

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Empty Hearts

Scripture: Matthew 7:24-29

Code: 2256

Take your Bible with me and let's look together for the last time at Matthew chapter 7, Matthew chapter 7. We began a look at the closing portion of the sermon and we want to finish that look in our time together tonight. 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...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 every one that saith 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 heareth 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’ve 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 mountainsides 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 efforts 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...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 seashore 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. Every place, 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 Psalm 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 heareth 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 saith 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 it says 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 1 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. 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. And 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 McDonald'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 spadework, 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 ones 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." Ooh, 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 nonelect 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 awhile, 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, 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've 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...one large church in America...this was a very large church...in one year had 28,000 conversions on paper, baptized 9,600 people, and had 123 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 28,000 people saved if there was only 123 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. "My – " 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' unequaled, 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, 1 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, envying, 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, saying, ‘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 will and 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, O 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.

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