

### Two Gates and Ways, Two Trees and Fruits, Two Builders and Foundations

#### Matthew 7:13-29

Matthew 7:13-29 - *“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. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it. <sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them. 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. <sup>22</sup> 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?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; <sup>24</sup> “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: <sup>25</sup> 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.*

*<sup>26</sup> “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: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

*<sup>28</sup> And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”*

#### Background Notes

In this final section of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord used a common teaching method that was used by the Jewish rabbis and other teachers in those days. It could be called the “Two Ways” method of teaching. Here the Lord talked about two gates and two roads, two trees and their fruits, and two builders and their foundations.

Although the Lord used the common teaching method of that day, that doesn’t mean that His teaching was similar to the teachers of that day. In fact, it was very different. *“The people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (v28-29).* When the scribes taught, they quoted former rabbis, and relied on the teaching of Jewish tradition for their authority. But when the Lord taught, He was His own authority. This was God speaking! The Lord Jesus had not been trained in any school of the Pharisees, and He had no recognized educational credentials, but He spoke with authority – God’s authority -- and the people listened. And that’s a great lesson for us. Tradition, formal education, and recognized credentials all have their place, but our authority is the Word of God! If we know the Word of God and preach and teach the Word of God, people who are hungry for God will listen.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. There are two different gates and ways.

*“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” (v13-14).*

In past Talks From Matthew we’ve learned that the Sermon on the Mount doesn’t give us the way of salvation. Rather, it gives us “the way of righteous living.” Even here in verses 13-14 the context is **discipleship** – not salvation. However, these verses can certainly be applied to salvation. In hermeneutics (biblical interpretation), one principle is that for any Scripture there is **one interpretation**, but **many applications**.

So the narrow gate and narrow way that leads to life is Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9).* And in John 14:6 He said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

Jesus Christ is the narrow gate and the narrow way that leads to life. Sadly, most people are attracted to the wide gate and follow the broad road that leads to destruction. The broad road is not filled with drunkards, murderers, thieves, and sexual sinners! Many respectable people are on the broad road to destruction, but they don’t realize it! Proverbs 14:12 says, *“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”*

Although the two gates and two ways certainly have an application for salvation and becoming a Christian, the context of the Sermon on the Mount is not the way of salvation – it’s the way of righteous living. Our Lord’s main point is that **the majority of believers are not committed disciples**. In fact, they don’t even enter the gate of discipleship. Most believers waste their lives doing things that will not count for eternity. In that way their lives are wasted and lost - not their souls, but their lives.

We have only one life to live, and only one life to give. What are we doing with our lives? The life of the committed disciple is not easy. It’s uphill all the way. The way of discipleship is narrow and there is danger on that pathway, but it’s so much more rewarding! Not only that, the way of discipleship has eternal value. There are two different gates and ways. The Lord invites us to be His disciples.

### 2. There are two different trees and fruits.

In verses 15-20 the Lord warned His listeners of false prophets or false teachers who appear to be genuine. They are like wolves. They may be wearing “sheep’s clothing” as a disguise to be able to infiltrate the flock, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. They infiltrate the flock for their own personal gain - to feed themselves, not to feed and care for the sheep! These false prophets are so deceptive that they will actually do miracles and cast out demons in the name of Jesus! *“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?’” (v22),*

Now remember the context of the Sermon on the Mount. It was given in anticipation and preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven to be set up here on earth. There will be no false prophets in that wonderful future Kingdom of Jesus Christ when it is finally established here on earth. All false prophets will be judged at our Lord's return. However, this warning against false prophets has important and serious application for today. It will apply as well to the false prophets who will be present during the Tribulation period that will precede the kingdom age.

Notice that you can recognize false prophets by their **"fruits"** – by what is seen in their lifestyle. *"You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit" (v16-17).* The fruit of the Spirit will characterize true and trustworthy teachers, but the fruit of the Spirit will not be seen in the lives of false teachers and their followers. True teachers will display lifestyle characteristics such as love, joy, peace and faithfulness to Christ. In your pastor, in your church teachers and leaders, and in your favorite radio or TV Bible teachers -- look for the **fruit of the Spirit!**

Ultimately false prophets and false teachers will be thrown into the fires of hell: *"Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire"(v19).*

## 2. There are two different builders and foundations.

*"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: 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. "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: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (v24-27).*

Most of us remember this story from our Sunday school days - right? In fact, many of us know the song and the motions about the wise and foolish men and their houses: "The rains came down and the floods came up, and the house on the rocks stood firm – but the house on the sand went – crash!"

Here again, this little parable can be applied to salvation. However, remember that the context of the Sermon on the Mount is about **discipleship** rather than salvation. There are many believers who don't build on the Rock. Building your house on the Rock means building your life on the Lord and His Word - not just for salvation, but also as a way of life. Building your house on the sand means building your life on the shifting sands of this world's value system - not on the firm and unchanging Rock of Jesus and His Word.

Many believers - not just unbelievers - are building their houses on sand. Many believers are building their lives on the values and attitudes of this world system. Before the storms come, a house built on rock and a house built on sand may look very much the same. In fact, a house on the sand may even appear to be bigger and better! But when the storms

come, **it's the foundation that matters!** Have you ever been to a beach after a hurricane blew through the area? Many of the beautiful beachfront homes are wiped out - nothing left but rubble.

When the storms of life come, it's your **foundation** that counts. If you're a believer and you're building your life on the principles of God's Word, you'll weather the storms of life - whether the storms are financial loss, or accident, or major illness. However, if you're a believer and you've built your life on the selfish pleasure and values of this world so you're not walking close to the Lord, the storms of life will be devastating. Many believers falter and fall during the storms of life.

Don't build your Christian life on sand! Be a wise builder, and build your life on the strong foundation of Jesus Christ, and the teachings and principles of God's Word. Remember - there are two different builders and foundations.

## Practical Application

### Don't be deceived by signs and wonders!

The false teachers of verses 21-23 are not Christian backsliders - they are **unbelievers**. Notice that the Lord will say to them, "***I never knew you...***" (v23). The Lord will never say "***I never knew you***" to a true believer, no matter how much he or she has failed in the Christian life. Notice that these unbelievers actually prophesy in the name of Jesus, and cast out demons in the name of Jesus, and even perform wonders (miracles) in the name of Jesus! But the Lord will say to them, "I never knew you."

So don't be deceived by teachers who perform "signs and wonders." Satan is a master at deception. He even disguises himself as an "angel of light." "*For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians 11:14.) Some so-called "miracles" of false "prophets" are actually deception and manipulation by the ultimate false teacher.

So look at the lifestyle characteristics of the people who are performing the signs and wonders. Do their lives display the fruit of the Spirit? Are they humble and Christ-like, or do they seem to be more interested in hyping themselves, in making a name for themselves, and looking for money - often to extend their own extravagant lifestyles?

Even with warnings like this from the lips of our Lord, many people are taken in and deceived by "signs and wonders." They might say, "These miracles must be of God since they're supernatural, right?" Wrong! The devil has supernatural power, but it is evil and satanic. Remember, there are actually occult healings and miracles.

Here's one area where Christians must be critics – and I mean "critics" in a good sense. This is an area in which Christians must be "judgmental"! Be very careful. Don't be deceived by signs and wonders!