

Saved or Self-Deceived? Pt 1 - Empty Words

Matthew 7:21-23 - John MacArthur

Turn with me in your Bible to *Matthew chapter 7*, our text for today, that is, this morning and again tonight will be in verses 21 to 29. *Matthew 7:21 to 29*. Let me read this to you as the setting for our day and ask that the Spirit of God would speak to us in these tremendous truths. *"Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out demons? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that hears these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."*

Now all through The Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 5, 6, and 7 the Lord has been setting forth the divine standards of His Kingdom. As the anointed Messiah, the Christ, the King, He has certain principles which He has demanded of those who desire to enter the Kingdom. Now those principles occupy the thrust of this sermon, but they can all be summed up in one word. The requirement for entering the Kingdom is that you be righteous, righteous, and therefore the whole sermon is summed up in chapter 5 verse 20, *"For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* The Kingdom of heaven is God's world, God's dominion, salvation, eternal life. And entrance into that Kingdom is dependent upon righteousness.

Now how righteous are we to be? Well, we're to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. How righteous were they? Well they were as righteous as a man could get, on his own terms. They had come to the epitome of human achievement in religion. They were obsessed with religious function. As far as the people around them knew they were exceedingly righteous. They seemed to do all the right things like praying and giving alms and fasting. They seemed to have all the right standards like not murdering and not committing adultery and making sure they maintained every minute element of the law. It seemed as though they were the ones who were exceedingly righteous and yet the righteousness that Christ demands far exceeds theirs. In fact our Lord is requiring a righteousness that is beyond man's capacity, a divine righteousness that comes from God, a standard that man himself is utterly unable to attain.

In fact if you want to know how righteous all you have to do is look at chapter 5 verse 48, and here our Lord says, *"Be ye, therefore, perfect,"* how perfect? *"even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect."* We are to be righteous, how righteous? More righteous than the most righteous. We are to be perfect, how perfect? As perfect as God is.

Now if you really hear that message you're going to face a fact and that is that you can't live this standard. You cannot be more righteous than the most righteous people, on your own. Because the most righteous people are as righteous as people can be on their own, you can't be more righteous than that.

And you cannot be as perfect as God is perfect because you're a human being. And so all through the sermon Jesus is endeavoring to show men the inadequacy of their own human resources, to deal with God's Kingdom. They can't make it. Therefore the whole idea of the sermon is to bring them to the very point at which our Lord started, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; blessed are the meek; and Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness."* In other words the Lord said at the very beginning that the people who enter My Kingdom are the people who know their own righteousness doesn't make it, that the standard of perfection is way beyond their capacity, and so they are beggars in their spirit, they can't earn it they have to beg for it, they mourn because of the total sinfulness that they see in themselves, they are meek and humble because they know they fall so short of the standard of God, and they hunger and thirst for a righteousness they know they can't attain.

The purpose of The Sermon on The Mount then is identical to the purpose of the law of God in the Old Testament. When God gave the law on Sinai, the law was not given in order to show man how good he must be, the law was given to show man how good he couldn't be, how bad he was, how short he came. And Paul summed it up when he said, *"For all have sinned and come (what?) short of the glory of God."* And Paul says that *"The law was our schoolmaster to drive us to Christ."* The law was what whipped us. And that is essentially what is going on in The Sermon on The Mount, Jesus is upholding the law of God. In fact He says at the early part of the sermon, *"Not one jot or tittle shall in any wise pass from the law. I didn't come to remove the law, or to destroy the law, but to fulfill the law."* And Jesus is reiterating the law of God and saying the standard hasn't changed and you must see how short you come, and therefore beg in your spirit as a mourner, meek before God hungering and thirsting for His righteousness.

Now that leaves men with two options, you either live your life, you either invent your religion or you come God's way. You either come on your terms or His terms and that is precisely where the sermon climaxes in chapter 7 verses 13 and 14. And there our Lord says, *"Enter in at the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in that way; Because narrow is the gate, and hard is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it."* Jesus says, there are only those two ways, there is the broad gate, leads to the broad way, ends up in destruction. It is the way of easy religion, it is the way of human righteousness, it is the way of the scribes and the Pharisees and those who think they're good enough on their own. On the other hand there's the narrow gate and the narrow way that leads to life and that is the way of those who come with a broken heart, with a contrite spirit, those who come and know they can't make it, they can't keep God's law, they can't meet His standard, they can't live up to His righteousness, they can't be as perfect as God is, and they cast themselves on the mercy of Jesus Christ who imputes to them His own righteousness. There's only those two ways and that is the climax of the sermon.

Now having stated that great invitation to enter at the narrow gate, and we've covered it in detail, the Lord then shows how difficult that really is. It is not easy. Don't believe anyone who says it's easy to become a Christian, it cost God everything including His own Son and it'll cost you the same thing including yourself. It's not easy. And those who would offer us an easy believism, a cheap grace do us no favor at all, they delude us. It is difficult to come to God on God's terms. First of all, it is difficult because you must recognize your own total inability and that means the death of pride and that's difficult, because we are constantly told that we're the most important thing to ourselves.

Now the Lord points out the difficulty of entering in the narrow gate right in verses 13 and 14. First of all it says in verse 14, *"Few there be few that find it."* And the word find is important, it's difficult to enter the

narrow gate because you have to find it. Which implies a searching, and a looking, and an examining and an effort. It's as the Old Testament says, *"If you seek Me with all your heart, you will find Me."* Nobody just stumbles along and falls into the Kingdom of God inadvertently. It's a searching, and the idea is that it isn't easily made visible.

Secondly, it's difficult not only because you have to find it, and that means a hard and diligent search, it's difficult because it means it's the opposite way that everybody else is going, many go in the broad gate, few go in the narrow way. It's what James said when he said, *"Friendship with the world is enmity against God."* It's what John said when he said, *"If you love the world the love of the Father's not in you."* In other words you have to come apart from the system to enter the narrow gate. It's difficult because the crowd is going the other way.

It's difficult also because it is a narrow gate and that means you come through naked, stripped of all yourself, your sin, your self-righteousness. You come through absolutely alone, you don't come through with a group, you don't come through with a family, you come through alone. And it is a constricted way and you know it's going to be a narrow life and you must count the cost. And Jesus said further it's not only difficult because it's hard to find, it's away from the crowd, it's a narrow gate, but because you must agonize to enter it, He said in the *Gospel of Luke*. In other words there must be penitence and confession and repentance and soul searching and brokenness.

And then in our last study, we saw that there is another reason why it's difficult to enter the narrow way, another reason why it's difficult to admit that you don't make it, you can't live up to God's standard, you're not as perfect as you have to be, and that is because of false prophets verse 15. And in 15 to 20 the Lord says, false prophets add to the difficulty because they stand in the way and they chase people onto the broad road. They're the ones trying to divert everybody for Satan's purposes and Satan's ends. Telling people they can go through the wide gate with all their sin and selfishness and they can flop from side to side and wander all over a great big wide road and there's little price to pay. And so the Lord offers a choice and a verdict, a decision. But He says the right decision is to enter the narrow gate and it won't be easy, and He says, *"Few there be that find it."* Mark that people, few, not many but few.

And there's one other reason why the few is only a few. Not only the deception of the false prophets, but listen to this, self-deception, self-deception keeps people from entering the narrow gate. J.C. Ryle, Bishop Ryle wrote, "The Lord Jesus winds up The Sermon on The Mount by a passage of heart piercing application. He turns from false prophets to false professors, from unsound teachers to unsound hearers." And Tasker the commentator adds, "It is not only false teachers who make the narrow way difficult to find, it is a man may also be grievously self-deceived that adds to the difficulty." In other words not just the false prophets but we can deceive our own selves into believing we're Christians when the fact is we're not.

Now that precisely is the issue the Lord takes up in verses 21 to 27, self-deception. And what a fitting climax it is to the sermon, having stated all the principles and having warned about the false prophets the Lord says, now let Me warn you one other thing, make sure you're not kidding yourself, are you really a true member of the Kingdom of heaven? And the Lord warns us about two categories of self-deception. Number one is a mere verbal profession, and number two is a mere intellectual knowledge. In verses 21 to 23 it is a verbal profession, verse 21, *"Not everyone that saith,"* verse 22, *"Many will say to Me,"* now these are the people who make the verbal profession, they say they're Christians. And then in the second paragraph it is the ones who have only an intellectual knowledge, they hear. Verse 26, *"Everyone that hears these things."* Now listen, then in verses 21 to 23 you have the people who say and

don't do, and in verses 24 to 27 the people who hear and don't do. That's the issue and they're deceived. On the one hand it's a verbal profession on the other it's an intellectual knowledge, and I call it empty words and empty hearts, and that's what we want to speak to in our study today. These deal with the matter of self-deception, mere verbal profession, mere intellectual knowledge is as John Stott puts it, "A camouflage for disobedience."

Now you will notice that at the end of verse 21 you have a key word there, "*but he that doeth the will of My Father, who is in heaven.*" It is not the ones who say and it is not the ones who hear it is the ones who what? Who do. In other words the Lord is saying, if you do not live a righteous life I don't care what you say or what you hear, you're deceived.

Now this is a very, very strong word, and I want you to listen as the Spirit of God speaks. Both of these closing paragraphs, verses 21 to 23 and 24 to 27 contrast a right and a wrong response to the invitation of Christ, and they show that our eternal destiny is determined by the choice we make. One as I said deals with what you say over against what you do and the other what you hear over against what you do.

Now keep this in mind, the Lord is not speaking to irreligious people, He is speaking to people who were literally obsessed with religious activity, they're not apostates, they're not heretics, they're not anti-God, they not atheists or agnostics, they are utterly religious people but they're damned because they're on the wrong road and they are self-deluded. Now maybe their self-delusion is a result of sitting under a false prophet or maybe they've actually sat under the truth but have deluded themselves. They are not a lot unlike Israel of whom Paul said, "*They had a form of godliness but denied the reality of it.*"

And I really believe people that this is a message that needs to be spoken today because I am convinced that the Church of Jesus Christ is literally jammed full of people who aren't Christians and don't know it. I mean when I hear statistics like two billion people in the world are Christians and two billion are not, then I wonder who in the world has established the criteria. That isn't what the Bible says it says many and few. When Gallup says according to his poll that 52% of the American population are born again Christians that doesn't square with the Scripture. And who is going to live under the delusion that because you sign a line on a survey that says you're a born again Christian you really are a born again Christian. Certainly Jesus is saying many of those who think they're in aren't in and only a few are. This is the ultimate delusion people. You could be deluded about a lot of things but to be deceived about whether you're a Christian that's really getting at your eternal destiny. And so Jesus says you better check it very carefully.

We have all kinds of people I'm sure even right here in Grace Community Church who are connected to the right religion and utterly devoid of the righteousness of God through Christ. We have multitudes of deceived people who are in the church, who are on the Jesus bandwagon, who think everything is well and for them judgment is going to be one big surprise. Frankly there's no better way to undeceive them than by this particular sermon of our Lord.

Now some of these people I believe that are deceived are false prophets, I think some false prophets aren't deceived they know they're phony, but I think some of them probably are self-deceived so we'd see some of them in this group but I think the many in verses 21 and following is not just false prophets but all of those who are self-deluded and deceived about whether they're really redeemed. You know I don't have time to get into it because our time is so limited but the Bible literally is filled with warnings to people who are deceived.

Let me just give you one other illustration, *Matthew 25* and it's very similar and I think you'll get the picture. And the reason there are so many warnings, listen, is because there are so many people deceived, *"Many will say to Me, Lord, Lord. And I'll say I never knew you."* Not a few, not an isolated bunch but many, and because there are so many that are deceived there are many warnings. *Matthew 25:1* says, *"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."* And of course the virgins are symbolic of people who are attached to Christianity and the bridegroom is emblematic of Christ. *"Five of them were wise, and five were foolish."* Like the people who build on the rock and the sand. *"And they were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them;"* in other words they had a form of godliness but they didn't have the power, they didn't have what they needed, they didn't have the heart of it, they didn't have salvation, they just had churchianity. *"But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. And while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go out to meet him. And then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish ones said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not."*

Now there is a similar text. Go back to *Matthew chapter 7*, that's saying the same thing. There's going to come a day when people are going to expect the door to be open and it's going to slam shut forever in their faces. *"I don't know you."* What a fearful thing. So many people think they're saved, think they're safe and judgment for them is going to be a shock.

What lulls people into that deception, what makes people really think they're saved? Well let me give you several suggestions. First of all I think many times it's because they have a false doctrine of assurance. In other words let's assume that when you were led to Christ somebody said to you, now all you have to do to be a Christian is pray this little prayer and say this little formula based on certain statements, well you prayed it, you said it, you signed on the dotted line and as long as you said it and as long as you prayed it and as long as you went through the thing, why you're saved and, I don't want anybody to ever question that and so forth and so on, and that very often happens and you have a false sense of assurance.

You want to know something? When you lead a person to Christ you should never say, now I know you're saved and don't you ever doubt it and don't you ever let anybody else cause you to doubt it, boy you're saved. And I've heard people even say, if you ever ask Jesus into your life a second time you are denying something that belongs to God, you're denying the permanence of His salvation, you are questioning God's integrity, you are in a sense casting against God that which He has said as if it weren't true, don't ever do that just accept it, you said it, you signed the dotted line, and that's a lot of baloney. Listen if you feel in your heart that you want to invite Jesus Christ to become the Lord and Savior of your life and you've done it before do it again. Don't let somebody's false assurance, somebody's false certification take the place of the convicting work of the Spirit of God.

And I think a lot of times in our evangelism as long as somebody says the prayer and prays the little thing and signs on the line and has the card stuck in their Bible we give them this little psychological game that they don't ever have to worry about whether they're saved or not, when the Spirit of God never did that in the beginning because they never were really right. I can't ever say to someone, well now boy, I know you're saved and don't you ever doubt it and don't you ever ask again, it's all settled and it's done because you said the little formula. If I do that I give them a psychological assurance of something I don't

even know is true. When Jesus said, "*The seed of the word is cast on four soils,*" only one out of four turned out to be true. Don't go around certifying people's salvation you give them a false assurance. Let God give them assurance through His Spirit witnessing with their spirits, that they are the children of God and crying Abba Father. Let God give them assurance when they add to their faith virtue, and as they add to their faith virtue and patience and godliness and love, then shall their election be sure, then shall they know they've been forgiven of their sin, they shall they not be blind to the reality of salvation. That's God's work not some certification by some human being. But I think a lot of people have been told they're saved so they believe it.

Another thing that I think lulls people into this deception is a failure of self-examination, they never really examine themselves. They get into such a grace concept, that everything is grace and everything is forgiveness that they never really bother to face their sin. They hear somebody say, well you don't have to confess your sin, your sin's already forgiven, it's all taken care of, everything is set aside, don't even worry about that just go on live your life, it almost borders on what is called antinomianism or an attitude against the law of God, and people can get to the place where they don't even bother to examine their lives. Why do you think the Lord brings us to His table in *First Corinthians 11* over and over and over and over again? In order that a man may examine himself. *Second Corinthians 13:5* says, "*You better examine yourself, whether you be in the faith.*" If you don't you're in danger of self-deception, you need to look at your sin, you need to look at your motives, why do you do what you do. And believe me if you're really genuinely saved God will confirm that, by His Spirit witnessing with your spirit, but if that confirmation isn't there you shouldn't be under the illusion that just because it isn't there you're okay, by some certification by somebody or some little prayer you prayed.

Thirdly, another thing that I think causes people to be under the delusion that they're saved is a fixation on religious activity. In other words they go to church, they hear sermons, they sing songs, they read the Bible, they go to a Bible study, they take a class, and because they're all wrapped up in religious activity they think they are saved. But that's, that's a very, very great illusion, a very great illusion. There are many in the church that are not, *tares among the wheat*.

And then a fourth area that I think lulls people into deception is what I call the fair exchange approach. And this is where whenever you see something wrong in your life instead of really dealing with it and examining whether you're really a true Christian, instead of dealing with what's wrong in your life you find something right with your life and you make a fair exchange. Oh, I can't be that bad, I mean look what I did over here, see? And you're always trading off the negatives and the positives and instead of really evaluating your life honestly with integrity and saying, am I a believer and if I am can I be doing this, you say, well I know I do that but oh look what I did over here, and you make a fair exchange and you whitewash the deal. You can be lulled into deception by some false assurance, by a failure to examine yourself, by a fixation on religious activity or by a fair exchange approach. But in all those cases you're deceived.

I mean it's amazing to me how many people are deceived. I can't believe how many times I've entered into a situation of, of talking to people in the homosexual movement who say to me, well we're Christians, we're born again and they can recite the, the creed and they can tell you the day they were saved and they can show you the card where they wrote the line and they can say, we believe in Jesus and so forth and so on.

But the bottom line is this, with all of your false assurance, with all your failure to self-examine, with all this fixation on religious activity and with the fair exchange principle in operation,

the bottom line that you'd better examine is this, do you live in total obedience to the Word of God? And when you disobey it, is there a sense of conviction and remorse that draws you to confess it to God? And if that isn't there there's a fair question about whether you're even a Christian. Because the one who comes into the Kingdom, verse 21 says, is the one not who says, but the one who does. And when these homosexuals or whoever come along and say, we're Christians, my answer to that is, if you were you wouldn't do what you do, and defend it. We have the same thing—for example take the, the women's lib movement which is so much connected with homosexuality and its origins and at the front running levels, here are women who are going around saying, well we don't believe the Bible anymore the woman is to be elevated and so forth and so on and over the man and all of these other things, and they say, we are Christians. In fact I just read a book by a woman who says she's a psychologist of religion and she wants the world to know that religion is to be altered and changed so that the woman gets her rightful place, and they say they're Christians, they say they believe, so many of them and yet if you get down to it they are unwilling to submit to the Lordship of Christ as revealed in His Word and it is a lack of obedience that reveals the illusion.

And I always wonder you know, just take for example that, that whole idea of the women's movement I get in a lot of trouble on that issue so I might as well go ahead on it, at least it won't be anything new. But I am amazed how many Christian women are lead astray by believing these people who just may claim to be Christians but are so utterly deluded, and then there are some who don't claim to be Christians at all and they're actually leading the parade and here are Christian women following the parade led by godless kinds of people.

For an illustration, there's a new book out called The Changing of the Gods, ah, Feminism And The End Of Traditional Religion is the subtitle, written by Naomi Goldenberg. Listen to what it says, "The feminist revolution will not leave religion untouched. Eventually all religious hierarchies will be peopled with women. I imagine women functioning as rabbis, priests and ministers, I picture women wearing clerical garb and performing clerical duties and suddenly I saw a problem, how could women represent a male God? Everything I knew about Judaism and Christianity involved accepting God as the ultimate and male authority figure. Congregations would have to stop seeing God as male. And what could these women priests and ministers and rabbis read to their communities? They certainly could not use the Bible. A society that accepted large numbers of women as religious leaders would be too different from the Biblical world to find the Bible relevant let alone look to it for inspiration. God is going to change, I thought, we women are going to bring an end to God. As we take positions in government, medicine, law, business, in the arts and finally in religion we will be the end of God. We will change the world so much that He won't fit in anymore. I found this line of thought most satisfying, I had no great tie to God anyway He never seemed to be relevant. Reflection on His cultural demise left me with no sense of loss yet there was a magnificence attached to the idea of watching Him go. I felt part of a movement that would challenge religions that had been enforced-for millennia. What will happen to God in His last years? The end of God and the transformation of religion was of major significance to human life so I returned to graduate school to study the end of God. The feminist movement in Western culture is engaged in the slow execution of Christ and God. All of the roles that men and women have been taught to consider as God given will be re-evaluated. "All feminists (listen to this line, all feminists) are making the world less and less like the one described in the Bible, and are thus helping to lessen the influence of Christ and God on humanity." Now at least she's honest enough to admit that, and there are feminists in the church that are claiming that this is the truth of God when the facts are she knows that this is a denial of everything the Bible teaches. And yet Christian people are buying this in disobedience to the Word of God.

Let me read you a couple of other quotes, "Jesus Christ cannot symbolize the liberation of women, in order to develop a theology of women's liberation feminists have to leave Christ and the Bible behind them. We have to stop denying the sexism that lies at the root of Jewish and Christian religion. It is likely that as we watch Christ and God tumble to the ground we will completely outgrow the need for an external God." Then she says, "We have to see the inner goddess as our psychic force. In the new age of changes for our gods, Christ and God will no longer behave as egotistical spoiled children in our psyches." In the book there's a section on feminist witchcraft, and by the way the feminist movement is attached to witchcraft, it goes way, way back I don't have time to develop it. But all through the book it talks about the goddess is alive.

And in April uh, the 23rd of April 1976 they had their first national all women's conference on women's spirituality, and Naomi Goldenberg describes the conference. "The women chanted the goddess is alive, the goddess is alive, magic is afoot. They ended the goddess is alive chants with dancing, stamping, clapping and yelling, they stood on pews and danced bare breasted on the pulpit communion table and amid the hymn books." All this in a church. And she says, "Why not display your breasts in a place that has tried to teach you that they are things to be ashamed of, features that make you unlike God or His Son." The chapter on witchcraft said, "That what the women's movement is going to demand in America is female deities, nature is sacred, human will is supreme, no original sin, no good and no evil, the absence of a sacred text, no laws of discipline, sex to follow its own course, and omnipresent in everything we do is play, p-l-a-y." Now you tell me that Christian women can line up with a movement like that, and be obedient to the Word of God?

I think there are a lot of people who are deluded about who really is a Christian. When so called Christians advocate following that kind of movement, and I'm sure many of the Christians who advocate the E.R.A. are not advocating that they just don't know what's really leading their movement, that's part of the delusion. If you argue with Scripture, if you twist the Scripture, if you manipulate the Scripture, if you force the Scripture to say what you want it to say you are not doing the will of the Father, you're imposing your own will on the Word of God, and you may be a part of the many, not the few. You have failed perhaps to come through the narrow gate. You come through the narrow gate you know the law of God is perfect and you're imperfect, you come through the narrow gate you know there is a righteous standard that you can't live up to, and instead of coming through with pride and egotism and demanding your rights you come through with repentance, confession, humility, brokenness, contrition of heart and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. There are many people deceived, beloved, many, many, few find it.

And the deceived come in a couple of categories I think in the church, apart from the hypocrites who aren't deceived they're phony and they know it, but they're trying to live up to their wife's standard or trying to appear religious for whatever reasons. But apart from hypocrites there are two categories of the deceived in the church, the superficial and the involved. The superficial are the ones who call themselves Christians because when they were little they went to church or Sunday School or they got confirmed or made a decision quote, unquote for Christ, and you hear very often people when they get baptized say, well I received Christ when I was 12 but my life was a mess after that and, and now I want to get back to that. Well, the truth probably is that they never received Christ at all when they were 12. They went through some religious activity, and these are the superficial they come to church now, they were somewhere in the background, raised in religion and they come on Christmas and Easter, they come to weddings and funerals and think they're Christians. They're the superficial who are deceived. Then there's the involved who are deceived and they're a much more subtle and serious group, they're in the church up to their neck involved and they know the Gospel, they know the theology but they don't obey the Word of God. They live in a constant state of sinfulness.

Now how does a deceived person know he's deceived? How can we spot such a person? Let me give you some keys, and I want you to think these through. Now not everybody in these keys that I'm going to give you is really deceived but these are good indicators that someone might be deceived. If you want to spot someone who's deceived look first of all for someone who's seeking feelings, blessings, experiences, healings, angels, miracles, why? Chances are they're more interested in the by-products of the faith than they are the faith itself. They're more interested in what they can get than the glory God can get, they're more interested in themselves than in the exaltation of Christ.

Secondly, if you're looking to see who might be deceived look for people who are more committed to the denomination, the church, the organization than to the Word of God. Their kind of Christianity may be purely social. I'm a Presbyterian, well I've been a Baptist all my life, I'm a Lutheran, I belong to the whatever. More committed to the organization than they are to the Lord and His Word.

Thirdly, look for people who are involved in theology as an academic interest. And you'll find them all over the colleges and seminaries of our land. People who study theology, write books on theology, absolutely void of the righteousness of Christ. Theology for them is intellectual activity.

Fourthly, look for people who always seem stuck on one over emphasized point of theology. This is the person who bangs the proverbial drum for his own little area, some crazy quirk. And it usually is not some great divine insight, they'd like you to think that they are so close to God they have a great divine insight no one else has, the fact of the matter is they're seeking a platform for the feeding of their ego. Watch for people with a lack of balance.

And one other thought. When you look for somebody who might be deceived look for someone who is overindulgent in the name of grace. Overindulgent in the name of grace. Lacks penitence, a true contrite *heart*, so forth.

Now they all may be deceived and on the broad road to destruction, thinking all the while they're going to heaven. Now our Lord warns these people in verses 21 to 27, we're going to draw this to a conclusion in a few minutes, I want you to listen. The Lord says in this passage that these people are the deceived. These people think they are on the right road but they are not. And first in the paragraph verses 21 to 23 is the folly of empty words, and in verses 24 to 27 the folly of empty hearts. Notice again in verse 21, *"Not everyone that saith,"* in verse 22, *"Many will say."* The claims are amazing, the claims are beautiful. But they don't do what they claim.

Elton Trueblood has said, "That our main mission field today as far as America is concerned is within the church membership itself. Carl Bart who is by no means an evangelical but did say some things that were true said, "The true function of the church consists first of all in its own regeneration." We've got to get our own act together. We're loaded with people who are filled with empty words, they say, they say, they say, but they don't do God's will. Now there's nothing wrong with saying, I mean, *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved."* So you've got to say, confession is necessary but confession without obedience is a sham.

Now look with me for a minute, very briefly at their confession in verse 21, they say, *"Lord, Lord,"* verse 22, they say, *"Lord, Lord,"* and we heard the virgins, didn't we? *"Lord, Lord,"* in *Matthew 25*. This is an interesting phrase, the first time they say Lord it could be their respect, the word means Master, Teacher, Sir, it's a term of dignity, respect, recognition. They're saying, Lord, in a sense that we respect You. The second time, *"Lord, Lord,"* may emphasize the orthodoxy of their claim for the word Lord,

Kurios is the word translated in the Septuagint of the Old Testament for the name of Jehovah. They're saying, we know You're God, we know You're Jehovah, we accept all that Your deity involves, Your virgin birth, miraculous life, substitutionary death, powerful resurrection, intercession, second coming, they are respectful, they are orthodox, they use the right terms, the right attitudes. And then notice, "*Lord, Lord,*" the fact that they say it twice indicates their zeal and their passion and their fervency and their commitment and their strength of devotion.

And by the way if this is occurring at the great white throne judgment and they're saying this at the great white throne judgment, if this is the day of which He speaks when He says in that day, then it's very possible that those who come there have already spent centuries in a place of judgment and punishment, and that even adds to their fervency, "*Lord, Lord,*" what have we been doing being where we've been. And so there is a fervency and an orthodoxy and a respectfulness.

And then in verse 22, they say three times, "*in Thy name, in Thy name, in Thy name.*" I mean they aren't even so self-centered in that sense, we've been doing it for You, we've been preaching for You, and we've been casting out demons for You, and we've been doing miracles for You. Now it's an amazing claim, it is respectful, it is orthodox, it is fervent, it is zealous. They proclaim and they do works. Boy that sounds good. And we say, these got to be Christians, I mean they are respectful, they're orthodox, they're fervent in their private devotion, they're zealous in their public ministry of word and work. It sounds so good. But, verse 21, "*Not everyone that says that is going to enter.*" Because not everybody who says that has been doing the will of the Father who is in heaven. And so the Lord will confess in verse 23, here's My confession, homologeō, "*I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.*" What a shock. He says, I want to give you a confession, and by the way this is taken right out of *Psalms 6:8*, I want to confess this to you, "*I never knew you.*" It's like He said to the virgins banging on the door, "*I don't know you.*" Well you say, what do you mean, you mean God doesn't know who they are? No, of course He knows who they are He knows everything. They're not talking simply about an awareness, not talking about mental comprehension, the word know is used in the Bible and you have to watch this, of an intimate relationship.

For example in *Amos 3:2* God says of Israel, "*You only have I known among all the nations.*" Does that mean the only people He knew about were Jews? No. It meant that He had an intimate relationship with them. "*My sheep hear My voice and I know them.*" To even put it more intimately I think this will help you understand it, in the Old Testament it says, "*Cain knew his wife and she bore a son.*" Now it doesn't mean he knew who she was or he knew her name, it means he knew her in the absolute intimate act of marriage. And you'll remember that when Mary was pregnant with our Lord as He as the divine seed was infused by the Spirit of God, Joseph was shocked and the Bible says he was shocked because "*he had never (what?) known her.*" You see the word know embodies an intimate relationship. And Jesus says, I never had any intimate relationship with you. Oh, you were around the fringes but I never had that intimacy with you.

And then He says, "*depart from Me,*" get out of My presence forever, why? Because the end of the verse 23, you do always continue to work lawlessness. That is a present participle, why? Because instead of doing the will of My Father, by the way that is a term that picks up all of the rest of The Sermon on the Mount, instead of living by these righteous principles you do always continue to do lawlessness. And instead of doing God's will, His righteous standard you do continually, always work lawlessness. You know what it means to profess Christ? Absolutely nothing, if your life doesn't back it up. That's why Peter said what he said, if you can't add to your faith, virtue, then you're not going to know you're really redeemed. That's what James meant when he said, faith minus works equals zero. It's dead.

Profession is valueless, in fact I believe that to profess Christ and to claim Christ invalidly is taking the Lord's name in vain in the ultimate sense. I don't think taking the Lord's name in vain is saying, Jesus Christ or God out on the streets, that's one way but the epitome of violating God's name is to claim Christ when He isn't yours.

G. Campbell Morgan has well said it, "The blasphemy of the sanctuary is far more awful than the blasphemy of the slum." It is a Judas kiss to say, Lord, Lord, and then disobey, that is a Judas kiss. We must be consumed with doing the will of God, that's why the prayer says, "Thy will *be* (what?) *done* (not only in heaven but where?) *in earth.*" And that means through me, through me.

You say, well John, what about if I don't do it, if I fail? The prayer goes on to say, "*Forgive us our trespasses, (our debts,) as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" Yes, we know that we're going to fail but that's where we come for forgiveness, and that's part of the righteous act. The righteous standard Jesus speaks of assumes we'll fail but when we fail we'll be there confessing. That's why *First John 1:9* says, if we are the ones continually confessing our sins, we give evidence of the ones that are being forgiven. In other words the ones being forgiven are the ones confessing. You see, He's not saying, here's the perfect standard, if you ever fail you're out, He's saying here's the perfect standard, and part of the perfect standard is that when you fail you deal with it. That's God's standard. And I would dare say that if The Sermon on The Mount is not the direction of your life, not the perfection of it but if it's not the direction of your life I don't care what confession you've made, I don't care if you've been baptized or whatever you're not a Christian. ***You remember in John 6 "they said to Him, well what do we do to work the works of God? And He said, this is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent. Where do you start with the will of God? Believe on Christ. The only thing acceptable to God is a righteousness that is the product of repentant faith in Jesus Christ, and that produces good works. And if that's not there no matter what you say it doesn't matter, it absolutely doesn't matter. And so the Lord says in verse 23, if I can paraphrase, not for one single moment have I acknowledged you as My own or known you intimately, you are forever expelled from My presence because you continue to work lawlessness.***

Now what makes this so shocking? And I want to just do this in closing. What makes this so shocking is that the claims they make are amazing. Look at verse 22, Lord, Lord, we've prophesied, cast out demons, done wonderful works. Three words, prophecy, exorcism, and miracles, it sounds like much of what's claimed in the Charismatic movement today. Now you know something? Some people who claim that will be legitimate, there are/have been some who were true prophets, some who truly in the name of Jesus Christ cast out the enemy, some that God used to do marvelous things, mighty things, but there are plenty who are going to claim it and it isn't true, it isn't true. That's not going to do it.

Now the question always comes up and I want to deal with it just briefly, just relax we're going to be here for another couple of minutes so don't be itching to go. This is my last time ... But I want you to hear this. Some people say, well I mean, boy, did they really do this, did they really preach, prophesy, did they really cast out demons, did they really do mighty works? There's three alternatives, number one they did, by God's power. Number two they did, by Satan's power. Number three they didn't, they just faked it. All three could be true. You say, even if they're unbelievers it could be true? Yes, do you know that God has worked through unbelievers?

Well look back in the Old Testament, and you'll find that God has actually worked His work through unbelievers. For example, in *Numbers 23:5* it says, "*And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth.*" "*And Balaam (says Peter) loved the wages of unrighteousness.*" He was an unrighteous evil prophet for

hire but God used his mouth. There have been times when God has even worked through unregenerate people. I suppose you would have to say the crucifixion of Christ was one of the most monumental ones. In *First Samuel 10:10 and 11* the apostate king of Israel who was by no means righteous, of him it says, "*The Spirit of God came upon him and he prophesied.*" Amazing. Of Caiaphas in *John 11:51 and 52*, the Lord put a prophecy in the mouth of that vile high priest, so that he prophesied the death of Christ for all men. It's very possible that some of these self-deluded people were actually used by God, did actually speak God's truth. I mean that's within the realm of possibility.

Secondly, it is possible that they may have done wonderful things, cast out demons and preached under the power of Satan. For Satan can express his power. Satan expressed his power on Job, didn't he? In death, destruction and disease. No question about it. Do you know that there were the sons of Sceva in *Acts 19* that actually went around casting out devils? Jesus even acknowledged that the Jews had this ability when Jesus said, *If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, who do you cast demons out through?* He was recognizing that perhaps they had even done that. And that you could cast out demons, perhaps some righteous Jews did it by the power of God, perhaps some unrighteous Jews did it through the power of Satan. You say, well why would Satan cast out Satan? Because he's confused to begin with, his whole system's a mess. Do you know that in *Deuteronomy 13* it says, There would come false prophets and they would prophesy certain things, certain signs and wonders and they would come to pass and you still weren't to believe them, and maybe they were Satanically energized. Do you know that it tells us in *Matthew 24:24*, false Christs, false prophets will come and do signs and wonders, *Second Thessalonians 2 verses 8 to 10* that the Antichrist is going to come and do false signs and wonders. Satan can do some amazing things.

And then there's the whole area of just plain fakery, and I think that's what was cooking up in Egypt, I think of the magicians of Egypt who were trying to mimic the miracles of Moses were just pulling off fake things. When they reproduced what Moses did I think it was just chicanery, just their own little magic. I call it magic shop stuff, tricks. Now the point is this people. These people are going to say, we preached and we cast out demons and we did mighty works, and maybe some of them were used by God to do that if God will use Balaam's ass He'll use anything. Maybe they did it by the power of the devil, masquerading as God, white magic, maybe it was just plain old hocus-pocus like most healers that you see today. The point isn't how they did it the point is they were deceived, they thought it was God but it wasn't God, it wasn't God. I think there are a lot of people today preaching, a lot of people casting out devils, a lot of people healing and a lot of people doing other stuff that they believe is God and it isn't God, and a lot of people believe that. They say, oh yes, it's the Lord, it must be God. And it's nothing but Satanic or trickery.

But the point is simply this, no matter what they say, no matter what they claim and no matter what miracles and wonders and stuff they've said they've seen, Jesus says, you are not qualified to be in My Kingdom. And that's the shock, because they never came through the narrow gate, never. What a devastating thing. Well, to make a mere verbal profession is not enough. Tonight we'll find out to hear is not enough either. Father, thank You this morning for this Word to us. We hear the words in our hearts of Jeffery O'Hara's anthem, "Why call Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say. Ye call Me the way and walk Me not. Ye call Me the life and live Me not. Ye call Me Master and obey Me not. If I condemn thee blame Me not. Ye call Me bread and eat Me not. Ye call Me truth and believe Me not. Ye call Me Lord and serve Me not. If I condemn thee blame Me not." May no one go from this place in that category. We cannot blame You Lord for condemning those who say but don't do for they give evidence of not being apart of the Kingdom. Father, do Your work in all our hearts, as we honestly examine our own hearts, that we might know we're in the faith. In Christ's name. Amen.

Saved or Self-Deceived? - Pt 2 - Empty Hearts

Matthew 7: 24-29 - John MacArthur

Take your Bible with me and let's look together at *Matthew chapter 7*. I have to admit that there are so many thoughts in my mind about this section of Scripture that I can't begin to give you even a small dose of what I feel inside. I sense that many of the things that I have been preaching to you in The Sermon on The Mount are going to find their way out of my mouth throughout this summer while I'm gone with my family, because I feel that so many parts of this particular message need to be preached and taught and spoken in our country. And I'm quite confident that many of the things that I'll say are things that I've been thinking about and have been kind of ruminating over in my own mind and maybe I've never even said them here as God continues to teach me as I meditate over and over on this message. To have your thoughts dominated by The Sermon on The Mount for as long as I have and I don't know how long I've been preaching on it but it's over a year, to have your thoughts continually dominated by this is to bring about a spiritual exercise that's second to none, and I just feel it's shaped my life in so many, many ways and I thank God far more for the privilege I've had of telling you about these things than ever you could be thankful for what you've had to listen to from me. But I want us again to look at *Matthew chapter 7* verses 21 to 29. And particularly because we've already discussed verses 21 to 23 I want us to focus on verses 24 to 27 and then a comment or two about the closing.

Beginning at verse 21 our Lord climaxes the sermon by saying, *"Not everyone that says unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the will of My Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? And in Thy name have cast out demons? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who hath built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine; For He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."*

Here in Southern California we are constantly made aware of the need for a good foundation on a house. Seems as though annually we either have earthquakes or floods. Earthquakes have a way of cracking foundations and floods have a way of washing them away altogether. Last winter we all went through the time of the storms that we have come to experience periodically and we saw the tremendous rains come and the swollen rivers and the floods that caused all kinds of havoc, our mountain sides were washed away and houses plunged into the valleys below. And living in California can be an experience depending upon where you may live in times like that. Whenever we go about to build something it's very necessary that we built it with an eye toward the possibility of a flood or the possibility of an earthquake. Careful soil tests are done, examination of the ground, compacting the soil in order to make sure that the foundation is going to stand. So we're very used to that. And it was frankly little different in Palestine. In fact Palestine has almost an identical climate to Southern California. It's dry and arid for the most part and when it rains the land really can only absorb so much, and when the rain comes in a flood it turns into just that, a flood. Houses are washed away in the same manner that we've seen it here. And so in a building plan or program in the land of Palestine you'd need to have the same kind of planning and the same kind of preparation that you have here. What may look like a wonderful place to build a house, firm footing in the summer, in the winter becomes a raging torrent that wipes away whatever edifice has been placed there.

Now Jesus has this in mind in verses 24 to 27. He pictures two men that build a house, probably in the dry bed of a stream somewhere in a valley. One man thinks little about what might come and he works feverishly on the house but has absolutely no thought for the foundation, he is called a foolish man, in verse 26. The other man, also building a house seeks to be sure that the foundation is built upon solid rock. He is called a wise man in verse 24. And so you have a simple story, two men build houses, one is wise and one is foolish. And what seems as a very simple story is in fact a startling, shocking, powerful commentary on people who have a head knowledge but an empty heart. You'll notice that He says in verse 24, "*Whosoever hears,*" and in verse 26, "*Every one that hears.*" These are the people who hear, they hear the message, they listen, they understand it, the wise ones do something about it the fools do not. James Denney has said, quote, "It is the consciousness that the speaker is nothing less than the final judge of all which makes the parable of the builders on rock and sand the most solemn and overpowering." End quote.

Now remember what we said to you this morning and all along in our study, Jesus is closing the sermon with an invitation, and the invitation is in verses 13 and 14. And the invitation says in effect, enter into the narrow gate onto the narrow way that leads to life. But it won't be easy to do that for two ultimate reasons, one is false prophets and two is false profession. You will be deceived by others and you will be deceived by yourself.

Now we all live under some illusions and in fact most of us cultivate those illusions. It's part and parcel of human nature to cover up its faults and defects. And so the Lord is saying, you must enter the narrow gate, but it won't be easy because in verses 15 to 20 there will be false prophets trying to keep you from doing that and sending you on the broad way. And it also won't be easy because you will tend to be self-deceived. First of all, He says there are those who say but don't do in verses 21 to 23, they simply have a verbal profession, they have just a verbal profession they say they belong in the kingdom, they say they know Christ but they don't do what Christ said. And the dichotomy indicates that they're not legitimate, they say-they don't do. We saw that in detail this morning. And then in verses 24 to 27 there are those who hear but don't do, they have a head knowledge without a heart knowledge. The first group has empty words the second group has empty hearts. And people can be deceived either way, a mere verbal profession you just keep saying it and saying it until finally you've convince yourself it must be true even though there's no evidence. Or a head knowledge which seems to suffice for a real heart relationship. There are some people who are deceived into thinking they're Christians because they know so much about Christianity. Just like there are people who think they're Christians because they say so much about it.

Now in verses 24 to 27 the Lord again reminds us that the standard of righteousness is required for entering the Kingdom of God, and unless your life is built on that standard no matter what it looks like and no matter what you know in your head and no matter how feverishly you conduct your spiritual activity when the flood comes you're going to get washed away, if all you have is a head knowledge. Now the Jews had developed a system of works, righteousness, a humanly devised system of self-stimulated fleshly effort that fell far short, and God came along and offered them a true righteousness. But before they could receive the true righteousness they had to note the bankruptcy of their own system, and that's why they had to come with a Beatitude mentality. Jesus is busy in The Sermon on the Mount tearing down their paper palace piece by piece, until by the time He gets to chapter 7 He has utterly destroyed their whole religious security, and then He forces them to make a choice in verses 13 and 14, tells them it won't be an easy choice because false prophets will deceive them and they will deceive themselves. And so the contrast in verses 24 to 27 is between two people who hear, some hear and obey, some hear and disobey, and the illustration used is two builders.

Now the words again are addressed to those who profess to know God, who think they're in the Kingdom, who think they're Christians. Verse 24 begins, "*whosoever hears these sayings of Mine,*" verse 26 begins, "*And every one that hears these sayings of Mine,*" in either case you have people who are hearing the message of Christ, they're listening to the Word of God. And you'll note also at the end of verse 24 it says, this one built his house, and at the end of verse 26, this one also built his house. They listen and they are involved in certain spiritual activity. They both belong to the visible body of believers, they both perhaps read Scripture, they both perhaps attend meetings at the church, they both are busy framing some kind of spiritual value system, building up some edifice of spiritual activity. But there's a tremendous difference. One is wise and one is a fool because one builds on rock and the other builds on sand. And by the way, if I might add this, the foundation is invisible, once the edifice is up you can't see the foundation anymore and so it really becomes difficult to tell. And we can be deceived just as well as the people who are self-deceived.

Now beloved let me add this just as a general truth, what our Lord is saying here is very simple. Lots of people hear Christ's teaching but only the ones that do them are in the Kingdom, did you get that? That's the bottom line. There are many people who hear, but if you examine your life and it's all a hearing and not a doing don't deceive yourself into thinking you're a Christian. In fact the Lord says, only the storm is going to manifest the truth, and then we'll find out who's wise and who's a fool.

Now there are several similarities here and I want you to note them. First of all, both individuals build a house, they're both involved in spiritual activity, they're both involved in something that has to do with the Kingdom of God.

Secondly, it's apparent that they both build their house in the same location, because the same storm hits both houses. They build a house and they build it in the same area or the same location, because they're both subject to the same storm. True believers and false believers invariably live side by side, they're on the same block, they attend the same church, they go to the same Bible studies and they are so similar in the building they build that they are indistinguishable to most people.

I might also add as a third thought that they apparently build it in the same way, because the Lord says the only difference is the foundation, He doesn't imply that the house itself is any different. Both people build a house, they build it in the same place and they build it in the same way. In other words they carry a Bible and a notebook and they go through certain prayers and they do certain activities and maybe they give some money to the Lord, and really it all looks very much the same. Until you come to the real crux of the matter and that's the foundation which as I said is very often not visible once the edifice is up. And only an honest and careful soul searching self-examination can reveal the truth.

You see Jesus is trying to get the Pharisees to come off of their proud, high tower and look at their own lives and see how really bankrupt they are. Because that's the only place you can tell the tale. One builds on rock at the end of verse 24, petra, that means in the Greek a rock bed. There's a word petros which means a stone or a boulder, this is petra it is a rock bed. And the other builds on sand, verse 26, the word is very simple in the Greek ammon, a-m-m-o-n to transliterate, you know what it means? It simply means sand, like sea shore sand. Now I've been to two cities in the area of Jordan one is named Ammon and the other is named Petra, they are named with these very terms. Petra is a city literally made out of rock. In fact when we rode into that city on horses you go through a little channel, one person could guard the whole city you could only get in through one little crack in the cliffs, and the entire city which still stands today is carved out of the rock, Petra. Then there's Ammon, I don't know if you've ever been to Ammon Jordan but when you go to Ammon you only see one thing, sand everywhere, sand.

Now a man is wise to build on rock bed, a man is a fool to build on the shifting sands of the sea or the desert. And by the way there are some land agents selling lots on the sand and they're in verses 15 to 20. The false prophets set up a real estate office and sell sand lots. A man is a fool to build on sand, because when the storm comes it will undermine the sand, verse 27, and the house will fall and it'll not just topple the thing will really fall. But when it is built on rock and the foundation is solid the storm can come and it isn't going to fall.

I remember when we built this church, that I was amazed at the footings that are in this church. I don't know if you realize it but the pillars in the back and the pillars outside go down into the ground so deep that it's amazing, and the huge, big caverns just for this building, where there is steel and concrete poured just filling these massive caverns, and the tremendous foundation that's built here. In fact they told us if an earthquake ever came this thing wouldn't collapse the worst that could happen is it would just tip over on one end and stay intact. And you'd all be piled up in the corner over here. A solid foundation.

And again we see a powerful rebuke of the religion of the Pharisees. They had no regard for spirituality of soul, they had no regard for purity of heart, they had no regard for integrity of behavior, they had no regard for obedience to God, and they were building their big spiritual structure on sand. They prayed, sure, and they fasted, of course, and they gave their alms for sure but only as a public show to parade their supposed spirituality and try to enhance their reputations. They had a religion of externals and that is sand.

Arthur Pink says, "They bring their bodies to the house of prayer but not their souls. They worship with their mouths but not in spirit and in truth. They are sticklers for immersion or early morning communion but they take no thought about keeping their hearts with all diligence. They boast of their orthodoxy but disregard the precepts of Christ. Multitudes of professing Christians abstain from external acts of violence yet hesitate not to rob their neighbors of a good name by spreading evil reports against them. They contribute regularly to the pastor's salary but shrink not from misrepresenting their goods and cheating their customers persuading themselves that business is business. They have more regard for the laws of man than those of God for His fear is not before their eyes." Sand, false foundations, they didn't come through the narrow way.

You want to know something? The broad way that leads to destruction is all sand, all sand. But others build on the rock at the end of verse 24, what is a rock? When you say you build your life on the rock, what are you saying? Well, we could make a case for the fact that the rock is God, that the rock is God you are literally building your life on God, and that of course is true. In *Psalms 18 verse 2*, "*The LORD is my rock.*" We could say the rock is God, but so would the Pharisees, they'd say that. Or we could say the rock is Christ. Christ, says Peter, is the chief cornerstone. Paul says He is the rock. But there are plenty of people who say they've built their life on Christ. It's got to be more than that.

And frankly most commentators take it to be God or Christ, but I want to take it a step further, as I mulled over this passage I think it's clear what the rock is. "*Whosoever hears these sayings of Mine,*" builds his house upon a rock. No. "*Whosoever hears these sayings of Mine, and (what?) does them, builds his house upon a rock.*" What is the rock? It is obedience to the Word of God. That's the rock. Yes God is a rock, yes Christ is the chief cornerstone. But I believe that what our Lord is saying here is simply this, these sayings of mine become the rock bed foundation of the church, the true church, the redeemed church.

Let me illustrate it by having you turn further in the *Book of Matthew* to the *16th chapter*, a very familiar text but one that I think aptly illustrates our thought. In *Matthew 16 verse 13*, "*Jesus came into the borders of Caesarea Philippi,*" which is way to the north part of the land of Israel,

*"He asked His disciples, saying, who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Who do they say I am? "They said, some say you're John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said unto them, But who say ye that I am?" Now listen, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Now that is not a human word. "Jesus said, flesh and blood did not reveal that unto you, (verse 17) but My Father, who is in heaven." That is a divine revelation. "And I say unto you, You are petros," you are a pebble Peter, you are a boulder. But "upon this petra," "rock" bed foundation, "I will build my church." And what was the petra? The rock bed foundation, it was the Word of God, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Upon that affirmation of truth I'll build My church. The petra of *Matthew 16* was the Word of God and I am convinced that the petra of *Matthew 7* is also the Word of God.*

In *Acts chapter 20* Paul says, *"I commend you (listen to this) to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up."* It is the Word of God that is our foundation and it is the Word of God that provides the material for the building as well. So what is our Lord saying?

Now listen, He is saying the person who lives a life where he only hears and never does has sand. And what does the sand represent? Human will, human opinion, human attitudes, the shifting sands of human philosophy. Even though you listen you don't do it you're not on the rock, on the other hand the wise man who hears the Word of God and builds his life on God's Word has a rock foundation. And that means a life of obedience.

In *John chapter 8* a text that I refer to so many times because it is such a very significant one, then it says in verse 30, *"As He spoke these words,"* listen now, *"many believed on Him."* Now that's, that's a good thing, *"many believed on Him."* They heard, they listened, they took it in, they accepted it. *"But Jesus said to them, If you continue in My word, then are you My real disciple."* It isn't just the hearing and the believing it is the continuing in obedience to the Word of God, that's the rock. So listen, don't be deluded people, I don't care what you verbally claim and Jesus doesn't either, if you don't do it you're deceiving yourself. And I care not what you may listen to and hear and take in, unless you build your life on Biblical truth you are deceiving yourself.

In *James chapter 1* we read this, *verse 22, "But be ye doers of the word"* now listen, *"be ye doers of the word and not hearers only,"* now listen, why? *"deceiving your own selves."* That's what our Lord is saying in The Sermon on the Mount, if you hear it and don't do it you're self-deceived. *"If any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man beholding his natural face in a mirror; He looks at himself in a mirror, goes his way, and immediately forgets the manner of man that he was."* In other words if you're not doing it, it's not having any effect on your life or your destiny.

In *Colossians chapter 1* *verse 21* we read this, *"And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, hath He now reconciled."* Now this is great. He's reconciled you, *verse 23, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled."* In other words, the truly saved are the ones who continue in a life of obedience.

In *First John chapter 2* *verse 3*, *"And by this we do know that we know Him, if we keep His (what?) commandments."* Now I'm not saying this beloved, the Lord is saying this, the apostles are saying this. Don't be deceived.

Titus 1:16, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him," now listen to this, how? *"being abominable, and disobedient."* If you go around claiming to be a Christian, you say, I profess it verbally, I listen, I have a head knowledge, but there's no obedience, there's no legitimate salvation.

So building on the rock beloved is obeying, look at your life, examine it, is it a life that longs beyond any other desire to obey the Word of God? Or is it disobeying and always and ever and constantly justifying that disobedience? So obedience is the key word here. And I'll add this thought, ***the only validation you will ever have of your salvation is a life of obedience, it is the only possible proof that you really recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ. I'm going to say that again because that's the heart of the message. Obedience is the only validation of your salvation. It is the only possible proof that you recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Because if there's no obedience then you're confessing Jesus is Lord is just so much verbal exercise.***

So Jesus is presenting the kind of life built on a rock, and what kind of life is it? It's the kind of life described in the whole sermon, it's the kind of life that has a Biblical view towards self, the Beatitudes, it's the kind of life that has a Biblical attitude toward the world it sees itself as something to preserve the world and light the world not be a part of it. It is the attitude of the Bible toward the Word of God, not changing it, not altering it but accepting every jot and tittle of it. Jesus is presenting the kind of life built on the rock that has a Biblical attitude toward morality, not trying to get away with everything you can, not external but internal. A Biblical attitude toward words, what you say, toward deeds, what you do, toward motives, the reason you do what you do, a Biblical attitude toward money, toward things, a Biblical attitude toward people, everything He's touched in The Sermon on the Mount, and He's saying if your life is committed to obedience to these things you're on the rock. So when I hear somebody come along and say, oh yes, you know I'm born again but ah, I just go on living the way I'm living. I question that.

I saw an article in a magazine recently, "What are pastors going to do with the new wave among Christians of people who aren't married living together." I question whether that can happen among Christians. I think maybe we better reevaluate not the standard for marriage but who's really a Christian. If this isn't the direction of your life, these truths and The Sermon on the Mount then you may be well self-deceived. It's not as simple as I've been saying all along, just making a decision, signing a card, raising your hand. Salvation is a recognition of a divine standard, a subsequent overwhelming sense of sinfulness, a pleading for God's mercy to receive His righteousness, because you desire to fulfill His Word. People don't say, well I'm coming to Christ, and I want to be saved but I don't want to get into all that obedience stuff. Then you're not a Christian. Grieves my heart. People say to me, well you know so and so I know they were saved because of such and such but they never come to church and they are not interested and they're upset with the church. The fact of the matter is they probably don't know Christ and they're self-deceived.

Let me look more deeply into this delusion that's presented here. We've seen the similarities let's see the differences. Now watch this, one built the easy way the other built the hard way, are you with me on that? It's very easy to build on sand, you don't have to dig, you don't have to do anything just like going on the broad road you just go on with all your garbage, have a great old time, lots of room, do anything you want, plenty of tolerance, and this is the way it is with the fool.

A fool does it the easy way for two reasons, number one, fools are always in a hurry. The Bible says in the *Book of Proverbs* that, "*Fools make haste.*" I've learned a little bit I'm not any good with my hands at building things but I've learned one thing through the years and that is if you do it right the first time you don't have to do it again. And I learned that because I always do things wrong the first time it's because it was not thorough enough. The fool is always in a hurry. It's easy to build on sand you don't have to dig, you don't have to prepare you just slap it up. The fool is always, always wants a short cut, quick results, quick evangelism, keep it moving man, jump on the bandwagon cause we're not slowing down. No time for soul conviction, no time for building a deep sense of God, no time for teaching the doctrine of sin, no time for building a sense of conviction, no time for coming to grips with your soul before God,

it's just here we go we're on the move if you want to jump on hit it fella cause we're not going to linger. Short cuts, quick results, quick evangelism. We've got that today, we've got the super canned fast approach to everything. That piles up fools more than wise men. Nobody builds a tower until he counts the cost, no wise man.

Second thing about a fool he builds the easy way not only because he's in a hurry but because he's basically superficial. You know, how many people do you know who proclaim that they believe in Christ, who said they heard the Gospel and accepted it and there has been absolutely nothing in their life to give evidence of that. Superficial. And I believe we live in the age of superficiality we're all in a big mad dash, I mean if you don't get your hamburger in three minutes in Mc Donald's you start having apoplexy. And we're so superficial. Millions name the name of Jesus but it is a shallow shifting sand and when they don't get their instant upper from Jesus anymore and they don't get the jollies and the kicks they thought they were going to get their house begins to collapse and they look for another sandy place to build another house that isn't going to stand either. Christianity has become so superficial it just galls me to hear some of the presentations of Christ that are supposed to be legitimate.

Sermons that have absolutely nothing to do with the Gospel and then you give an invitation at the end and people are accepting who knows what. There's no deep plowing, there's no spade work, there's no foundation, there's no brokenness of heart. Arthur Pink says, "If I have never mourned over my waywardness then I have no solid ground for rejoicing." I think Spurgeon had a good word he said, "Want of depth, want of sincerity, want of zeal in religion this is the want of our times. Want of an eye to God in religion, lack of sincere dealing with one's soul, neglect of using the lance with our hearts, neglect of the search warrant which God gives out against sin, carelessness concerning living upon Christ, much reading about Him, much talking about Him but too little feeding on His flesh and drinking of His blood. These are the causes of a tottering profession and a baseless hope." End quote.

On the other hand while the foolish man is in a big hurry the wise man is not. In fact in *Luke 6:47 and 48* the parallel passage it says, that the wise man, I love this, dug deep. Oh, that's good, dug deep to the foundation. He went for the rock of the Word of God he blew the sand away. The sand of human opinion and self-will and he went for the rock of obedience to God's Word.

Now what does it mean to dig deep? First of all it means you're not in a hurry, no quickie conversion, no light confession. One writer has said, "There are some people who say they are saved before they have any sense that they're even lost." And I have said in the past that some people present the Gospel so poorly that even the non-elect don't know enough to reject it. Those who claim Christ as their own are willing to dig deep, they have thought out the responsibility, they don't rush into some profession later to rush out of it again, or be thrown out in final judgment, they count the cost, they consider what they're doing, there is a digging deep there's not a hurry.

When the Lord sowed the seed in the parable in *Matthew 13* He says, "*But he that received the seed in stony places is he that hears the word and immediately with joy receives it. But he has no root so he endures for a while, and when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word immediately he is offended, and he runs away.*" Just think of it, oh I've seen it so many times. Oh I profess Christ, I'm a Christian, and as soon as you start laying on them the Word of God and what it demands they're gone, they don't want it. Well that's not the way it is with one who digs deep. He digs deep to the rock bed of God's Word in order that he might obey.

In *Luke chapter 9 verse 58*, "*Jesus said to them, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, and the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.*" Of course what's interesting about that is his father

wasn't even dead. Let me go home and wait for the inheritance, soon as I get my money I'm coming. And He said, "Let the dead bury their dead; you go and preach the kingdom." You let the, the world take care of its own, the spiritually dead bury the physically dead, you come preach the Kingdom. "Another said, Lord, I'll follow thee; but I want to go first and say good-bye to everybody who is at home. Jesus said, No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." The people who come rushing in and then all of a sudden when you start to lay the standard of following Christ down they want to get out again are not fit for the Kingdom, why? They didn't come the narrow way. So first of all, those who dig deep are not in a hurry. It's not superficial.

Secondly, those who dig deep show a desire to give a maximum effort. Men are always drawn to the easy path, the easy way. And I think sometimes we make the Gospel so easy that it's no Gospel at all and it's no conversion at all. You know we've always went, oh how it's so hard to follow up new converts, it's so hard to follow up those that ... you know we've had so many say ... one large church in America, this was a very large church in one year had twenty-eight thousand conversions on paper, baptized nine thousand six hundred people and had one hundred and twenty-three added to the church. And the man who was on the staff of that church said, I knew right then something was wrong and that's when I left and said, God show me how to do it right. There weren't twenty-eight thousand people saved if there was only one hundred and twenty-three added to the church. The problem is not the difficulty of follow up, the problem is the difficulty of conversion, that's the problem. And we are trying to follow up people who never were redeemed to begin with.

People say, oh you know, if we don't get them into the follow up we'll have to just leave them to the Holy Spirit and that doesn't usually work. You know, if they're really converted God is going to do His work. It's just that trying to follow up the unconverted is a little tough. Listen, the person who digs deep desires to strive to enter in, he takes the hard things, he disdains the labor, he minimizes the travail of soul in order to build on the rock. Sure it's a lot easier to go the way of the flesh, sure it's tough to restrict yourself, to go God's way. But His commandments beloved are not grievous, are they? They're blessed, and we fulfill them not out of law but out of love. Another thing about the man who digs deep he wants to do it right, and he's teachable. The Pharisees weren't teachable you couldn't tell them anything, they didn't even want to hear it. There's so many people like that, they profess Christ but they don't want to hear what that demands, they don't want to hear what that requires, they don't want to count the cost, they don't want to learn the right way to build their life. They want to go on their own ideas and their own goals and their own self-will and their own designs, and their own purposes and go down their own little channel and when you go to them and try to teach them what is right to do they don't want to hear that. It's not because they're unteachable Christians it's because they're sham Christians, that's what our Lord is saying.

Dig deep, the one who digs deep empties himself of self-righteousness, empties himself of self-sufficiency, knows he has nothing, knows he's not commendable, overwhelmed with his sin. He makes the maximum effort to strive to enter in, he makes the maximum effort to place the Word of God in his heart that he might not sin, he is interested in a genuine love relationship with Jesus Christ, not a routine of spiritual activity, he does not build on visions, he does not build on experiences, he does not build on supposed miracles, he builds on the Word of God, and he builds for God's glory not his own.

Listen, many people want spiritual power, look at Simon in *Acts 8* he wanted to buy the power of the Spirit of God, and Peter says, *"Your money perish with you,"* you phony. Many people want the power they just aren't interested in living according to God's standards, they're a sham, they're building on sand. They want to know what Jesus can do for them, they want the goodies, chasing signs and wonders, not committed to Christ at all.

And what happens ultimately? Well, according to verse 25 and verse 27 the day of reckoning is going to come. Now this just sums up the whole of judgment, I don't think you can say well the rain was so and so and the flood refers to so and so and the wind refers to so and so and the beating on the house is such and such. You can get carried away on that stuff. What it's simply saying is, is one day a storm came and it was obvious what house was on the rock and what house was on the sand, and someday there's going to come a divine accounting. That's what it's saying, God is going to blow the wind of judgment and rain the rain of judgment and sent the flood of judgment, and when He does some are going to stand and some are going to fall. Whether your religion is true or false it's going to be tried, and whether you're chaff or wheat is going to be found out. Someday the chief winnower is going to come and He's going to separate the chaff and the wheat, He's going to blow the wind of judgment and those who have built their lives on the rock are going to stand. Oh what a wonderful promise it is.

I always think of *First Thessalonians 1* where it says that, "*Jesus, has delivered us from the wrath to come.*" Why? Because our faith is genuine, that's what He said to the Thessalonians. Your faith is genuine so you'll be delivered from the wrath to come. There is going to come a judgment time, it tells us in *Revelation chapter 20* specifically how that's going to happen, "*And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged out of those, things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every man according to his works. And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.*" That's the final great white throne judgment, and I believe that is a day when there will be echoing through the corridors of that judgment hall Lord, Lord, and echoing back the reverberation of His reply, "*depart from Me, I never knew you.*" People are deluded.

Listen, Satan is a liar, true? Satan is a deceiver and his ultimate deception beyond any deception is to make someone believe they're a Christian when they're not. Because if you don't know you've got the problem you're not looking for the answer anymore. The day of judgment is coming, you'd better look at your life.

Not everyone, back to verse 21, not everyone who thinks they are in is in, look at the foundation. They may be respectful of Christ, they may be orthodox, you may be fervent, you may be active in private devotion, you may be active in public proclamation, you may be busy with spiritual activity, you may be building a religious life right in the same community with true believers and your little house may look exactly like their house, but when the judgment comes it'll be devastated because it's on sand, it's on the sand of your own will and your own whims and your own wishes and your own way rather than the rock of obedience to His Word.

Beloved I only can tell you out of the heart of love that I have that you should go back and check the foundation. The hymn writer says it, "*The soul that on Jesus doth lean for repose I will not, I will not desert to His foes. That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake I'll never, no never, no never forsake.*" And what soul is that? The soul that leans on Jesus for repose. If I can paraphrase the other hymn, "*My house is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and (what?) righteousness.*" I dare not trust the strongest frame, but wholly build on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand all other ground is sinking sand." So Jesus' unequalled, unparalleled masterpiece of oratory ends with a devastating warning and it ends with judgment.

The final word of the sermon is at the end of verse 27, *"and great was the fall of it."* Listen, if you want to know how to present the Gospel, the Gospel every single time must end with a warning of doom to the one that rejects, it has to end that way. It's not, well if you don't come to Christ you're certainly missing a lot of nice things. It calls for a decision, and I ask you tonight, what is your decision? What is it? You say, well I choose Christ, I choose the right way. Are you sure, are you sure you've chosen the right way?

You see in *Proverbs 30* verse 12 it says, *"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, but are not washed from their filthiness."* They just think they are. You say, how do I know? See what your life is built on, see if you're in any of these lists. *"For this we know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man (who is an idolater) hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."* Now listen, *"And let no man deceive you with empty words; for because of these things comes the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."* You can say all you want and you can claim to have heard it all and it'll be nothing but empty words and empty hearts, because if you're a fornicator or an unclean person or covetous man you have no inheritance in the Kingdom and don't let anybody tell you different.

Now there are times when all of us may stumble into a sin, but if these are the patterns of your life, you're not in His Kingdom, don't be deceived. See if you're in this list, *First Corinthians 6:9*, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived:"* again He says it, the thing is that this is always a deception, people say, oh well I believe and I've made a statement and I've made a profession, don't be deceived. *"If you are a fornicator,"* committing sexual sin, *"an idolater, an adulterer, if you are effeminate,"* if you are a homosexual, *"If you are a thief, if you are covetous, a drunkard, a reviler, an extortioner, you will not inherit the kingdom of God."* Look at your life. You see we've made it far too easy, haven't we?

Maybe you're not in those lists, see if you're in this list, *Galatians 5:19*, *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, (what are they?) fornication, impurity, lasciviousness,"* that means without restraint, sexually, *"Idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, wrath, self-seeking factions and seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, wild parties, and the like; of which as I have told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* Don't be deceived, don't be deceived.

In *Revelation 21* verse 8 it tells us this, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."* Do you see yourself in any of those lists? Now listen, we all sin, we're not talking about that, but if those are the pattern of your life, those are the things which characterize your living you're not in the Kingdom. I don't care what you think, that's the word of the Word of God. You say, then who, who, who then is saved? Who is saved? And you're right back to the end of verse 14, what is it? *"Few there be that find it."*

Charles Haddon Spurgeon invited men to come to Christ, he said, "I invite men to Christ not to an altar." Listen to what he said, this is at the close of one of his sermons, he said, "Before you leave this place breathe an earnest prayer to God and say this, God be merciful to me a sinner, Lord I need to be saved, save me. I call upon Thy name Lord, I am guilty, I deserve Thy wrath, Lord I cannot save myself, Lord I would have a new heart and a right spirit but what can I do? Lord, I can do nothing, come and work in me to do of Thy good pleasure, Thou alone hast power I know to save a wretch like me to whom or whither should I go if I should run from Thee. But I now do from my very soul call upon Thy name, trembling yet believing I cast myself wholly upon Thee oh Lord, I trust the blood and righteousness of Thy dear Son, Lord save me tonight for Jesus sake." And then you know the legitimacy of that kind of prayer when the passion of your heart is that you should live a righteous life. And if that isn't the passion, then you're deceived.

Now beloved when you give your life to the Lord at that point I believe that's when He takes over, that's when everything begins to unfold and from there on He begins to take over and empower you and change you, C.S. Lewis has a marvelous illustration of this, he writes, "When I was a child I often had a toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something that would deaden the pain for that night and let me go to sleep. But I did not go to my mother at least not till the pain became very bad, and the reason I did not go was this, I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin but I knew she would also do something else, I knew she would take me to the dentist the next day. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain but I couldn't get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists, I knew they started fiddling around with all sorts of other teeth when they had not yet begun to ache. They never will let sleeping dogs lie." Now if I may put it that way our Lord is like a dentist, if you give Him an inch He'll take them all. That is why He warned people to count the cost before becoming Christians, make no mistake He says, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in My hands that's what you're in for, nothing less or other than that. Understand that I'm going to see this job through. I will never rest nor let you rest until you are literally perfect, until My Father can say without reservation that He is well pleased with you as He said He was well pleased with Me." Paul put it this way, *"He that hath begun a good work in you will (what?) perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."* So our Lord confronts the empty words and the empty hearts of those who professed to be in the Kingdom but were not.

What was the result of the sermon? Say a sermon like that this morning our prayer room was so filled, couldn't even deal with the people in both services. What was the response this day? A great revival, tremendous conversions? No, verse 28, *"It came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were"* converted, no? No they weren't converted, they were *"astonished; for He taught them as one having authority, not as the scribes."* All they did was analyze it. They were astonished, we could use a lot of words for that, it means they were awed, they were amazed, they were dumbfounded, they were bewildered, but I looked it up in the Greek text and it literally means they were struck out of themselves or they were struck out of their senses, in the vernacular it blew their minds. It blew them away, that anybody could stand up there and say all of those things with such power, exousia, authority, such power, such dynamic and not do it like the scribes, and how did the scribes do it? They just quoted other people, they were fallible and they stacked up a lot of other fallible people as their source. Jesus just flat out said it, and it blew them away. They had never heard such wisdom, they had never seen such depth, they had never understood such scope, every dimension of human life was touched in an economy of words that was breathtaking. They had never heard such deep insight into the law of God or the sin of man. They had never heard such fearful warnings about hell, hellfire and judgment, they had never heard anybody who so confronted the religious leaders of the time. They were utterly shocked that He didn't use anybody else as an authority but seemed to stand upon His own authority.

And that's where it ends. They were shocked.

I'm going to pick it up there three months from now. But that's not the way it ought to end for you. You should be more than shocked, more than amazed, you should be converted. That's what Jesus is after. They never heard anybody speak the truth like He did, they never heard anybody speak of divine matters with such clarity, they never heard anybody speak with such love, they never heard anybody speak with such absolute utter and total power and authority. But they didn't respond the right way. I mean they couldn't believe that a Man would say He was the fulfillment of the law, that a Man would say He was the determiner of righteousness, that a Man would say He was the corrector of the scribes and Pharisees, they couldn't believe that a Man would claim to be the way of life, that a Man would claim to be God Jehovah, that a Man would claim to be judge of all, the one who could come and make judgment on everybody, they couldn't believe that a Man like this could say He was the King, and all they got was

astonishment. What's your response? Your eternal destiny depends on it. And the hymn writer says, "In every high and stormy gale my anchor holds within the vale. When all around my soul gives way He then in all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid rock I stand; All other ground is sinking sand." Your life is either built on rock or sand, on disobedience or obedience, and therein is the only available verifier of the legitimacy of your faith. I pray to God that your faith is in Christ. Let's bow in prayer.

While your heads are bowed and we close this evening, I cannot add to the words of our Lord I can only diminish them, in my own human way, I cannot be the purest channel as Christ was for the Word of God but I trust that through all of those weaknesses you have nonetheless heard the message, that you're searching your own heart and your own soul. I trust that the Spirit of God is responding and that you're responding in return to what conviction is taking place. Right where you sit I trust that you're going to be facing the reality before God of your own life.

We took a little more time tonight because we needed to finish, thank you so much for your patience but it all means nothing if you don't respond rightly. The saddest thing that could ever happen to me would be to have people that I know and love and minister to who miss the Kingdom, because they're deluded by Satan, don't let him do that. Search your heart.

Father I pray for all who are here that they might see truth as You see it and rightly respond, in Christ's name. Amen.