

SALVATION AND ITS FRUITS

Matthew 7:13-20

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. A Christian is a person who has received Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. Every Christian knows, through the Holy Spirit's testimony, that he is saved but he may not understand all the details about his salvation. Many Christians are babes in Christ with very little spiritual understanding.
- B. This was also true of the disciples of our Lord. They had just recently been called to salvation by Christ and the Lord takes time to instruct them in the Sermon on the Mount. They needed understanding and maturity in their newfound salvation in Christ. This sermon was designed by Christ to prepare them to go out to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the world.
- C. Christ has been instructing his disciples. Now we come to the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. The conclusion is comprised of various warnings to his disciples. These warnings are designed to help them see the real meaning of their salvation in Christ. Stresses the necessity of choice.

II. WARNING ABOUT THE WAY OF SALVATION -- 7:13, 14:

“Enter ye in at the strait (narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” -- The Lord wants to impress upon his disciples the real meaning of their salvation, so they will understand and stand strong for Christ in a world that is antagonistic to Him. Christ uses an illustration of two ways (roads) with two gates (entrances) in front of each road. One is a broad gate and multitudes are passing through it on the road to destruction. The other is a narrow gate and only a few are passing through it, being on the road to eternal life.

NOTE: The thirteenth and fourteenth verses have been poorly interpreted by many expositors of scripture. They give the impression that the choice is between the broad way which is exciting and fun and the narrow way which is dark and uninviting. Yet the contrary is true. The entrance to the way that leads to destruction is wide but it narrows down to only one point -- destruction. The entrance to life is narrow but it opens out like an inverted funnel and gets broader and broader. Christ has come to give the Christian an abundant life, not a miserable one (John 10:10b).

- A. Two Gates: There are two gates or entrances to two roads. The broad gate is human works. It is man's numberless plans of trying to reach God by his own efforts. The multitudes are rushing through this broad gate, which seem so natural and logical; yet they will find this broad gate will ultimately lead to their destruction. Salvation is not based on man's good works (Eph. 2: 8, 9) but on God's grace. The narrow gate is Christ himself, for he is the door to salvation (John 10:9) and the only way to God (John 14:6).

NOTE: This is a narrow way for the only way a person can get through this entrance is by the new birth from God (John 11:25). Millions, proud of their good works, are

rushing headlong into destruction. But the narrow gate is like a revolving door, letting only one person at a time though as he trusts Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour.

NOTE: This refutes the whole idea that all religions are simply gates and roads to God. Christ narrowed the gate to Himself and Christians must be as narrow as Christ himself was.

- B. **Two Roads (Ways):** The broad way is the attitude and the philosophy of the world. The worldly is living for himself, avoiding any personal responsibility to God. He is having a good time, trying to fulfill his own pleasures and pursuits apart from God. Outwardly it looks like the worldly has it “made” but the Bible says that this road leads to destruction. The narrow way is the Christians new life in Christ. It is learning to live the Christian life in a world totally indifferent to Christ. This narrow road may involve sacrifice on the part of the true Christian, for the Christian life is a hard road to hold. Christians are exceptional and unusual people in this world, for they have made a radical break from the world system. As pilgrims and strangers in the world, we leave behind worldly pleasures, we may have to leave worldly friends and relatives, and we may have to be persecuted for our Christian faith. Surely we will have to suffer for Christ and stand out from the worldly crowd. The true Christian gladly takes the narrow way of living for Christ, for this is the road to eternal life (Phil. 1:21).
- C. **Two Destinies:** This verse tells us that there are just two destinies for all men - destruction or life, heaven or hell. Only those who have trusted Christ and are living for Christ are on their way to heaven. Did you realize that Christ spoke more about hell than any other Bible character? Christ himself said much more about eternal damnation than he ever did about heaven. Today Christ would be called a “hell fire and brimstone” preacher. He preached the way He did because there are only two gates, two roads, and two destinies and He desires that every person hears and understands that message.
- D. **Two Decisions:** The vast majority of the people in this world willfully choose to go the way of the crowd, for they cannot give up hope in their own effort for salvation, nor do they want to be different. They hear the gospel, count the cost, and willfully reject the message, for they would rather go the broad way even though they understand that it is the way of destruction. There are a few that diligently see and find the narrow way of Christ and voluntarily submit their will to Him as personal Lord and Saviour.

NOTE: It becomes obvious to anyone with their eyes wide open that the lost world outnumbers the saved. In fact, true Christians are in the tiny minority. Most people in this world will never be saved but those who hear the gospel and truly seek shall really find Christ. **NOTE:** We have here a theological problem. Does Christ teach here that the vast majority of mankind is damned? His point is that the vast majority of people have no desire to be saved. In Luke 13:23 a group of learned Jews asked Christ, “Are there few that be saved?” Our Lord told them in 13:24, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Leave the question to God. God, and God alone know how many are going to be saved. It is not your business or mine to discover how many are going to be saved. Our business is to strive to enter, to make certain that we are in the narrow way. If we make sure we are in, then in glory we shall find out how many companions we have that the Lord also saved through His grace. We know that God saves all that come to Christ in faith.

III. WARNING ABOUT THE TEACHERS OF SALVATION -- 4:5:

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves." -- If there are two gates, two roads, and two destinations in relation to salvation, then there are two types of teachers for each group. Christ wants to warn his disciples about false teachers who lead people down the wrong way. There will always be false teachers and Christians must be continually on the alert for them. Warnings about false teachers are the order if truth is to be preserved (Acts 20:29); II Peter 2:1, 2).

NOTE: The "broad way" would lead us to conclude there will be many more false teachers than true teachers of the "narrow way."

- A. These false teachers are very subtle, for they do not appear to be false at all. They do everything to appear like sheep. These false teachers may be educated, may call themselves reverend and doctor, they may even wear clerical garb. These false teachers are pleasing and pleasant and use many terms that are used by the true teacher of the gospel. They may talk about God, even Jesus Christ, and emphasizes the love of God. They seem to be saying what Christians should say but upon further examination you find that their false teaching is not in what they do say but in what they do not say.
- B. A false prophet or teacher is one who leaves out the narrow gate and narrow road in his teaching. There is nothing in his gospel that offends the natural man. As a matter of fact his teaching lulls the unsaved man to sleep. There is a notable lack of doctrine in his teaching and he never disturbs anyone or makes anyone feel uncomfortable. You never hear him teach on the holiness, the righteousness, the justice and the wrath of God. He never talks about the utter sinfulness of sin and the total inability of man to do anything about his own salvation. It would be unthinkable for him to preach on the final judgment and the eternal destiny of hell for the lost. Repentance is not stressed, nor is the death of Christ spoken of as a substitute for the sinner and his sin. Again, why is he a false prophet? There is no teaching of the narrow way in his false gospel and his message is not offensive (I Cor. 1:23, 24). How much different their false gospel is than the true gospel that the Apostle Paul preached.
- C. We are living in a day when people say that, as long as a man claims to be a Christian at all, we should regard him as a brother. But Christ said, "Beware of false prophets." So many folks are deceived because those who deny the essential doctrines of the Christian Faith are upright people. But we must remember that Satan has ministers, clergymen if you please, who are propagating the message of destruction in many of our pulpits of America (II Cor. 11: 13-15).

IV. WARNING ABOUT THE NATURE OF SALVATION -- 7:16-20)

"Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." -- A problem would naturally arise. If false teachers look like true sheep, how are we able to tell them from true sheep? How can we tell if they are wolves? The Lord answers by their fruit. You can tell the false from the true by what they produce in their lives. Their fruit

will be consistent with their root!

- A. “Do men gather grapes from thorns?” In Palestine there was a certain thorn that had a little black berry, which resembled a little grape. “Do men gather figs from thistles?” There was a thistle, which had a flower that from a distance looked like a fig. Christ is saying then that the appearance of a false teacher is only superficial. On closer examination he will not be found to be a true teacher. You can tell by their fruits.
- B. By “fruit” our Lord is speaking about their false teaching as well as their false works. The test is by words and works. When God saves an individual, he places within that person a new nature that will bring forth spiritual fruit for Christ. The unsaved man has only a old nature and, while this nature may do good things it only brings forth human works fruit which glorified self. Our Lord speaks of two trees, a good one and a corrupt one, and each tree brings forth fruit in accordance with its nature. As a man thinks, so eventually he is. As a man reasons, so he does. The real inner nature of a person is bound to express itself. A man’s belief is bound to manifest itself, sooner or later, in his life.
- C. False teachers and **psuedo** Christians will soon declare themselves by their fruits. Their words and works will sooner or later manifest what they really believe. True Christians and true teachers, who have a new nature from God, will demonstrate with their words and works that they are in the narrow way to eternal life.

V. CONCLUSION

- A. Christ has given two warnings. Beware of false prophets who will teach a false message, and to be certain to enter the narrow gate, which leads to eternal life. The gate is Jesus Christ himself and He is making an invitation for you to accept Him now (Jn. 14:6; 10:9).

Have you entered the narrow gate through Christ? Are you on the road to eternal life in Christ? Do you really know whether you are saved? Remember the broad way of human effort and wisdom is the road to destruction. Take Christ into your heart and you will have entered the narrow gate and be on the narrow road which leads to eternal life.