**Building an Indestructible Life**

*The Way that Leads to Life: Moral & Doctrinal Purity*

Matthew 7:13-23

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**Two Paths: Choose Wisely (Matthew 7:13-14)**

We have reached the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount; now the listener has to choose.  Choose wisely, because life and death hang in the balance (Deut. 30:11-20). It is a radical choice. Why radical? Scan back through chapters 5-7, and contemplate how difficult and, yes, radical Jesus’ teaching is on topics like hate, lust, judging others, marriage and divorce, worry, etc. The last two verses of this chapter tell us that His teaching astonished the people present.

Jesus does not hide the fact the way that leads to life is a difficult path. Picture a path along the side of a cliff. When walking that path, you must be careful every time you pick your foot up and look where you will put it down. Notice in Deut. 30:11-14 that it is not too mysterious (impossible) to know what to do; the difficulties come in putting God’s ways first and resisting our own ways. Everyone has the ability to do what Jesus laid out in this sermon, but it is difficult because it is against human reasoning. Therefore, the choice may be difficult, but it is not complex. In contrast, note the wide path—or the path of least resistance—is much easier, but its end is destruction.

In the questions section, meditate on the question, “If Jesus was to return today and preach another sermon like this, what topics might He cover that would be considered radical in your life and among your peers?” Likewise, what doctrines do we find in the scriptures that your peers would consider difficult or radical today?

In contrast to Jesus’ honesty, many today offer an invitation which speaks of many paths but the same end location, and many have a carnal appeal like wealth, health, and untold pleasure. Does Matthew 7:13-14 even slightly resemble this modern teaching about Christ?

**Two Fruits: Choose Wisely (Matthew 7:15-22)**

Jesus begins this section with **“BEWARE”** which should make us sit up and listen closely. Paul feared that the Corinthians would be deceived by someone who would come and preach a different Jesus, a different gospel than they had accepted, and that they might put up with it! (2 Corinthians 2:3-4). We are being warned that we are going to have to live in the midst of false prophets.

The Old Testament (Deut 13:1–3; 18:20–22; Jer 23:13–32; 27:9–10; 29:8–9; Ezek 13:1–23; 22:28; Mic 3:11; Zeph 3:4) and the New Testament (Acts 20:28–29; 2 Cor 11:1–4, 13–15; Gal 1:6–9; Col 2:8, 16–19; 2 Thes 2:8–12; 1 Tim 1:19–20; 4:1–2; 2 Tim 2:16–17; 4:3–4; Tit 1:10–11; 2 Pet 2:1–2; 1 John 2:18–23; 4:1–3; 2 John 9–11; Jude 3–4; Rev 2:15, 20–24) are full of warnings regarding false teachers. Does this not underscore the “**BEWARE**” in this passage? What is the fruit of a prophet? Their teaching is their fruit. Therefore, we can tell by their teaching whether they are “good fruit” or “evil fruit.” Part of their deception may be that their actions “appear” to be good, because they do this to fit in and try to deceive us.

Jeremiah gives us a great test of a false prophet that we can use to heed this warning (Jeremiah 23:16-17).

1. They speak of a vision of their own heart and not from the mouth of the Lord
2. To those who despise God, they say, “You shall have peace.”
3. To everyone who walks according to the dictates of his own heart, they say, “No evil shall come upon you.”

Another key is that he “looks like a sheep” in order to deceive but inwardly is a ravenous wolf. This sounds like Satan in 1 Peter 5:8. These are not people on the outside; they blend in with Christians and try to draw you away. We need to be careful not to be judgmental of everyone we come into contact with, but when you see the signs of Jeremiah, it is time to beware.

On the other hand, a good prophet will preach sound doctrine. It is hard to read Paul’s two letters to Timothy and his letter to Titus without finding his instructions for them to take the sound doctrine they had received from him and preach it to others (2 Timothy 1:13; 2:2). The elder should be able to compare anyone's teaching and rebuke any who do not teach sound doctrine (Titus 1:9). Secondly, a good prophet teaches the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). If someone never preaches on the grace of God, then the prophet is not preaching the whole counsel of God. Likewise, if someone never preaches on sin, then this prophet is not preaching the whole counsel of God either.

What do you think of when one says “good fruit”? Most likely it is the list in Galatians 5:19-25. Many false teachers do portray the fruits in this list. Now, Paul also speaks of the fruit of the spirit being “truth” and “finding out what is acceptable to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-10). The only way we can do this is to compare their fruit (teaching) to the standard which is the word of God. If it fails the test, it is false.

A word of warning, we need to be careful to hold fast to sound doctrine, which simply put means it is found in the word of God. However, the mindset is also wrong to build hedges around the word of God in order to keep from breaking a command. Likewise, we should give people the benefit of the doubt and not listen to every teacher and every sermon in order to find fault. If we do, we may miss a truth God would have us to hear and apply.

Just like the wide gate, the end of the false prophet is destruction (v. 19). In Matthew 7:21-23, it is clear that it may even come as a shock to the false prophet (or the one deceived) that he is doomed to be separated from God for eternity.

**Two Foundations: Choose Wisely (Matthew 7:24-28)**

“Everyone, therefore, that heareth these words of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.” We want to focus in on the phrase, "these words of mine." Throughout the New Testament, the final authority is the word spoken by Christ. Jesus has commanded us to teach the world "whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). We will stand in judgment, and the standard will be His words (John 12:48). In Hebrews 2:1-3 we must give heed to the things we have “heard” and the things “spoken by the Lord in the beginning.”  "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 9). We should not go beyond the things which are written (1 Corinthians 4:6). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16). Whatever you do, do it “in the name of the Lord” (Colossians 3:17). Prophecy of Scripture is not of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man but was given by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21). Read Colossians 1:9-10 and meditate on the question, “How do we fully please Him?” We do so by being filled with the knowledge of His will and being filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding that we may walk worthy of the Lord.