An Appeal to Charismatic Pretenders (John MacArthur)
Matthew 7:13–27
80-409

Strange Fire Conference

Let's open the Word of God again to the 7th chapter of Matthew and the final words of Jesus in the great sermon on the mount. The sermon on the mount is an evangelistic sermon intended to destroy the confidence of the Jews in their false form of religion and lead them to the truth in Christ. And at the end of the sermon, our Lord gives an invitation that begins really in verse 13. And we're going to look at that section, but with particular focus on verses 21-23. So let me read them to you.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness.' "

There could not be a conference talking about the charismatic movement without addressing this passage. It is obvious to any reader that the claims of these false believers to prophesy, to cast out demons, and to perform miracles are an exact parallel to the charismatic movement. So here we have Jesus giving us the last word, as it should be.

There's an old spiritual that says, "Everybody talking about heaven ain't going there." That's been true from the very days of the New Testament. In Proverbs 30:12 we read, "There is a kind - " or there is a generation " - who is pure in his own eyes, yet is not washed from his filthiness." In Romans 10:2, it says of Israel, "They have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge."

External Christianity, professing Christianity possesses millions of people who feel like Christians, who have been induced into thinking they are Christians, who live with the hope of entering heaven and escaping hell, but will find at the end that they were wrong. There are millions of people who claim to believe in Jesus, who use His name who call Him "Lord," who say they believe in Him, expecting heaven, only to receive hell.

Our Lord saw this at the beginning of His ministry. In John 2:23, "When He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing." Drawn by the miracles, they believed in His name. "But Jesus, on His part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men." He didn't need anyone to testify concerning man, He Himself knew what was in man. He knew it was a superficial faith. It was a faith attached to experience, to miracles. It was external. The fact is clearly stated here by our Lord that many will say, "Lord, Lord," who will not enter the kingdom.

Now let me be clear about it. No one will enter the kingdom who doesn't confess Jesus as Lord. Romans 10:9-10 says, "If you confess Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved." Confessing Jesus as Lord is essential to salvation. It is a work of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:3, "No one can confess, 'Jesus is Lord,' but by the Holy Spirit." Anyone who will not confess Jesus as Lord cannot be saved. But the shock is there people who will confess Jesus as Lord who are not saved. They will profess Jesus as Lord loudly and repeatedly on their way to hell.

This invitation at the end of the sermon on the mount forces anyone and everyone who reads to choose. It's a very sharply-defined contrast between false faith and true faith; non-saving faith and saving faith. Two paths, two ways and it's still the choice.

You say, "Well, in a world of multiple religions, how can there only be two choices?" Because you either choose the way that leads to heaven, or you choose a way that does not. And while there may be varieties of that, it's the same thing. It ends up in the same place.

There really are only two religions in the world. There is the religion of human achievement, and that's all religion in the world that offers heaven for good works, morality, religious ceremonies, rituals. On the other hand, there's the religion of divine accomplishment, which offers heaven to those who admit there is nothing they can do to earn it. One comes the way of works, and flesh, and merit, and ceremony, and ritual, and ends up in hell, whatever its label. And the true way is by faith and grace and the Holy Spirit.

The first way involves what we do, and the true way involves what God did. If you're trying to earn your way to heaven, you're coming by Law. And according to Romans 3:20, "By the deeds of the Law no one will be justified." You have no hope and you are cursed.

If you seek heaven God's way, you come by grace. And under grace there is no law. There is no way you can earn your way in. You have hope and the curse is removed.

Of course, the Jews of Jesus' day were part of the religion of human achievement. They were earning their way to God by their own merit, their own righteousness, their own religious activities. But, in fact, Paul in Romans 11:28 calls them "enemies of the gospel." And in reality, they were enemies of God. "Not knowing about God's righteousness - " Romans 10 says " - they went about to establish their own."

So there is that religion that seeks to come to God and to heaven by its own merit, its own involvement, its own morality, its own ceremony, its own good feelings, its own attitudes, its own experiences, religious and moral.

But on the other hand, there's the true way of salvation in which the sinner provides nothing. That's what our Lord is distinguishing here. And it's a series of vivid contrasts. And what I read you earlier in the service, let me just help you recall a minute. There were two gates: Wide and narrow. There were two ways: Broad and confined. There were two destinies: Destruction and life. There were two crowds: Many and few. There were even two trees: Good and corrupt; two fruits: Good and bad; two behaviors: Saying and doing; two builders: Wise and foolish; two foundations: Rock and sand; two

houses: One stood and one fell. It's a very simple contrast.

It would be hard to imagine a clearer way to depict the choice that every person must make between these two. Now by the way, they both promise heaven. No one is selling hell. No one is saying, "Come our way to hell with us." And by the way, the broad road that's marked "heaven" ends up in hell. But the people on it don't know that. Additionally, there's some very busy folks pushing people on to the broad road. They're identified in verses 15-20, they're the false prophets dressed in sheep's clothing, inwardly ravenous wolves who, if you look closely at their lives, will demonstrate their corruption by their corrupt fruit.

So you have offered to the world two paths to heaven. One lies and goes to hell. One is the truth and goes to heaven. Make your choice.

So let's look at this contrast and begin with the two gates, verse 13. "Enter through the narrow gate." "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is constrictive, pressed that leads to life, and there are few who find it."

Both roads are religious. We're not talking about religion as opposed to atheism, or religion as opposed to agnosticism, or a religion which believes in one God as opposed to paganism, pantheism, animism. We're simply talking about two religious roads promising, "this is the way God wants you to go, it ends up in heaven." Both roads promise heaven, only one gets there.

Now you have a command in verse 13, "Enter through the narrow gate." That's a command. That's a mandate. A call to immediately response, really a call without a reasonable alternative. And with that call, we enter into an understanding of what the Lord is saying. I'm just going to give you some points to break down this important invitation.

Number one, you must enter. You must enter. The true way to heaven is spelled out clearly. It is the narrow way. It is the narrow way. And you must enter. Not enough to look. Not enough to admire. Not enough to study. Not enough to analyze. Not enough to critique. Not enough to be impressed. Listen, hell is full of people who admire Jesus. Hell is full of people who even admired the sermon on the mount. Hell is full of people who belong to Christian churches and organizations. But they never entered. They admired. They looked. They analyzed. But you must enter. You must enter. You must come all the way in.

Secondly, you must enter this gate, this gate, this narrow gate. Why is it a narrow gate? Because there's only one way in. It's a narrow gate because it's through Christ and Christ alone. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me." John 10, "I am the door." There's no other way. There's not salvation in any other than the Lord Jesus Christ. You have to enter through Him, believing in Him. Anyone who rejects Him is cursed. "If you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, you are damned," Scripture says.

It's a strange thing that we have to emphasize that, but we do. There are people today in evangelicalism who say, "Well, for one thing, Jews don't have to come through Christ. They can come without Christ." There are others who say, "Gentiles can come without Christ. They can be transdispensationalized and God will treat them as if they lived before Christ ever arrived in the

world." But the Bible is very clear. You must enter, you must enter this gate, and this gate is Christ and Christ alone. "As many as received Him - " John 1:12 " - He gave the authority to become the children of God." Whoever doesn't accept Him - John 3 - perishes. So you must enter. You must enter this gate, the gate being Christ. You must come to Christ, the true Christ and the true gospel.

Thirdly, you must enter this gate alone. It's a narrow gate. It's not a group event. You leave the crowd behind. This is one of the very disturbing things about the mass hysteria that goes on in the charismatic movement. It's the same kind of mass hysteria that happens at a rock concert, just the words are different. Jesus' words, but it's the same emotional, elevated, out of control kind of hysteria in many cases.

When you come through this gate, it's a very narrow gate. Think of it as a turnstile, one at a time. It's exclusive. It's intensely personal. In fact, it's so personal you may have to break with your father, and your mother, and your sister, and your brother, and all your friends and family, and everyone you know. This is not a group event. This admits one person at a time. And we've said that for years. The kingdom of God advances one person at a time. One soul at a time. You come alone.

You spend all your life rushing in the maddening crowd, all your life trying to belong to the group. There is a form of Christianity that says, "Great. Bring the group along." And in an emotional hype, you're swept up in mass hysteria. This is not that. You have to deny yourself, your family, your friends, your life, reject everything you've ever known, perhaps everyone you've ever known, and come all alone. For the first time in your life, you stop rushing with the crowd. You stop floating with the mass and you come alone.

I don't hear that message from those people. I don't think people understand that. I think it's simply mass manipulation, but you come alone.

Number four: You must enter, you must enter this gate, you must enter this gate alone, and you must enter this gate alone with difficulty, with difficulty. You say, "Why is it difficult?" Well, apparently it is because the end of verse 14 it says, "Few who find it." "Few find it." Why is it hard to find? Why is it hard to find the gate?

I'll tell you why it's hard to find a gate, look at the next verse. "Beware of - " what? " - false prophets." They're everywhere. They're everywhere. And what are they doing? Calling people to the other gate. Few find it.

And by the way, once you find it, you enter with great difficulty. In Luke 13:24 Jesus said, "Agonize to enter by the narrow door." Wow, "agonize to enter by the narrow door"? You're telling me this is an agonizing experience? I don't see that being sold. "For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able." The agōnizomai is an intense struggle, pain. In fact, in Matthew 11:12 Jesus said, "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." It's a violent thing to become a believer. It's a violent thing to come through this gate alone. Luke 16:16, Jesus said, "Every man presses into it."

Why is it so hard? Why is it so difficult? First of all, it's hard to find it. Somebody in Los Angeles says, "I want to find a narrow door." How many places would they go before they could even find it? How many places would they have to go before they could ever find it? And once they did find it, it then

becomes an agonizing experience to go through it. Why? Because it demands total repentance and self-denial.

Isaiah 55:6-7, “Let the wicked forsake his way and the righteous his thoughts.” You want to come? Repent forsake your wicked way. Forsake your unrighteous life. That’s hard. That’s all you’ve ever known.

Jeremiah put it this way, more positively. Jeremiah 29:13, “You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.” What that means is it takes over everything. You want nothing else. There’s nothing left but this. You know, it’s that narrow. It’s a challenge to find it, and once you found it, it’s an agonizing experience to go in because you’ve got to leave everything you’ve ever known outside. It’s only entered by the serious. It’s only entered by the zealous. It’s only entered by the wholehearted. It’s only entered by the broken. This is not a party.

You look at this charismatic movement and its stupidity, and idiocy, and folly, and frivolity. Sometimes you wonder if there’s much of a difference between a “preacher” and a stand-up comedian. This is the most serious thing a soul ever does. This is devastating. It’s absolutely devastating. Why is it so hard? Because sinners love their sin. But this is how you come.

Number five: You enter, you must enter; you must enter this gate, that is Christ; you must enter alone, this isn’t a group event, it’s personal; you must enter with difficulty because it means you are repenting and turning from everything you’ve ever loved; and you must enter naked. You can’t go through a turnstile with your luggage. It’s a gate for those who have dropped everything. And that’s Luke 9:23, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.” How extreme is this denial? John 12:25, you have to hate your own life, hate your own life, deny yourself.

In the two little parables of Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus said there was a man who sought for a treasure, and when he found the treasure in the field, he sold everything to buy the treasure. There was a man who found a pearl of great price and he sold everything to buy the pearl. It’s a simple couplet of stories to tell you that when you find Christ, you give up everything. The main line that’s repeated in those two little parables is he sold everything, he sold everything, sold everything. That’s Luke 9. That’s Matthew 10, deny himself.

What do you mean, “naked”? You don’t bring your self-righteousness. You don’t bring your accomplishments. You don’t bring your own achievements. You really come with a beatitude attitude. What’s that? At the beginning of the sermon He introduced that, didn’t He? In chapter 5 when He said the one who enters the kingdom is the one who is “poor in spirit.” What does that mean? Personally bankrupt. When you understand your moral, spiritual bankruptcy, you’re not bringing on any of your achievements, any of your accomplishments, any of your religious performance. You’re stripped down to nothing. You sell it all.

You’re like Luke 18. You’re like that publican in the temple who is pounding his chest saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” Offers nothing. And next to him is a Pharisee saying, “I thank You that I’m not like this poor Publican, I tithe, and I do this, and I do that.” And Jesus said, it was the man beating his chest who had dropped everything who was justified, and not the other.

Then it was the rich young ruler in Matthew 19. Jesus wanted to check whether he was willing to

leave it all outside, and told him to sell everything he had and give it to the poor, and he walked away, turned his back on Jesus. That was too much.

From the start, John the Baptist and Jesus preached repentance. Jesus always preached a recognition of your own spiritual bankruptcy, spiritual emptiness, called for sorrow over sin, brokenness, eager to turn from sin, eager to be rescued from its judgment, and understanding that you have nothing to offer. So the beatitudes go, the people who enter the kingdom are spiritually bankrupt and they know it. Therefore, they mourn over their condition. Therefore, they are meek and broken. Therefore, they hunger and thirst for a righteousness they know they don't have.

I don't see that kind of preaching. I don't see that kind of invitation in the charismatic movement. It's join the party. Jump on the bandwagon. Get healed. Get rich. Get prophecies, let Jesus speak to you, be happy. That's a far cry from what our Lord says.

You must enter. You must enter this gate. You must enter this gate alone. You must enter with difficulty. You must enter naked. And you must enter submissive to the Lord. A few years ago, I wrote a book called Slave and that's really what you become. That's a hard sell for the early church in a world where slavery existed and was hated and people wanted to be free to tell people "Here's the gospel. You need to become a slave. You need to give up your family, hate your family, your father, your mother, your sister, your brother. You need to hate your own life. You need to drop all your possessions. You need to abandon everything, and then submit yourself completely to the Lord."

Deny yourself, take up your cross. What does "take up your cross" mean? Is that some kind of mystical experience? No. It means "be willing to die." Is it that important? Is it important enough that you would die for it? If somebody said to you, "If you come to Jesus Christ and confess Him as Lord, we're going to hang you," would you come? That's what Jesus was saying. Would you die for this? And true believers would say, "Of course. Of course, because I'm going to die, and I'm going to die in the condition I'm in, and end up forever in hell." A recognition of your own emptiness, sorrow over sin, eagerness to turn from sin, eagerness to be rescued from judgment at any cost.

That is a far cry from selling Jesus as the one who will give you what you want. You can literally speak your own world into existence. Jesus will fulfill all your dreams. You better reconsider that. In fact, Jesus gave a couple of stories in Luke 14, He said, "You better think about coming to Me, because you don't want to be like a man who started to build a tower and didn't have enough to finish it and looked foolish. You don't want to be like a king who went to war with his 10,000 and really couldn't stand up against the forces that were far greater than his."

Count the cost. And what's the cost? Everything. You're becoming a slave of Jesus Christ. Can you imagine that early church, those early believers, trekking along from little place to little place in the Gentile world, trying to call people to become the slaves of a crucified Jew? It's a hard sell.

In fact, it was such a hard sell then, much harder than it would be today, because we don't have that kind of slavery, but it's the same message. We're calling people to become slaves of Jesus Christ, lifelong slaves. You come through that door, you have left everything outside. All spiritual provisions for you are at His hand. You have to trust Him for that, for your provision and your protection, and to fulfill promises that He made to you. It's an act of faith the likes of which no human could ever make

until that moment. That's what it means to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him.

In contrast to that first narrow gate, there's the wide gate. The gate is wide. It's wide. What does that mean? No constriction. Come on, you can come with the group. You can come with the gang. Let the music lure you in. Let the fun. Let the experience draw you. The whole crowd - no difficulty, no self-denial, bring all your pride, bring all your sin. Don't worry about repentance.

Huge crowd of religious people coming through the broad way with all their baggage, all their stuff, all their desires. I'm coming to Jesus because Jesus will make me rich. I'm coming to Jesus because Jesus will make me well. I'm coming to Jesus because Jesus will fix my marriage. Jesus will make me influential. Jesus will satisfy me. Jesus is the one who's going to fulfill fleshly desires of unregenerate people. Huge crowd coming through that gate.

That's two gates. Now two ways. Very different, two ways. There's the broad way, verse 13, and the narrow way, in verse 14. And broad is the way, plenty of room for diverse doctrine. You can believe just about anything you want. Let's not argue over that, right? You hear these charismatics all the time accusing us of being divisive, intolerant, unloving. We need to get rid of all doctrine. No, that's the broad way. Sure, just come along. Whatever you say you believe is fine.

That's why 120 million out of 500 million charismatics are Roman Catholics with apostate, heretical, corrupt doctrine. Twenty-five million of them are one as Pentecostal that deny the Trinity. Ninety percent of them believe the prosperity gospel that Jesus wants to make you rich and healthy. The vast majority of these people aren't believers. But that's how the broad way works. That's how it works. That's how you sell it. That's why - I was talking to a pastor from Nigeria this morning, he said, "I used to be in a charismatic church. We had a thousand people. I saw the truth. I left the charismatic church. Now I teach the truth, I have a hundred people." That's the broad way. And again, the ticket sellers are introduced to you in verses 15-20, false prophets. And they're really good at what they do, and they have the kingdom of darkness on their side.

On the other side, narrow is the way. Once you get on, it's narrow. What does that mean? It's very constricted. What constricts it? The Word of God, right? What is the great commission? "Go make disciples and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." That's how we live.

Now there's kind of popular new approach in evangelicalism that says, "Well, we're sanctified by just looking at the cross, looking at the cross, getting emotional about the cross, being thankful for the cross." Cross-centered sanctification, they call it. "And by the way, if you obey," they say, "out of duty, that's a sin." That's bad theology. Sometimes I obey out of love. Sometimes I obey out of gratitude. And, frankly, sometimes I obey out of fear. But I want always to obey. And fearing God doesn't mean I don't love Him. It's just part of how I love Him as who He is.

It's a narrow way. You can't have any theology you want. You can't live any way you want. We don't affirm immorality. We don't affirm homosexuality. We don't affirm materialism. We don't affirm worldliness on the narrow way.

So you better count the cost. The true gospel is not promising you healing. It does not promise you well-being. It does not promise you a perfect marriage. It does not promise you money. It doesn't

promise you anything but forgiveness, and divine blessing, and power. It promises you heavenly things, not earthly.

And there are two destinations, two destinations. “The broad road - ” verse 13 “ - leads to destruction.” That’s hell. The entrance, remember, is marked “heaven,” it just doesn’t go there. Ends up in hell. Everlasting punishment, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth forever. “The narrow way - ” verse 14, “ - leads to life.” To life, eternal life, glorious bliss of heaven.

Then we come, fourthly, to two crowds. On the broad road “there are many.” Verse 13 ends, “there are many,” many. On the narrow there are few, few. I hear this. We’ve been listening to this kind of discussion a lot in recent months. How can you say, “this is not a work of God,” when so many are involved in it? Really? I would tend to think that it was really a work of God if there were a few involved in it. I don’t want to limit God, but these are Jesus’ words. There are going to be many on that broad road that doesn’t want to make doctrinal distinctions, that wants to offer people what their unaided, unredeemed flesh already wants. But the other is the narrow road and few find that.

And, you know, in Luke 13, I think it’s verse 23, His disciples were trying to figure out what was going on. The Messiah had come. They had great expectations. And the Messiah had been doing miracles, and teaching, and they had grown to love Him, and believe in Him. But nobody else seemed to be joining. And so, in Luke 13:23 they say to Him, “Are only a few being saved?” Only a few being saved? And that’s when Jesus basically said, “A lot of people are striving to get in, but they can’t cause they won’t let go of the things they hold dearly.”

In a parable in Matthew 22, Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” When Isaiah had his great vision of God in the 6th chapter, at the end of it, God said, “There’s a remnant, there’s a tenth, there’s a stump, there’s a holy seed.” On the broad road, many, many. And oh, by the way, it’s the many who show up in verse 22. It’s many on the broad road at the end of verse 13. And then it’s the many in verse 22 that say, “Lord, Lord, it’s us. It’s us.”

And here you have two behaviors, two behaviors. You have the sayers and the doers. By the way, false profession is a kind of profanity. It’s a kind of taking the Lord’s name in vain. It’s a violation of the commandment, Exodus 20. The doomed speak empty words out of empty hearts. No real repentance. No real faith. No real love. No real obedience. “Lord, Lord.” There’s some zeal in that, right? There’s some passion in that. There’s some respect in that. That’s orthodox, to some degree. “Lord, Lord,” they say. “Did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” They talk about these wonders. They don’t talk about, “Did we not repent in Your name? Did we not obey in Your name?”

Three times in verse 22, “In Your name, in Your name, in Your name.” You can throw the name of Jesus all you want. You can sing it 50 times in one song. It’s common. It’s common. And like the charismatics, Jesus must have had in mind in the future, including today, they think the proof that they are His is in their prophecies, their exorcisms, and their miracles.

Did they really do them? Of course not. Of course not. You have to debate that? The Lord says, “I don’t even know You.” He doesn’t empower people who aren’t even in His kingdom to do miracles, to cast out Satan, or to reveal His truth through prophecy. These are fake claims, false claims. They sound like modern-day charismatics. “We prophesy. We cast out demons. We do miracles.” But they

have no relationship to God whatsoever. Their eternal destiny, they think, is basically affirmed by these fraudulent signs.

Hell is going to be filled with people, sadly, who are involved in this prophesying, exorcising demons, and doing miracles. They claim to be worshipers. “Lord, Lord,” and then they say it again, “Lord, Lord.” Once in verse 21, once in verse 22. They sing the music. They feel the energy. They’re in the middle of the experience.

But when they show up that day, verse 22 says, when they show up that day, that day of final judgment, “I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’” It wasn’t that I once knew you and you slipped. I never knew you. “Depart from Me - ” into hell, “ - you who practice lawlessness.” It’s about what you practice. It’s not about these kinds of experiences that can be falsely induced. Literally, in the Greek He says, “I have never known you.” Never.

The reality of one’s spiritual condition shows up in one’s behavior with relationship to the law of God. False profession is valueless. It’s a kind of profanity. It is taking the Lord’s name in vain. G. Campbell Morgan, English commentator from many years back, said, “The blasphemy of the sanctuary is more awful than the blasphemy of the slum.” A Judas kiss says, “Lord, Lord,” and disobeys.

The bottom line is “I don’t know you” at all. It is a sad thing to think about, but I think that will be heard by the majority of people caught up in this movement. Jeff O’Hara wrote some years ago, “Why call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not the things I say? You call Me ‘the way’ and walk Me not. You call Me ‘the life’ and live Me not. You call Me ‘master’ and obey Me not. If I condemn you, blame Me not. You call Me ‘bread’ and eat Me not. You call Me ‘truth’ and believe Me not. You call Me ‘Lord’ and serve Me not. If I condemn you, blame Me not.”

Two gates, two ways, two destinations, two crowds, two professions, and then two foundations. Finally, two foundations and that drops us into verses 24-27. This is an illustration, powerful illustration. “Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, - ” does them, obeys them. In other words, you come the way I told you to come, through the narrow gate, on to the narrow way “ - may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. For everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, - ” or obey them “ - will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell - and great was its fall.”

This is talking about final judgment. And it’s the final judgment of both. It’s the same storm hits both houses. These houses are built in the same location, in the same place, and externally they look the same. You can look at a house. You can’t tell if it has a foundation. One of the reasons why the Lord warns us we can’t be ripping the tares out because we may not know who’s real and who’s not.

But there’s coming a judgment. Both people - groups of people - built a house, built a religious edifice, and they’re indistinguishable, basically. Maybe they go to church, and they engage in activities, and they use the name Jesus, and they put up their walls, and their windows, and their doors, and the roof, and they put up the structure of their religious activities. Both apparently built a house in the same place because they’re hit by the same storm. It’s hard to tell the difference. Huge difference. One’s on rock. One’s on sand.

The rock - what's the rock? Obedience, obedience to these sayings of Mine. "Hears these words, these words of Mine." Obedience to the way Jesus said to go. Obedience to the call to the narrow gate, through Christ and Christ alone, with an attitude of penitence and self-denial. They have built on rock. In fact, in Luke 6:47-48, Jesus said, "This man dug deep." So he put the pillars down to even anchor the foundation.

On the other hand, the people who built the easy way, it's all emotion, swept up in the crowd, shortcuts, quick fix, no time for soul conviction, no time for brokenness, no time for the painful agonies of repentance, no time for sacrifice, no time to abandon all. No time to build a true sense of sin, a true understanding of holiness, no real striving after Christ. And when the storm of judgment - final judgment - comes, the house on the sand, it's gone, it's gone. And the judgment will reveal the true condition.

I love that hymn, "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but holy lean on Jesus' name. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is - " what? " - sinking sand."

How do you know when somebody's deceived like this? Well, just a few things I might mention. They have a false sense of belonging cause they're reinforced by the group. They have no interest in self-examination. Second Corinthians 13:5, "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith." I don't hear preachers in these movements demanding that people do heart examination. They are engulfed in activity and it's external. They seek feelings, blessings, experiences, healings, angels, and not Christ. They have an indifference toward sound doctrine and they are over-indulgent in the name of grace.

And what would be our message to them? Examine yourself to see whether you're in the faith. What do you do? What do you do today if you're asking yourself, "I don't even know if I'm a real Christian. What do I do? What do I do to get on that narrow road, off the broad road, what do I do to get on the narrow way through the narrow gate?"

Go back to verse 7 of this chapter. What's the first word? What is it? "Ask" "Ask and it will be given to you." What do you need to do? Ask, "O God, O God, show me the narrow door. Let me in." Seek and you will find. "Ask, and it will be given you; seek, you will find; knock, it will be open to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened." Is that good enough?

Jesus said, "Whoever comes to Me, I will never turn away." "What man among you, if his son asked for a loaf, would give him a stone? Or if he asked for a fish, would give him a snake? If you then, human beings who are basically evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who - " what? " - ask." Ask, ask, ask.

Father, we have been again enriched and blessed so wonderfully this morning in our worship together. And, as always, the capstone of that wonderful worship is Your truth, the truth that informs our worship. We ask, Lord, that You would press this message to hearts, that You would prompt people to ask, to seek, to knock, knowing that You will respond.

We pray, Lord, that You would snatch brands from this strange fire burning, You would rescue people from this movement, deceived and deluded people who are eternal souls. Maybe You can use us in ways that we don't even yet know as instruments, for You have chosen to do Your work of calling in Your own through us.

Use what was accomplished this week to extend around the world to rescue people from the fire. And again we end up where we started, giving You glory that we should gain an interest in the Savior's blood. "Amazing love, amazing love, how can it be that You, our God, would die for us?"

We bless Your name, praise Your name. And we ask that You would do Your work in hearts. May the Holy Spirit prompt the asking, and the seeking, and the knocking.

Father, we do thank You that Your Word is not void ever when it is proclaimed. It is not empty. It is powerful, sharper than any other thing, and always accomplishes what You send it to do. It is in that confidence and with that promise that we have proclaimed it again. Be glorified, be honored, and draw people to that narrow gate, and through it to the narrow way that leads to life, and we'll give You all the praise. Amen.

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