

Matthew 7:21-29

A Christian's Commitment: A Radical Choice - Part 2

Friday, August 5th, 2005

Introduction:

In our last study, we took some time to review the teachings of Christ that we have studied in the Sermon on the Mount – His teachings on the character and life of a true believer. In these teachings he has repeatedly laid out contrasts between how His disciples were to live in comparison to the world around them. This contrast was described as a choice between two gates and their corresponding paths. The way through faith in Christ alone was small and its path narrow while the way of the world was wide and its path broad. The way of Christ leads to life, while the way of the world leads to destruction and yet few find it – not because of insufficient grace – but man's stubborn sinfulness. As we close our study of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ leaves us with the same choice, giving two unacceptable alternatives.

Read Matthew 7:21-29.

“Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you...’ ” (v.21-23)

In defense of themselves on the Day of Judgment, what was the response of those who would be kept out of the kingdom of heaven?

- “Did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” (v.22)
- claimed that they had done much work in Christ's name – speaking, exorcising, and performing miracles – emphasis on OUTWARD appearances / saying all the right things

According to Christ's response in this passage, why was this unacceptable? (v.21 & 23; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 John 1:6, 2:3-6; cf. Matt 24:24, 2 Thess 2:9,10)

- Verbal profession of faith / works without obedience
- Stott: they called him LORD but did not submit to his lordship
- As seen in Christ's rebuke / warning:
 - v.21 – “... only he who does the will of my Father...”
 - v.23 – “...you evildoers”
- Verbal profession of faith is necessary (Rom 10:9,10) but must be accompanied by obedience.
 - 2 Tim 2:19b – “...Everyone who **confesses** the name of the Lord must **turn away from wickedness.**”
 - 1 John 1:6 – “If we **claim** to have fellowship with [God] yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.”
 - 1 John 2:3-6 – “The man who **says**, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever **claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.**”
- Signs and miracles alone do not guarantee salvation...
 - cf. Matt 24:24 – “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles...”
 - cf. 2 Thess 2:9,10 – “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders...”

Should this teaching cause us to question our assurance of salvation? (2 Cor 13:5; 1 John 5:13, 3:21-24)

- if we are not living in obedience – with lives marked by persistence disobedience - YES
- 2 Cor 13:5 – “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” - it is valid to test ourselves – to examine our life and faith carefully against the word
- What are the elements upon which we can test our faith? → 1 John 5:13 – “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” - 1 John were written for this very purpose
 - 1 John 3:21-24 – “Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: **to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another** as he commanded us. Those who **obey his commands** live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.
 - BELIEF – right doctrine (see also 1 John 2:21,22)
 - LOVE (see also 1 John 4:7,8)
 - OBEDIENCE (see also 1 John 3:5,6)

“...[Christ] is not impressed by our pious and orthodox words.
He still asks for evidence of our sincerity in good works of obedience.”

- John Stott, p.208

The Wise and Foolish Builders (v.24-27)

Compare and contrast the two builders and their houses (cf. Luke 6:46-49). What do each represent?

- BOTH were people who HEAR the teachings of Christ → both built houses (that may have been indistinguishable on the surface)
 - recall: sermon intended for would-be followers – ie. People *within* the church body that hear Christ's teachings
- Contrast: WISE man vs. FOOLISH man → in their response to what they have heard...
 - WISE: *"everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice"* (v.24)
 - FOOLISH: *"everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice"* (v.24)
- Contrast: WISE man vs. FOOLISH man → in the foundations of their houses...
 - WISE: *"dug deep and laid the foundation on rock"* (Luke 6:48) – SOLID foundation
 - FOOLISH: *"built his house on sand"* → NO foundation
- Contrast: WISE man vs. FOOLISH man → in the testing of their houses by storm...
 - WISE: the storm *"could not shake [the house]"*
 - FOOLISH: *"the moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete"*
- Those who hear *and obey* build a firm foundation of their faith...

What was the unacceptable response to Christ's teachings in this passage? Is this teaching us salvation by works? (John 14:23-24; James 1:22-25, 2:14-26)

- Hearing / knowledge of Christ's teachings *without obedience*
- NOT teaching salvation by works...
 - John 14:23-24 – obedience as an **outward manifestation of our love for God**.
 - Faith without action is dead – obedience stands as **evidence of the inward condition of our hearts**
 - James 1:22-25 – v.22: *"Do not merely listen to the word... Do what it says"*
 - James 2:14-26 – v.17: *"faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead"*

Reflection and Application: Teaching that demands a response... (v.28-29)

How did the crowds who had gathered to hear Jesus' teachings to His disciples respond at end of the Sermon? Why did they respond in this way?

- RESPONSE: *"the crowds were amazed"*
- WHY: *"...because he taught as one who had authority?"* – as teacher, judge, Lord, Savior, and God (Stott, p.212-222)

Now that you have heard Christ's teachings, there is no neutral ground. His teaching demands a response. You can either obey it or reject and ignore it. Our salvation rests only in the grace of God who has given us eternal life through His son Jesus Christ (1 John 5:11-12). Christ came to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law and, to those who receive Him by placing their faith in Him, the gift of the Holy Spirit is given, enabling us to live this sanctified life.

Take a few minutes to consider how, in the following areas of your life, you have heard these teachings and need to put them into practice.

...your **CHARACTER** (Matt 5:1-12):

...your **INFLUENCE** (Matt 5:13-16):

...your **RIGHTEOUSNESS** (Matt 5:17-48):

...your **RELIGION** (Matt 6:1-18):

...your **AMBITION** (Matt 6:19-34):

...your **RELATIONSHIPS** (Matt 7:1-12):

What gate will you enter through, what path will you walk and what foundation will you build on?