought, word, and deed between the wide gate that leads to destruction and the narrow gate that leads to life. They are also able to figure out that the broad way is the easier way, and the narrow way is the more demanding, more restrictive, and therefore the more difficult way.
  2. However, popular Christian teaching and evangelism presents entering the narrow gate to eternal life as relatively easy. For example, one popular method of evangelism is called "The Romans' Road," and follows selected scriptures from Romans.
    - a. It begins with **Romans 3:23**, which affirms that everyone needs to be saved because all have sinned. It proceeds to **Romans 6:23** to show that the wages of sin is eternal death which is why we need God's gift of salvation if we are to have eternal life.
    - b. Some insert **Romans 5:8** here: (*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*). Regardless, all include **Romans 10:9-10**, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; [10] for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation." (*When Paul wrote this, a public acknowledgment of becoming a Christian opened you up to persecution – a limiting factor by itself.*)
    - c. Finally, most conclude with **Romans 10:13**, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."
  3. Without question, these scriptures are to be taken seriously – yet when treated as if they alone present the way through the narrow gate, they mislead by implying that the narrow gate only requires calling on the Lord, believing in the saving work of Jesus, and publicly acknowledging you are a follower of Jesus – thus making it easy to obtain eternal life.
    - a. As we can see from Jesus' teachings, this is not true. He presents the **broad** way as easy (*minimal restrictions, freedom to do as you please*) and way to life as being **narrow** (*difficult, restrictive, must deny self, live to please God, seek the good of others*).

- b. He affirms this perspective by saying that **many** travel the wide path, while **only a few** find their way to the narrow gate.
  4. As already inferred, the word **narrow** speaks of a gate and a path that are difficult to navigate, that have limited options, and have numerous restrictions.
    - a. For example, the narrow way leaves no room for such things as selfishness, pride, irrational fear, greed, immorality, returning evil for evil, hatred, and sinful anger.
    - b. It requires living in the way that pleases God – which includes humility, dying to self, denying self, and trusting God to be your primary provider, protector, source of security, and source of love.
    - c. It requires living according to the way of love and the good of others – which includes valuing relationships, rejecting divorce, turning the other cheek, and loving your enemies.
  5. Of the people you know, how many are knocking on your door and pressing you to tell them how they can enter through the narrow gate and live a life like that?
    - a. Is not the answer to this question validation for Jesus saying only a few put forth the effort required to find their way to the narrow gate?
    - b. Interestingly, Jesus only says a few find it. He does say how many pass through and travel the narrow way. In my experience, there are those who find the gate, yet never choose to pass through.
  6. **Acts 16:31** is true, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.” But so is **Matthew 7:13-14**. Because both are true, let us do our best to take in **all** that God says about salvation and living the Christian life so that we do not deceive ourselves or get led astray by half-truths or misleading interpretations of scripture.

- B. [15] Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. [16] You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? [17] So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. [18] A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. [19] Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. [20] So then, you will know them by their fruits.
1. After clarifying that there is only the broad way and the narrow way, Jesus warns us about false prophets – which I take to include misleading elders, pastors, teachers, Bible Study leaders, theologians, authors, religious podcasts, and Christian music.

- a. **Why?** Because the consequences of being deceived into thinking you have entered through the narrow gate and are securely on your way to eternal life, when you aren't, are dire – as Jesus shows in His final three statements.
  - b. It is a sad reality that many church leaders in an effort to grow their church numerically endeavor to present the Christian life as easy to enter and self-serving to live.
  - c. Such efforts are not the work of God's servants who are endeavoring to do God's will and build God's kingdom. It is the work of self-serving leaders endeavoring to build their own kingdom with methods developed by the world and promoted by the devil.
  - d. These false leaders may look and sound like God's leaders, they may even say things you find helpful in living a more tranquil, happy life. But underneath their facade, they want something other than what God wants, which means they are leading you to someplace other than the small gate and narrow way.
  - e. However, false prophets are not the only ones responsible for false teaching in the church. Many who consider themselves Christians follow and support leaders who teach what they prefer to hear – be it biblical and religious information that is of little use in living a godly life, or an understanding of scripture that makes it easy and self-serving to become a Christian, and safe to live a half-hearted, double-minded, mediocre Christian life.
2. If I read **Hebrews 13:17** correctly, then it is my responsibility to keep watch over your soul, and I am to do so as one who knows he must give an account to God. **James 1:3** adds that God will judge me more harshly than those I teach and lead.
    - a. In recognition of my responsibility and the fact that I will have to give an account to God, it is my goal to treat God and His church as what is most important (*as opposed to myself*), to serve God (*not myself*), to work at accomplishing His purposes in our church (*not my own*), and to do my best to direct you to the narrow gate and teach you how to travel the narrow way.
    - b. I am also committed to this because I am convinced that how you live here and now, and how you treat the people around you in this life, is a significant factor in where you will spend eternity.
    - c. Therefore, I devote myself to teaching you, counseling you, and showing you, *in the most practical and applicable ways possible*, how to live a godly life now – which is why I don't spend time increasing your general Bible knowledge, or making sure you know

a particular theology, or creating Sunday meetings that send you home feeling good about yourself regardless of how you live throughout the week.

- d. However, I can only lead you to where I have already gone. And I can only continue leading you in the direction of godliness (1) if I maintain a godly, humble life myself, (2) and if I continue growing in my understanding of God and godly living, (3) and if I value God, His kingdom, and godliness on your part more than numbers in attendance or what you think of me.
  3. The reality is, it is godliness, and only godliness that leads to the abundant life, intimacy with God, inner peace, and lasting joy. Therefore, beware of false prophets in the church, for though they sound good, the best they can do is lead you to the wide gate and down the broad way to destruction.
- C. [21] 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 will enter.
1. To call Jesus ‘Lord’ is to acknowledge His position as master over you, and your position as His servant.
  2. Therefore, to call Jesus ‘Lord’ and serve yourself and act according to your own will is to turn against what you claim to be true, and to turn away from serving Jesus to serving yourself.
  3. In other words, saying the right words is empty and meaningless unless you live the right way, that is, according to what Jesus says.
- D. [22] 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?’ [23] And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”
1. I cannot offer a satisfying explanation as to how highly religious, self-deceived unbelievers can prophesy, cast out demons, and perform miracles.
    - a. However, we know from scripture that Judas was included when Jesus sent out His twelve disciples with the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons – as they preached the gospel of the Kingdom (**Matthew 10:7-8**).
    - b. And in the OT, we have the story of Balaam, a well-known, yet greedy diviner who had been hired to curse the Israelites, yet God used him to bless Israel.

2. Regardless, what matters is the truth Jesus is conveying. Prophecy, casting out demons, and performing miracles are neither proof of being born again, nor a reason to feel certain you have eternal life.
  3. Assurance of eternal life, according to Jesus, comes from living according to the word of God in this life – which includes believing in Jesus’ saving work on the cross and in His resurrection.
  4. Paul says it this way in **Romans 2:13**, “It is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.”
- E. [24] Therefore **everyone who hears** these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall (*nothing was lost*), for it had been founded on the rock. [26] **Everyone who hears** these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall (*all was lost*).”

### III. Conclusion

- A. What we claim to believe and be, in relation to salvation and the Christian life, remain empty and of no eternal worth until we proceed to live according to Jesus’ teaching and the will and word of God. We may deceive ourselves with our claims, and we may deceive others, but we won’t deceive God.
- B. Therefore, may we make it our daily aim to live according to Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and God’s speaking throughout the Old and New Testaments.