

# PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE

Matthew 7:13-29

Key Verse 24

**“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”**

Today we come to the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It is fitting for us to briefly review it up to this point. What are the 8 Beatitudes, or descriptions of a blessed person? (The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and those who are persecuted because of righteousness) Then what two metaphors did Jesus use to describe Jesus' disciples in relation to the world? (Salt and light) After that, Jesus said he came not to abolish but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets and he required a righteousness surpassing that of the religious elite to enter the kingdom of heaven. What were the 6 laws or teachings that Jesus took to a higher level of difficulty? (murder/anger, adultery/lust, divorce, oaths, eye for eye/vengeance, love your enemies) Then what was Jesus' concluding command? (Be perfect) That's chapter 5. Chapter 6 has 2 main parts. What were the 3 acts of righteousness Jesus mentioned that we should do before the eyes of our Father in heaven, for his reward? (giving to the needy, praying, fasting) Then what were the 2 main commands to overcome the pursuit of money and the problem of worry about provision? (Store up treasures in heaven; seek first his kingdom) Finally, Jesus said not to judge, not to give dogs what is sacred, to ask, seek and knock and then the Golden Rule, which is...? (Do to others what you would have them do to you)

These are wondrous and at the same time challenging teachings. They don't agree with common sense or our natural way of thinking and living. For example, we like the saying, "If it feels good, do it," or, "Follow your heart." This is the way of the world. But it does not agree with Jesus' teachings.

Today, Jesus presents two paths: the broad way to destruction and the narrow way to life. He warns against false prophets who bear bad fruit, and false disciples who don't know him or do the Father's will. Finally, Jesus describes people as wise or foolish builders according to their response to his word. Let's not take Jesus' words casually.

**First, the broad and narrow roads (13-14).** Let's read verses 13-14. **“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads**

## PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE

to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." To our ears, these are disturbing words, are they not? Why? It is because Jesus says that "many" are on the road to destruction. That doesn't agree with our normal way of looking at people. We usually consign only killers to judgment in hell. Is Jesus talking about hell, or just messing up in life? He contrasts the wide gate and broad road to destruction with the small gate and narrow road to life. Many are on the road to destruction and few find the road to life. May this never be! But Jesus said it is so.

Then why are so many on the road to destruction? How can so many people be wrong and deceived? It is because it is quite natural to live in pursuit of an easy, comfortable, and popular way of life. For example, if we see many people doing something or buying something we easily think, I will also do that or buy that. We naturally follow the crowd to where the action or pleasure or delight is. We see people enjoying life and think, "Ah, that's where the joy is. Let me go there and do that. Let's go together, shall we? Come along with me!"

Exodus 23:2 says, "**Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd...**" Moses challenged the Israelites, "**I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live...**" (Dt 30:19) Jesus challenges us to consider: Are you on the path to destruction or the road to life? The road to life is not popular or easy. It involves hardships, persecutions, rejections and sufferings. It is not the natural choice I will make if my aim is an easy, comfortable, trouble-free life. But it is the way to life. Actually, Jesus is the narrow way to life. He said, "**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" (Jn 14:6) So we must ask ourselves: "Am I on the narrow road to life? Am I following Jesus?"

**Second, false prophets and false disciples (15-23).** In this part, Jesus exposes false prophets and warns fake disciples. Look at verses 15-20. "**Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is**

## PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE

**cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.”**

Jesus warns, **“Watch out for false prophets.”** What is a false prophet? A false prophet claims to represent and speak for God, but in fact, a false prophet leads people away from God and the truth. Pharaoh’s magicians were false prophets who defied the word of God and challenged his power. In Jeremiah’s time and many other times, false prophets preached peace and prosperity, when God was calling them to repent of idolatry and turn back to God. The Bible warns that false prophets even do miraculous signs to deceive people and lead them away from the truth of God. Apostle Paul warned that Satan masquerades as an angel of light and Satan’s servants appear to be servants of righteousness (2Co 11:13-15).

Then how can we recognize false prophets? Jesus said twice, **“by their fruit you will recognize them.”** There is good fruit and there is bad fruit. Good fruit comes from the good root of a good heart and life. Bad hearts bear bad fruit. A heart full of pride, greed and lust bears bad fruit. A life that is self-seeking and worldly produces bad fruit.

Jesus is challenging us to consider: **“Who are you following?”** Is the one you are listening to and following worthy of imitation? What is the fruit of their life? What kind of influence do they have on others? Who is truly representing God and God’s word? Good fruit is a repentant heart, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and a life that honors and glorifies God. Many famous people are false prophets leading people away from God. We must follow the ones who are bearing good fruit, not those who bear bad fruit.

Of course, we know that Jesus is the Son of God, the promised Messiah, who came from heaven in the wisdom, power and love of God. Jesus is the One to trust wholeheartedly and follow. Also, those in this world who are earnest in imitating Jesus’ life and following his teachings are worth listening to and following and learning from. Just as Paul wrote, **“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.”** (1Co 11:1)

Jesus then talked about fake disciples in verses 21-23. **“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive**

## PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE

out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

This teaching of Jesus seems to contradict other New Testament teaching, so it requires explanation. To call Jesus "**Lord**" is not only good but necessary for salvation. The problem here is not with the confession but the proof. In other words, it's possible to talk the talk but not walk the walk. Said another way, a person can call Jesus "**Lord,**" but go on their own way living their own life. They believe in Jesus just in case the Bible might be true, as an escape from a judgment they know they deserve. These people might even do seemingly good or religious things in the name of Jesus.

Then what is the problem with them? Jesus reveals it in his words to them: "**I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!**" They do not really know or follow Jesus. They are not interested in doing the Father's will. Rather, they use Jesus for their own purposes and benefits. They might even engage in Christian activities, but their motivation is worldly gain or to look or feel good as if they've done their duty. They are following a Jesus that they prefer, such as a prosperity Jesus, who promises them no problems of life, but rather good health and much wealth. Their purpose in following Jesus is to get some worldly benefit, and at the same time the promise of eternal life.

American Christians are in great danger, because we are too much focused on worldly benefits, rather than God's eternal reward. This is why my life key verse is Mark 8:35, which says, "**For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.**" I recognize my strong desire and inclination, even as a follower of Jesus, to live an easy, self-centered, pleasure-seeking life. But Jesus calls me again and again to lose my life in this world for him and for the gospel.

Are you trusting and trying to obey Jesus Christ personally, or are you just going through Christian motions to do the minimum required to get into heaven? Are you following the Jesus of the Bible or an easy, laid back Jesus, a Jesus made in America? Lord, have mercy on us. Forgive our complacent, self-seeking attitudes. Lord, we seek to please you and do your will, to live out your life, growing in your mind and heart. May this be our true confession.

**Third, wise and foolish builders (24-29).** This part is the conclusion to which Jesus has been building. Look at verses 24-27. "**Therefore everyone who hears**

## PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE

**these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”**

There are two types of builders, one is wise and the other foolish. Wise builders build their house on solid rock. Foolish builders build on sand. Why would anyone build a house on sand? Because it is easier and less costly. To build on rock requires much more effort and money. In appearance, there is no difference between the house built on sand and the one built on rock. They both look good above the ground. But the foundation underground makes all the difference. When a storm comes, only the house on rock survives, though it takes a beating from water and wind. The house on sand falls with a great crash.

To everyone, storms are coming. There are storms of temptations, trials, hardships, persecutions, failures, heartbreaks. Storms will involve our health, finances, relationships. Finally, there is the greatest storm of all to face, God's judgment. How will we fare in these storms?

If we've loved and obeyed Jesus Christ and put his words into practice, we will be saved. The house we've built will survive. But if we have not put his words into practice, our house will collapse. The key here is not hearing, but obeying Jesus' words. Both the wise and foolish builders were people who heard Jesus' words. Attending church and going to Bible studies is good. But is it not enough. It's useless unless we put Jesus' words into practice.

Recall that Jesus taught this sermon mainly to his disciples in the hearing of the crowds. Yet it is the crowds whose response is recorded in verses 28-29. **“When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.”** Jesus' teaching had power because it was the living word of God. Jesus wasn't giving mere advice or human opinion. He was giving the words of eternal life, which could change hearts and lives.

Today, Jesus presented two ways of life for us: the broad road to destruction and the narrow road to life, the bad fruit of false prophets and the good fruit of true servants of God, the way of lip-service Christians and the way of loving and

## **PUT JESUS' WORDS INTO PRACTICE**

obeying Jesus, the wise builder who puts Jesus' words into practice and the foolish builder who just goes on their own way. May we all take Jesus' words seriously, and out of love and with the help of the Holy Spirit, put Jesus' words into practice.