

Session 7 Being Wise and Great in God's Eyes (Mt. 7:13-27)

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

Now this final session this is my seventh message. I started the first night with God wanting to restore the first commandment to first place in the Church. It is all about love. Then we talked about the false grace message and the need to contend for the new one. The Bible tells us to contend earnestly for the new-covenant grace message. We need to contend for it, because there will be opposition against it. Paul said it, Jude said it, and a number of others said it. Then we looked at the eight Beatitudes as normative of what biblical Christianity is to look like. Then we looked at being a new creation in Christ and the three principles of cooperating with the grace of God: the knowing principle, the resisting principle, and the pursuing principle, and how all three of them have to operate together.

Now, out of the seven messages, I believe this one is the most important one of all. This is the weightiest one and I think the one that is the most uncommon. The other ones you will hear regularly. This one you will hear sometimes, but not enough. It is the final teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. He teaches on the narrow road versus the broad road and then He brings it to the next level.

JESUS IS TALKING TO PEOPLE WHO LISTEN TO HIS WORD

Now again, He is talking to people who listen to His word. He is talking to believers and false believers, who don't know they are false believers. He is not talking to those who follow the world religions. He's not comparing Christianity to world religions. No, He is talking to people who listen to His Word. Jesus is giving us one of the weightiest warnings in the whole of the Bible. He says that many of the people, who profess to be loyal to Him, take the broad road. They don't even know it is the broad road. It leads to destruction and they don't know it. He says it is the popular road. He says that on the last day when it is too late to change anything, there will be utter destruction and disaster for them and they will be shocked beyond measure. They will say, "Lord, Lord, we were enthusiastic about You. We did miracles in Your name," and He will say, "But we never had the relationship to which I called you, and that is what salvation is about" (Mt. 7:22-23, paraphrased).

WE MUST APPEAL TO THOSE WE LOVE CONCERNING THE TRUTH

Then He says, "Don't be the foolish man who takes the broad way, who takes the easy way with the popular crowd. Be the wise man who takes time and effort to build his life on My words" (Mt. 7:24-27, paraphrased). What He is saying in essence is, "Don't let anybody give you false comfort." That is what He is talking about here in this passage. That is the main thrust of it.

We are going to break it down just a little bit. Most of us are familiar with this passage, but I don't know how many of us wrestle with it, and not just wrestle with in our personal lives, but also boldly proclaim this to our friends as part of the Sermon of the Mount. I don't mean in a condescending way, looking down at them as if we have attained it and they haven't. I'm not talking about a condescending attitude that comes from a feeling of superiority, which says, "You better get with it." That is not what I am saying. Why I am saying this is because I love the people who have gathered in His name in this place. We must appeal to those we love concerning the truth.

DON'T LET ANYBODY GIVE YOU FALSE COMFORT

Now some of you are you are in conflict right now. You are saying, "I am confused." That conflict actually will turn out to be good for you. I don't want you to be easily comforted. You are like the caterpillar in the cocoon struggling to get out and the struggle in the cocoon releases the butterfly. Get the Bible, wrestle with it, and don't let somebody comfort you quickly with a false answer. If you are struggling in your conflict that means you are listening.

Here is the reason some of you are struggling: you have grown up with the dominant message being the distorted grace message. It is falsehood and it is error and you have heard it for years. You are saying, "Wait, this is surprising me. I didn't expect this at this conference. I don't know." This is a good struggle. Some of you are struggling, because you are uncomfortable. You are saying, "Maybe I'm not saved. No, I know I am, but what if I am not." That is a good struggle right now. It doesn't hurt you to ask deep questions about the genuineness of your own faith.

Now we are not supposed to live our spiritual life without confidence in God, that is not what I am saying, but there are moments when we can ask, wrestle, go deep, and say, "God, give me Your answer about my life, not my youth pastor's answer or my friend's answer. I want it from You and Your Word," because, beloved, that is the only answer that will stand steady on the final day.

JESUS EXPOSES THE DECEPTION OF THE BROAD ROAD

Well, let's go back and look at this. We will do an overview of the first few parts of this final exhortation in Matthew 7:13-27. It is one exhortation. He has finished the Sermon on the Mount and now He says to the crowd that has gathered, "Some of you will not listen to Me and some of you will, although all of you think you are listening to Me." They applauded Him at the end of the sermon. They thought it was awesome and said that He was amazing, but Jesus said that many of them were not really going to follow through. He was waking them up, because they were so overjoyed in Him without even knowing that they would not follow through on what He said.

Well, He starts off at the end of the Sermon on the Mount with the call to the narrow road and He exposes the deception of the broad road. This is what we just covered in the previous session. I am going to say it just one more time for about three minutes. The two messages—the narrow-road message and the broad-road message—are similar on this one point: they both use Bible verses to explain the point of Jesus' blessing. The preachers of the narrow road speak on the blessings of Jesus. The preachers of the broad road speak on the blessings of Jesus. They are unified. That is what makes it confusing. They both use the Bible, but they are opposite on the next point.

THE NEED TO EMPHASIZE JESUS' REQUIREMENTS AND WARNINGS

The broad-road preachers don't emphasize the requirements or the warnings. Some of them go further than just dismissing them; they actually say there are no requirements. They contradict the teachings of Jesus boldly in the name of grace. They tell His promises accurately, but they negate Jesus' own teachings by negating the requirements of the Lord and the warnings. Beloved, they are preaching the broad road using the Bible with great confidence. It is a popular message in the Body of Christ. It gives people confidence to live in compromise with a sense of security in the grace of God. That is a disaster; that is a spiritual disaster.

I see so many young people who live in compromise with confidence and with all this false assurance. When they meet that Man eye to eye, it will be too late to change it. Their life will have been wasted, although they spent four decades in ministry.

People don't want to feel sorrowful for their sin, they don't want to feel convicted, and they don't want to feel uncomfortable. That is a false message. Not that we need to live perpetually uncomfortably. We live in the paradox of security and confidence with joy, but at the same time we are convicted, we press in to go deeper, we struggle to deny our flesh, and we long for godly sorrow to break through because of our failures, but with joy and confidence that we know we are on the right road. That is the tension of all of those things happening in the heart of a New Testament believer.

FALSE TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH

Now Jesus goes straight from the narrow road to the broad road. He gives these two messages. It is clear that the broad road is far more popular. Paul prophesied it, Jesus prophesied it, and others prophesied that the broad road will be intensely popular in the last days, in the end times, in the generation of the Lord's return. There will be far greater numbers embracing the false way within Christianity. So right from the broad and the narrow way, Jesus now addresses false prophets. He said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Mt. 7:15).

Now I think there is a lot of confusion about what Jesus is saying here. These false prophets are coming in sheep's clothing. They look like born-again preachers, they look like born-again believers. They are not evil men in the sense that they come into the pulpit with horns, a sinister look, and a long finger like the wicked witch of the west, saying, "I am going to get you, little guys." No that is not what they look like. They are excellent communicators, they are charming, they are funny, they are positive, and they are winsome. You like them. They want a following. They want to gain the resources from a huge following and a huge ministry and all the perks that go with it. Jesus says that they are not exactly what they look like. He is talking about preachers in the Church. He is not talking about a weird cult leader over at the side. He is talking about people with wide-spread acceptance—many of them, not all of them.

FALSE TEACHERS PRESENT THE BROAD WAY AS THE NARROW WAY

A false prophet is a preacher who is promoting falsehood. It doesn't mean that they are evil in the way we think of a false prophet as a dark, sinister personality. A false prophet or a false teacher—you can use those words in some way synonymously and interchangeably—regularly promote falsehood related to the major doctrines of salvation. I don't mean that they give a sermon one day and it is a bit off and they say, "Oh, I said it wrongly." I am not saying that they gave a ten-minute talk and they didn't say it right and regretted it later. That is not what I am talking about. I am saying that they regularly present falsehood related to the major doctrines of salvation, such as the deity of Christ, the nature of the grace of God, the Trinity, the authority of the Scriptures, and various other subjects like that.

The most common false teaching in the Church is a distortion of the nature of the grace of God. That is the most prevalent and common false teaching, which is widely accepted in the Body of Christ. Beloved, that is a false teaching, no matter how big the crowds, how big the applause, and how many promises they talk about. That is a false gospel. These false teachers are presenting the broad way as the narrow road. They are confusing their followers. They say, "This is the narrow way." They preach the broad way and they call it the narrow way. That is false teaching.

CONTENDING FOR THE SOUL OF YOUR GENERATION

Again, I am calling you to be alert and to contend for the soul of a generation. I want to urge you to enter into contending for the gospel and to fight for the soul of your generation, because this falsehood is everywhere throughout the western world. If you fight against it, you will run into opposition at every turn and if you are not grounded in the Word, you will end up yielding under the pressure and taking the popular way, or at least being silent about falsehood if not promoting it yourself.

If you love people, and you do, you want to be faithful messengers of the truth, because Jesus and His Word will never change. When we stand before Him on the last day, He is not going to acclimate His words to twenty-first century western Christianity. He will not change them for us. His words are true and He will not change them for this Laodicean condition that is wide spread in the western Church, where people boldly proclaim the grace of God, yet in a distorted, false way.

FALSE TEACHERS: WOLVES IN SHEEPS CLOTHING

There are many wolves. Now, again, a wolf is a sinister image so you might have this sinister picture, and I want to say again that these guys are charming, good communicators, funny, and winsome. You like them and they like you. Why does Jesus call them wolves? Wolves go among the sheep to satisfy their own personal appetites. Yes, they love God in a certain way, whatever that means, but they are deeply involved in their own personal appetites, which you will never understand or see. It will never be openly revealed in its fullness.

It is as if Jesus says that these guys are in the ministry with appetites you don't know about. They want to gain things from their followers and they bring disaster to the people who believe them. The disaster is that the people are confident in their compromise. They go on for decades and when they stand before the Lord, it will be impossible to change. That is disaster beyond anything we can imagine, and the whole time they will be confident that everything is alright.

“YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUIT”

Again, I define a false teacher as someone who regularly promotes false teachings related to the major doctrines of salvation: the deity of Jesus, the nature of grace, the authority of the Word, the Trinity—I mean major things not minor things. The biggest issue is the nature of the grace of God. This is the most prevalent false teaching today, in my opinion.

Most false teachers don't know they are false teachers. The reason they don't know is because they don't read the Bible enough to even see their errors. They have their twenty-five verses, they may have their fifty verses—all the promises of blessing. Those are the only ones they talk about. They don't know their Bibles. They don't study the warnings, the threats, and the requirements, and that is why you don't hear those coming out of their mouths.

Now Jesus openly warned us. He says in effect, “They are in your midst. I am telling you, because I love you. They are in your midst, beware” (Mt. 7:15, paraphrased)! We need to be cautious about the ministry we are receiving. That is why I tell our students, “Everything I tell you, everything Allen Hood tells you, check it out and if you can't see the things we are saying in your Bible with your own eyes, throw out what we are saying. You have to base your convictions on what you see in your own Bible. Jesus said, “Beware” (v.15)! Now I don't mean that you should be cynical and suspicious of every preacher at every turn. That is not what I mean. He said, “Be alert! You will know them by their fruit” (v.15-16)! Their fruit is basically their words and their

deeds. Listen to their sermons. Are they proclaiming the deity of Jesus, the authority of the Word, and the way of salvation by grace? Are they teaching the true response to grace that is taught in the whole New Testament and not isolated verses taken out of context?

PROMISES, REQUIREMENTS, AND WARNINGS MUST GO TOGETHER

We always need to have Scripture interpret Scripture. We cannot isolate a promise from the context of the overall message of the New Testament. The promises, the requirements, and the warnings must go together. You cannot preach the warnings without the promises. You cannot preach the requirements without the promises and the warnings. They must be presented together. Now, I don't mean that every message has to hit all three of them. That is not what I mean. I mean, in the overall presentation over a period time, these dimensions must be presented, because they are true to the New Testament message of grace. God's people must take a stand against compromising trends and doctrines in the Church.

WE WANT TO LOVE THE WHOLE CHURCH

I encourage our young people to love the whole Church. We want to honor the whole Church, but that is not contrary to pointing out the trends that are destroying the Church. If we love the Church, we must point out where cancer is destroying the Church. If a physician notices cancer and there is time for healing, but he never says anything, that physician will be charged with malpractice. To love the Church and to see a major trend or doctrine which is destroying the Church, and to be silent in order to be more popular, that to me is a sin and a crime against love. However, be cautious in pointing out falsehood. You must understand that millions of believers in many denominations and streams in the Body of Christ are being faithful to the truth. As I said before, it is not just you and your little group who are faithful. If you think it is you four and no more, you are already completely in deception. There are millions of people in many denominations and different streams who are faithful, so don't write off whole sections of the Body of Christ in a broad stroke. That is a wrong way to apply this point I am making.

WE MUST POINT OUT ERRORS, BUT WITH TENDERNESS AND PATIENCE

It is an expression of love to point out a major error that causes damage. I don't mean an occasional mistake or a mishap or a weakness or a deficiency. We don't want the kind of spirit where we point out deficiencies in everyone. That is not the spirit of love. I am talking about errors that destroy the Church, like the ones I am talking about here in this conference. We must point them out, but we must do it tenderly, we must do it patiently, and if you name somebody you must go to them first in private with tenderness and humility. You can't just start naming people because you hear them on TV or read a book. You have to go to them in private first if you ever use their name in a negative way. I want to urge you as young people to do this.

I trust that some of you are being stirred up. Don't go home and tell your spiritual leader, "I found out this week that you are a false prophet." Please, don't do that. I want you to preach this message to your two's and three's, and to your ten's and twenty's for two full years before you point out an individual who is in error. In other words, be seasoned in it. Two years is not even being seasoned, but let's just say, don't take two weeks and become an expert on this. Don't go to a person, point your finger, and tell them how much they are in error. Take two years to teach the message and to acclimate to it, so that you are not going in a know-it-all condescending spirit of judgment that is not seasoned. That is not what I am trying to empower. I am trying to bolster people to walk in love and to point out these things for the sake of love, not for the sake of triumphalism, when you are trying to win an argument over somebody whose ministry you don't like and you want to prove you are better. That is not what I am talking about.

I took the last three minutes to say this, because for you to be stirred is good, but to apply it in a carnal, proud, and unseasoned way without tenderness will set you back and set your effectiveness back. You need to bring this to people in a spirit of love, so that it bears good fruit.

ON THE LAST DAY IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO CHANGE ANYTHING

Now Jesus is moving from the false lifestyle to the false narrow road, which is the broad road, and from the false message to false prophets. Now here in Matthew 7:21-23, He is talking about false believers. He went from a false message to false leaders and now to false believers. He says there are many of them. There are more than you can imagine.

Right now I want you to think about your own life. Don't think about your friend and two or three people of which this is true. Lock in! It is you and Jesus right now. It is not about you figuring out how to fix somebody else right now. Wait a little while before you fix somebody else. Work this out in your own life first.

Jesus is saying that on the last day it will be too late to change anything. When we stand before Him, you can't repair any deficiencies He is describing here. It will be too late then. That is the terror, the weightiness, and the heaviness of this final word in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but only the person who sets his heart on obeying the will of My Father in heaven" (v.21, paraphrased). Now I am adding the phrase "sets his heart," so that this saying of Jesus doesn't throw you off, because I believe this is the testimony of the New Testament scriptures. It is about the setting of the heart in sincerity.

WE FALL SHORT, BUT WE CALL IT SIN AND WE MOURN OVER IT

We all fall short, but we can have confidence in our relationship with God when we fall short. We fall short, but we call it sin and we mourn over it. I don't mean that we go into a little period of spiritual probation, where we just sulk for a while. That is not what I mean. We mourn over it. We say, "Lord, I really hate that I did this." I don't mean you make a big display in front of everybody, but in your heart you say, "It is not OK that I did this. I stepped over the line in immorality, I stepped over the line in lying, I stepped over the line in alcohol. I stepped over the line and I am troubled I did this. I am sad I did it. It is not OK I did it. Lord, I declare war, I set my heart to not do it again and I confess it as sin." You can have confidence that the Lord is enjoying His relationship with you that very moment. You don't have to wait until you get full victory, before you walk in confidence and joy.

What happens many times is that people step over the line and they are casual about it. It doesn't bother them they did it. It should be a warning sign. It means trouble and it shows that your relationship with the Lord is really sick or even non-existent. If you can step over those lines and not be troubled by it, is a warning sign that your relationship with the Lord is very weak and almost broken, or very possibly non-existent, even though you grew up in the Church.

THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH WHO ARE NOT BORN AGAIN

There are many people who grew up in the Church, who are even in ministry, but who are not even born again. They don't even know they are not born again. It has never crossed their mind they are not born again. They have been told since they were young that they are born again, but it is not even true. When they sin it doesn't even bother them. As long as nobody catches them, they think everything is fine. They got away with it. That is the evidence of what Jesus is talking about. He says here in Matthew 7:21, that these people are enthusiastic.

They say, “Lord, Lord!” The repetition of “Lord” depicts their enthusiasm, meaning they talk about Jesus openly. They say in effect, “I love Jesus, He is my Lord and He is my God.” They have an open enthusiasm and confession. They are not hiding it from anyone, but in their secret life they are not trying to obey the Word of God and they are not trying to walk out the Sermon on the Mount, because their relationship with Jesus is not about encountering His heart and pleasing Him. In a moment Jesus is going to say, “We don’t even know each other. You want forgiveness, you want My blessings, but I want relationship. I mean, when no one is looking, I want you and Me to love each other. That is what this is about. That is what I died for” (v. 23, paraphrased).

“DEPART FROM ME”

Well, they are more than enthusiastic. They talk about Jesus everywhere, but they are still not born again. They have a supernatural dimension in their ministry. They go on ministry trips, preach in healing conferences, have accurate prophetic dreams—prophetic dreams that actually come to pass—they cast out demons, do miracles, and are actively involved in the healing ministry. So they have public enthusiasm, supernatural ministry, and tons of confidence with God. They will say in essence, “You were my Lord, you know everything about me, you know I loved You” (v. 22, paraphrased). Now they are on the last day and they are face to face with Jesus. Jesus says, “You are totally deceived. I don’t know everything about you. You didn’t love Me. Yes, you talked about Me. Yes, you were involved in ministry, but you didn’t know Me in the secrecy of your heart. I was not your heart’s passion at all” (v. 23, paraphrased).

So they have this boldness even on the last day in front of Jesus. They will get the shock of their life. It will be the most terrible and shocking words they will ever hear in their entire eternal existence on that day. He is going to say in essence, “Yes, you were enthusiastic about My name, because you were ministry oriented. You liked the Christian environment. It was your job and opportunity, but we didn’t know each other. We didn’t grow together in love. That is what I called you to and that is what you avoided all of those times. I wooed you, I called you, and you used Bible verses to silence your conscience” (v. 23, paraphrased). He is going to say, “Depart from Me, I don’t know you”—meaning, in a salvation relationship. God knows everything, so of course He knows who they are. He says in essence, “Here is the issue. The issue is not the ministry trips. You went on plenty of ministry trips. The issue is that you practiced lawlessness and you did not repent of it when you did” (v. 23, paraphrased).

He is not saying that the issue is that they stumbled. The issue is that they settled into a lifestyle of sinning and of casting off His leadership in their life. It didn’t bother them at all. That is not what salvation is: casting off His leadership and His relationship in order to pursue ministry. There are people on worship teams, who will say, “Lord, Lord, I was on the worship team. I was a pastor of a church, I went on ministry trips, I was on the IHOPKC staff, I gave a million dollars to missions, I had accurate prophetic dreams.” The Lord will say in essence, “That is not the point. The point is, did you know Me and resist sin as an expression of your loyal love to Me? Did you do that? When you failed did it trouble you, because it troubled Me? If you did that, you were genuinely with Me” (v.23, paraphrased).

OBEDIENCE IS THE EVIDENCE THAT YOUR FAITH IS REAL

Now know that doing the will of God and seeking obedience doesn’t earn you salvation, but it is the evidence that your faith is real. It doesn’t earn you salvation, but it is the evidence that you have salvation. James 2:14 (paraphrased), “If someone says he has faith”—meaning, he knows the Lord—“but he doesn’t have works of obedience, does that faith bring that man salvation?” James says in effect, “Let me ask you a question, and I will tell you the answer. If a man has faith, but he doesn’t have the evidence of works of obedience, can that

faith save him?” James says, “Faith by itself”—or more accurately, the confession of faith—“is dead if it doesn’t have the evidence of works of obedience. It isn’t real, it is false” (Jas. 2:17, paraphrased).

Now, I never hear people who preach the distorted grace message talk about James 2, which is as much a part of the Bible as the verse which says that you are the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. There is no contradiction in those two messages. We express our faith by our works of obedience. Obedience doesn’t earn salvation, but it expresses the genuineness of our faith. Salvation by works is an error, but salvation that doesn’t have the evidence of works is also an error. Both of those errors and extremes rob Jesus of His glory, of who He is as our Savior.

THE MOST SHOCKING WORDS YOU COULD EVER HEAR

Well, these guys have a supernatural ministry. If you have miracles in your ministry, it is going to grow and it is going to be popular. They assume that their popular growing ministry with miracles in it is proof of their genuine faith. Many people have testimonies of accurate prophecies, of prophetic dreams, of casting out devils, and of healing, but Jesus says that you can’t camouflage your lack of a spirit of obedience by claiming miracles, even if the miracles happened.

Now someone asks how miracles can happen. Well, there are three or four answers to how they could testify of miracles in this condition. I am not going to take time and go down the list of answers, but different books write on it and there are several answers to why that could be true. Well, it is true, because Jesus says it is true. My point here is not to explain how that could happen, my point is to say it does happen, and that is the terrifying point. Jesus says, “Depart from Me” (Mt.7:23). They are the most shocking and terrifying words you could ever hear.

Even standing before the Lord, these people are confident that everything is fine. Beloved, that is a deception. That is how false teachers, who have taught the broad way but called it the narrow way, brought confidence to the people and devoured them, in order to garner their allegiance and following. These false teachers wanted the resources and all that results from garnering greater popularity. So they were man-pleasing and ended up destroying these people's lives. On the last day Jesus will say, “Depart from Me,” and that is the final fruit of those false teachers who devoured people's lives, although the people are responsible too.

PEOPLE WHO PRACTISE LAWLESSNESS

He says, “You practice lawlessness” (Mt.7:23). He doesn’t mean that they slipped up and failed. Everybody steps over the line and sins, but it did not bother them. They didn’t call it sin. They didn’t rise up and resist it.

Now people who practice lawlessness are the billions of the human race. I am not talking about mass murderers, although they are lawless too, but that is not what I am talking about. When Jesus talks about lawlessness, He talks about a lifestyle of immorality, drunkenness, lying, financial unfaithfulness, and slander without repenting of it. That is what the Bible calls lawlessness.

Some people hear the word lawlessness and think, “Well, I am not a mass murderer, I don’t abuse children, and I don’t rob banks.” That is not what Jesus is talking about. Paul says it very clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:9. He is actually echoing the words of Jesus from Matthew 7 right here, or he is certainly echoing the idea and the principle. He says, “Don’t be deceived. Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous people, drunkards, revilers, and extortionists will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (1 Cor. 6:9,

paraphrased). This is what Jesus is saying in Matthew 7. Many people are deceived about this. Preaching the broad way under the title of grace and dismissing the narrow way is bolstering the confidence of millions to embrace that deception.

THE SIN OF FORNICATION

Paul talks about being involved in fornication. What is fornication? It is sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman; that is fornication. It is popular among young people in the Church today. Beloved, don't be deceived. If you are involved in this and you are OK with it, you are probably not born again. You might be on the worship team, you might lead the prophecy team, but you are probably not born again yet. I am not talking about just stumbling in fornication. I am talking about someone who stumbles in the area of fornication, who looks right and looks left, sees that nobody caught him, and says, "Let's do it again." That attitude should give you the warning that you are probably not born again. Believers don't involve themselves in fornication and if they do—we do those things as believers—they say, "Jesus, we sinned." They go to the person and say, "What I did was wrong. I sinned against you and God, forgive me."

The guy or the girl says, "What are you talking about? We love each other!"

They say, "Yes, but we are not married and in a covenant relationship. What we did yesterday is sin."

The other guy or gal may not think so. Beloved, hold your testimony. That is the testimony of a genuine believer. You can have confidence that you are forgiven, you are cleansed, and God enjoys you. If you stumble again, declare it a sin, and soon you will stop doing that.

WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MANIPULATE JESUS ON THE LAST DAY

If you are OK with living in fornication, because you are in one of those modern-day church fellowships on the college campus, the whole group is probably in deception. I say that as your best friend, because I tell you, we will never be able to manipulate Jesus on the last day with Bible quizzes, spin, and arguments. Jesus will not be tricked by any of it. It is as if He says, "Adulterer, if you are married, and you are sexually involved with somebody else and that doesn't break your heart and trouble you, brother, you are probably not born again. "Well, I know I am. I have pastored a church for ten years." Well, there are several different ways of looking at this. I won't get into it, but I tell you, if you stumble in adultery, it had better be called sin. You had better go to the person and call it sin.

1 Corinthians 6:9, "Don't be deceived. Neither homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves"—now I don't just mean robbing a bank. You can steal money in legal ways if you are crafty, but you are still a thief. You are stealing. You say, "Well, nobody caught me. It was a little sleight of hand." It is as if Jesus says, "Is that what you think about our relationship, that it doesn't matter to you that I told you not to do it, and you say, 'Oh, so what?' How can you do that? It is about you and Me! It is about My leadership over you. That is what this is about. It is not about not getting caught!"

"...nor drunkards, nor revilers"—a reviler is someone who slanders another person and they won't repent of it. They say, "Yes, but I don't really slander people. I just talk about people who bother me, because they are really wrong." Beloved, that is a reviler.

“...nor extortionists”—extortionists are people who have business plans and they put a spin on them, so that they are not accurate and truthful. They seduce people for profit, because it is legal and they get away with it. They think they are clever, but that is extortion. I want to assure that if you are comfortable with these things, don't be deceived, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. If you stumble in these things, wake up, repent of them, and you can have confidence that the mercy of the Lord is new every day.

Jesus says, “Many...” He uses this word “many” a number of times. It is alarming. This is a major problem. We are fighting for the soul of a generation. Look at Matthew 24. He uses the word “many” six times, describing the Church in the generation of His return or people who are numbered among the Church. He says “many of them”—talking about the Church.

THOSE WHO BUILD THEIR HOUSE ON SAND

In the final couple of verses, He really brings it home now with this last parable. He says, “Everyone who hears these words of Mine...” (Mt. 7:24). He is talking about the Sermon on the Mount, about Matthew 5-6 and the first part of Matthew 7. He is talking about people, who don't not seek to do the Sermon on the Mount. I am adding the word seek, because I believe that is what the testimony of Scripture allows me to add. These are guys, who go to church, they hear sermons, they go to conferences, and they have heard Jesus' teachings. Again Jesus is not talking about blatant pagans, who deny Him. He is talking here about people who go to Bible studies, people who profess their loyalty to Him. He says in essence that when the rain and the flood come, and the winds blow—the storms of life are the pressures and trials; this is talking first about trials in this life—when the trials come, the genuineness of our love and spirit of obedience will be tested.

When things don't work out, the money doesn't come in, the healing doesn't happen, the relationships don't work, and people don't make things work the way they wanted, the foolish man looks to heaven and says, “You know, I gave You a chance, Jesus, but I don't even believe You anymore.” Jesus' answer will be in essence, “I love you, but you were never in it for the relationship. You were in it, so I would forgive you and make your life comfortable. I want you in relationship with Me.” When the pressures come, people walk away from God, instead of repairing the deficiencies in their walk with Him.

BUILDING OUR HOUSE ON ROCK

The wise man also hears these words in Matthew 5-7. It is as if he says, “Ah, this is a narrow road. These eight Beatitudes are tough on my flesh. I have to show mercy to people who are mean to me, I have to bless them and not get vengeance. I have to because You showed mercy to me and because this is the way I live under Your leadership. I will show them mercy and I will pursue purity of heart, so I can see You more. I will hunger for righteousness instead of ignoring the pursuit of deeper righteousness.” Jesus said that the people, who do this, seek to follow through.

Our follow-through is not that good. My love is frail and my obedience is weak, but when I come up short, I recommit and I recommit and I recommit and if I come up short, I recommit, and I believe that the Lord says, “That is what I am after. I can live with that. I can dwell with you because of that continual recommitment to obey Me day after day when you come up short.

Beloved, if you do this, you show a spirit of love toward Jesus, but I don't want you to exaggerate this in such an extreme way, that you think if you don't have perfect obedience, you are not of the faith. I am talking about a heart that is seeking to obey when no one is looking. Jesus said in effect, “I will call that man wise” (v.24, paraphrased). Beloved, on the last day you will stand before Jesus, before this Man with the eyes of the fire.

Those burning eyes reveal a burning heart. They depict His heart of desire. He loves you with such intensity. This Man is the epicenter of all the created order and He will look at you eye to eye. I can't imagine anything greater than when the Man with the burning heart, who is fully God, will say, "It was wise what you did." You will say, "Yes, yes it was worth it! Yes, oh yes, yes! I am so glad I pressed through and took the narrow road and didn't take the way that was popular even in the Church."

TEACHING THE BEATITUDES

Earlier in the sermon Jesus says something even more intense. Look at Matthew 5:19 at the end. He says, "If you do these things and teach them, you will be called great" (v.19, paraphrased). As I told you the other day, I thought that the challenge would be doing these things, but it is teaching them—whether you are teaching one on one, one on three, or one on a thousand, the numbers don't matter. When I began to take a public stand for these things, I had no idea of the resistance I would get from the Body of Christ and from my friends. I thought teaching this would be fun, but teaching this is as big a pressure as doing it. I found people all over the Body of Christ that I really liked, saying, "How dare you put this on me!" I thought, "Whoa!" I looked up to Jesus and said, "I thought teaching this would be fun." No, it is challenging, it is not popular, and it makes people uncomfortable. They want to feel comfortable with God while they are sinning. They don't want conviction and they don't want to feel troubled. They want to feel affirmed, even if they are not denying their flesh and walking the broad way. They are looking for teachers who will tell them that what they are doing is good, and give them Bible verses to back it up.

Jesus told us to do the Sermon on the Mount in our secret life, to pursue that lifestyle and take a stand for it, talking people into it, and not talking people out of it. I hear young people here and there, talking people out of hungering for righteousness in the name of grace. They talk people out of denying their flesh. They say, "We are under grace. We don't have to deny our flesh." Beloved, it is foolishness to do that. Stand with Jesus and His Word! Don't be content with ten Bible verses, but read the whole New Testament. Don't pick and choose verses that verify and validate a carnal lifestyle.

"HE SHALL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"

Matthew 5:19. Jesus said, "If you do them and you teach them, I will not only call you wise"—that is in Matthew 7—"I will call you great." Can you imagine the Man with eyes of fire on the last day? The greatest Man who ever lived will look you in the eye with burning desire and say, "You lived in a way I consider great. Well done! You lived with greatness. Maybe you didn't have a big following, you didn't have any money, you didn't have any education, and you didn't have anybody paying attention to you, but I was paying attention and what you did was great in My sight. Come into My kingdom." Now you are not getting into the kingdom because of all of this. You are getting into the kingdom, because Jesus died for you, but Jesus will affirm that your lifestyle was great.

Beloved, how do you want to live? I want to live in a way He calls wise. I want to live in a way He calls great. For what message are you going to take a stand? What lifestyle are you going to go after? In what message are you going to invest yourself? I tell you, you can be great and wise in His eyes on that day and even before that day, but it will be proclaimed on that day if we simply say yes to the relationship of love to which He beckons us and we walk it out on His terms and not on the terms of our culture.

Amen and amen. Let's stand.

MINISTRY TIME

Now I am not going to ask for an altar call, because I don't want to make a big deal out of this. Listen carefully for sixty seconds. I think it is possible that there are a number of people in this room who are on a worship team, who lead in ministry, or who go on mission trips, but you are possibly not born again. I think with a crowd this size, there are a number of you who are in ministry, on worship teams, and going to conferences, but you are comfortable with fornication, drunkenness, lying, and casting off the Word of God. Don't come forward to the nice gentle music and cry a little up here. That is not what I am asking for. I am not asking for you to make a decision with every eye closed. I don't mind those kinds of things, but that is not what I am doing. I want to charge you and ask you to sit here or stand here for a few moments and say, "Lord, yes, I am pretty comfortable with fornication. I never really thought much about that. Maybe I am in trouble."

Beloved, I challenge a few of you, some of you, many of you, to ask those questions. I don't know the number. It might be two or three, or it might be a thousand. I am not asking you to answer them in three minutes. That is not the kind of response I am asking of you. I am asking you to go to your hotel room tonight, the next two or three days, or at home, get alone, get these notes out, and say, "What? No one ever told me this." Well, I don't know if they loved you enough to tell you this, but I want you to ask the Lord, "Am I in this for You or am I in this to be on the worship team, so I can be on the stage somewhere? I want to know You, because You want to know me."

I am going to leave you with that. We will go on for about ten minutes. If you need to slip out go ahead, but I ask you not to talk in here. I want to give you ten minutes to think this thing through. Some of you can be deciding what message you are going to stand for. Others of you can commit yourself to Jesus and say, "I am going for the Sermon on the Mount. I love You!"