

Ministry of Grace

Matthew 7

¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁶Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹²So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets. ¹³Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

¹⁵Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

²¹Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

²⁴Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

²⁸And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Parallel Passages

Luke 6:37-42

³⁷Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." ³⁹He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. ⁴¹Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴²How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

Luke 11:5-13

⁵And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹²or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

Luke 13:22-30

²²He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. ²³And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, ²⁴"Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. ²⁵When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' ²⁶Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' ²⁸In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. ²⁹And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. ³⁰And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Luke 6:43-49

⁴³For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, ⁴⁴for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

⁴⁶Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you? ⁴⁷Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: ⁴⁸he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

Notes

Matthew 7:1-5

¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁵

Some people believe the opening part of this passage means that Christians should never exercise critical judgment. They believe that Christians should be totally accepting no matter what the situation. Ironically, our world today seems to admire those who are articulate and dogmatic about their positions on politics, art, music, literature, culture, etc. However, when it comes to religion and individual morality, the world hates opinionated people. In the eyes of the world, the ideal Christian is undiscerning, non-confrontational, and all-accepting. The world is willing to judge and condemn Christians for their hypocrisy, but is not willing to be condemned for their own position on morality.

This feeling has also crept into the church where we are quick to say, "You are not supposed to judge me." Whenever I am confronted with this comment, my first impulse (which I almost always suppress) is to say, "You mean the way you are judging me right now?"

You see, not only does this verse not mean that we are never to judge anyone, but we are later told specifically to judge some people (we'll get to that in a little bit). One of the difficulties of Jesus' teaching style is the fact that he uses parables and metaphorical language. If we listen to His teaching only on the surface we don't get the true meaning. So, let's look a little deeper.

What Jesus is condemning here is being overly critical in your judgment of someone else. In fact, He says that we will be judged with the same type of judgment that we exercise against others. Wow, that's kind of scary, isn't it. That's what He means when He says "**For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.**" For believing Jews, this will be at the Sheep and Goat Judgment. For unbelievers, this will be at

the Great White Throne Judgment. For Christians, however, this will be at the Bema Seat Judgment (The Judgment Seat of Christ). No matter which of the above groups you fall into, Jesus is warning us that if we are overly critical of others in this life, we will be judged more harshly at the end of this life when we stand before the Perfect Judge.

As an illustration of what He just said, Jesus then gives a somewhat tongue-in-cheek metaphor. “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” The word translated “speck” is *karpfos* which refers to “anything that is small and dry, such as a speck of dust.” And, the word translated “log” is *dokon*, which refers to “a beam or a rafter used in a building.”

The speck is an accurate description of what someone might accidentally get in their eye. This represents a fault that a brother or sister might have that we are being judgmental of. It's probably a little, insignificant thing, but something that causes a little irritation. His reference to the beam, on the other hand is hyperbole (a gross over statement) of what might be in our own eye. It represents the same kind of fault, one that we possess. Not only would a beam in our own eye be harder to see around than a tiny speck (impossible in fact), but if a speck causes a little discomfort, a log would be unbearable. The clever part of this metaphor is that the fault that we see in our brother or sister looks more like a log to us and the same fault in us we see as just a tiny speck. Oh, how we like to deceive ourselves.

We tend to be far more critical of others than we are of ourselves. In the second chapter of Romans, Paul expresses it this way:

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. (Romans 2:1)

Instead of being critically judgmental of others, we should first be critically judgmental of ourselves and work on correcting our own faults. Deep down inside, we know what our problems are but we tend to overlook or excuse them. But, when we see the same thing in others, we want to condemn them because we know what they are doing is wrong. Temporarily, it makes us feel better when we criticize someone else. It makes us feel a little superior. However, if we compare ourselves to Christ, we recognize that we are the one who needs to change. We need to quit looking for specks in other people's eyes and take care of the log in our own eye first. By doing this we will learn to be understanding of other people. And we will be well pleasing to God.

One word of caution, however. When we look at ourselves in the mirror of the Word of God, we need to recognize that we are all sinners and that we are no less and no more a sinner than anyone else. The Apostle Paul said:

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)
[NKJV]

If the great Apostle Paul, the apostle to the gentiles had this view of his own sinfulness, we should too. We need to have an accurate view of our own sinfulness and continually submit ourselves to the merciful judgment of God.

Matthew 7: 6

⁶Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

This verse gives us one reason why the common interpretation of verse one is so wrong. If Christians are not to judge anyone else, how will we determine who the dogs and pigs are? In other words, we **have** to execute judgment of others. This judgment, however, is a realistic evaluation, not a critical condemnation.

This verse does not seem to fit with the preceding verses. On closer inspection, however, we see that it is connected. What Christ is saying is, if you recognize a brother or sister who needs correcting, do so in a humble spirit of love (after you have addressed the log in your own eye). And only do so if you believe (judge) that they will be receptive of your advice. If they are not willing to admit that they have a problem and are not receptive of your efforts, you will not only be wasting your time and effort (**giving dogs what is holy**), but they may take your advice as critical and unhelpful and throw it back in your face (**turn and attack you**). In such a case, you have not brought a brother or sister into closer fellowship with God, but you may so alienate them that they turn away from the ones who truly love them.

Matthew 7:7-11

⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ⁹Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? ¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? ¹¹If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The next lesson Jesus taught is to be persistent in prayer. There are three steps in this lesson on prayer. They are: ask, seek, and knock. Before we go on, we need to look at these commands. Looking at the Greek verbs, we see that all three of them are present tense commands. The present tense of the commands indicates that they are to be ongoing activities. So, we could translate this as:

Keep asking continually and it will be given to you; keep seeking continually and you will find, keep knocking continually and it will be opened to you.

But, keep in mind what James teaches us in his letter:

... You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (**James 4:2b-3**)

There is an important sequence here that I don't want you to miss. First, we are to ask and keep on asking. If you have a need in your life (physical or spiritual) you are to come to God and ask. Keep in mind, however, the first two Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (**Matthew 5:3-4**)

A few weeks ago we saw that the first beatitude is a reference to our unworthiness. We come to God spiritually (and morally) bankrupt. The word translated "poor" refers to abject poverty, like a beggar on the street. We come with absolutely nothing! We have no right to expect anything

from Him based on our own merit, except, of course, the fiery Hell that all sinners deserve. It is only by His grace that we are saved and have access to the King (our Father). The second beatitude is a natural reaction to how sinful and unworthy we are. When we come to God mourning our sinfulness and unworthiness, it puts a smile on His face and opens the gates of His blessing.

The next step in this progression is to be continually seeking. But what are we to be seeking? He told us back in the previous chapter:

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

We are to be continually seeking a righteousness like His. Paul described it this way:

... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, (Philippians 2:12)

Paul didn't mean that we have to earn our salvation by doing good works. He meant that we have to work hard at producing the deeds of righteousness that demonstrate what has already happened within us. According to Matthew, as we keep praying, we are to be continually working on deeds of righteousness, not like the hypocrites who only do them to be seen by others, but doing them to put a smile on God's face.

If we are continually praying and continually seeking His righteousness, He will lead us in the paths of righteousness. And, when the path leads to a closed door, we are to knock and keep knocking.

Then – in verse nine we see what types of “asking” that Jesus is talking about. The things being asked for here (bread and fish) are things that we need (remember, bread, not dessert). So, if we combine this passage with what James teaches us, we see that Jesus is telling us that if we have a need, we are to ask our Heavenly Father to satisfy that need. However, we are not to simply ask once and then give up. We are to be humbly insistent and consistent.

If we do this (if we keep asking, seeking, and knocking), He will honor our prayers. However, the way He answers our prayers may not be the way we expected. He knows what is best for us and He will answer our prayers like only a perfect, loving, heavenly Father can do.

Matthew 7:12

¹²So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Even though I didn't grow up in a Christian home, I was taught the Golden Rule from my earliest childhood. I can still remember as a young boy reading the Bible for the first time and reading that, in fact, the Golden Rule comes from the Bible! That was when I first realized that the Bible was a very special book. What I didn't realize then was that the Golden Rule was the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. In other words, by obeying this command and doing to others what you want to have done to you, you are loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself. Later in Matthew's gospel account, Jesus said it this way,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall

love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 22:37-40)

Matthew 7:13-14

¹³Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

Throughout this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching about the righteousness that is required of us in order to gain access to the Kingdom of God. The Jewish people of Jesus' day recognized that access to the Kingdom was only possible through righteousness. Remember what Jesus said earlier?

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

When the people first heard this they would have immediately thought that it was impossible for them to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees, thus they thought they could never enter the Kingdom. But as Jesus' teaching unfolded, they realized that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was phony. They also learned from Jesus what it meant to be truly righteous. They believed that fulfilling the Law and the Prophets is what they needed to do, but they didn't think they could do it. When they learned that the central nugget of righteousness is to do to others as they wanted others to do to them, it would have suddenly seemed possible to them. However, just because something seems possible doesn't mean that everyone will suddenly do it. That's why Jesus gave this warning.

Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

These verses describe two gates: one wide and easy to get through and one narrow and difficult (but not impossible) to get through. The wide gate does not lead to the Kingdom. It leads to destruction. The narrow gate, the one that requires great effort, is the only one that leads to the Kingdom.

As Christians, we are already in the Kingdom, so why do we care about the two gates? Although we know we will gain access to the Kingdom, we are to be laying up treasures in heaven. These treasures only come as a result of our acts of righteousness. We don't have to do them to gain access, but if we are truly saved we will want to do them.

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

What is a prophet? This word is transliterated (taken directly from Greek to English) from the word *prophētēs*. This is made up of *pro*, meaning before (either in time or position) and *phēmi*, meaning “to tell, to proclaim, or to speak.” Although we think of the Old Testament prophets as telling the future (proclaiming beforehand), their primary responsibility was to speak God’s message to the people (to proclaim in front of). But that was the Old Testament. There aren’t any prophets in the New Testament, are there? Actually, there are. In the book of Acts there is mention of several people who, as part of the church, were prophets. One of them, by the name of Agabus, predicted both a famine that was to come and told Paul that if he went to Jerusalem, he would be bound and delivered to the Gentiles. Both of these prophecies came true. Today there are a number of Christians who claim to be prophets and have predicted a number of things regarding the Church and regarding our country.

However – we should not be too quick to believe their messages. Without the spiritual gift of Discerning of Spirits, it is very difficult to know who are true prophets and who are false. The only way to know for sure is a simple test. If any one of their prophecies does not come true as they claimed, they are a false prophet. But, again, a prophet is not just a fore-teller, he is also a forth-teller. This causes these verses to take on a very different emphasis to modern day Christians. There are some famous preachers today who claim to be delivering God’s message but they are more like snake-oil salesmen than shepherds. Some of them proclaim a “name-it-and-claim-it” gospel, teaching people that God wants us to be rich and to have luxuries. All we have to do is ask for them. They don’t proclaim repentance and they don’t proclaim humility. These preachers are nothing more than wolves in sheep’s clothing. They may have extremely large churches, but they may be leading more people into Hell than into Heaven. Beware! You will know them by their fruit!

If you will indulge me, I’d like to quote extensively. First, from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

The picture we need to have in our minds, therefore, should rather be this. The false prophet is a man who comes to us, and who at first has the appearance of being everything that could be desired. He is nice and pleasing and pleasant; he appears to be thoroughly Christian, and seems to say the right things. His teaching in general is quite all right and he uses many terms that should be used and employed by a true Christian teacher. He talks about God, he seems to be saying everything that a Christian should say. He is obviously in sheep's clothing, and his way of living seems to correspond. So, you do not suspect that there is anything wrong at all; there is nothing that at once attracts your attention or arouses your suspicions, nothing glaringly wrong.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer adds:

Though there is nothing apparently wrong with this messenger, there are things that are subtly wrong — terribly wrong. In terms suggested by the immediate preceding context

of the Sermon on the Mount, there is no narrow gate in his message. This man's preaching is all right in that he says nothing that is untrue. The problem stems from what he does not say. He says many right things, but he also leaves out some indispensable points of belief. And that makes him exceedingly dangerous. He is truly a wolf "in sheep's clothing." His preaching also has another telltale characteristic — he says nothing that is offensive to the natural man. His message comforts and soothes and never warns of judgment. He wants everyone to speak well of him. There is nothing to make anyone uneasy, but rather only things that make people feel good, content, and falsely assured. They characterize anyone who preaches otherwise as negative.

The result of such preachers' work is disastrous. Jesus says they are "ferocious wolves" — that's a horrific title!

Matthew 7:21-23

²¹Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

When our life is over, we all will stand before the great King and Judge of mankind, whether we are saved or not. We will all have to give account of the things we have done while on this earth. Unfortunately, there are many in this life who have been fooled into thinking that they are saved. When they appear before God they will still think they are saved when they really aren't. They will point to their "Christian deeds" claiming that they deserve entrance into His Kingdom because of what they have done (prophesying, casting out demons, and other mighty works). Unfortunately, what they never did was to admit their unworthiness, confessing their sins, and accepting Jesus' payment for their sin debt. They never truly got saved.

Jesus' response to them will be, "I never knew you." But, what does that mean? Paul talks about it in Romans chapter 8 where he said:

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he **foreknew** he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. (**Romans 8:28-30**)

This is the famous (or infamous, depending on your theology) passage on the foreknowledge of God. It says that God predestined for salvation those whom He foreknew. Those who insist on the free will of man interpret this as "God knew ahead of time who would accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and chose them to be saved based on this knowledge." The problem with this explanation is that fore-awareness is not the same as foreknowledge. The word translated foreknowledge is *proginōskō*, which implies a complete, in depth knowledge of someone, not just an awareness of their actions. After all, if God knew ahead of time who would accept Jesus as Savior, then it logically follows that he also knew ahead of time who would reject Jesus. Thus, by that definition, he "foreknew" all people, so all people would be saved. Now we know that's not true.

In verse 23 above, Jesus said, “**And then will I declare to them, 'I never **knew** you ...**” These are people whom God did not foreknow. They are not saved. They may have walked down the aisle and talked to someone about salvation, they may have said the “sinner’s prayer,” but they never really got saved.

Matthew 7:24-27

²⁴Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

So ----- How can we be sure we are saved or not? These verses tell us how. Having just warned the crowds that not everyone who thinks they are righteous (saved) will enter heaven, Jesus now gives them (and us) the solution.

We’ve all heard the children’s song, “The Wise Man Built His House Upon the Rock.” But, what was it that made him wise and the other man foolish?

Everyone then who hears these words of mine **and does them will be like a wise man**

But, it’s more than just doing the right things. There’s an old saying, “Reputation is what you do when others are watching. Character is what you do when no one is watching.” If you were to read back through the Sermon on the Mount, would you be able to say that you do these things when no one else is watching? No, I don’t mean do all of them every time. None of us can do that as long as we have this sin nature. But does the Sermon on the Mount describe in general your character (not your reputation, your character)?

The rainy, flooding, windy storm that Jesus is talking about is very likely a reference to the judgment and the “fall” that He talks about is the fall into the lake of fire. Will you stand, or will you fall?

Matthew 7:28-29

²⁸And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, ²⁹for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.

Traditional teaching by the Scribes and Rabbis in the first century typically started off something like this: “Rabbi Abin said in the name of Rabbi Elai in Rabbi Jochanan’s name that ...” But Jesus did not rely on someone else’s reputation or authority. Not only was His teaching radical and strict, He taught it with his own authority and the people recognized it. He was speaking the Word of God, because He is the Word of God.

So What?

We have now spent five weeks walking through the Sermon on the Mount. We have learned what Jesus said about the righteousness that is required to get into the Kingdom. As born-again Christians, we know that in God's record book we are recorded as having the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, which we know we can't lose. But we also know that each of us has a sin nature. Because of this, we should all be acutely aware of how unrighteous we really are apart from Christ. So – if we can't live a life of perfect righteousness, yet we are already credited with being righteous why do we even have to try? Why not, as the hedonists of the first century proposed, just live for pleasure?

The answer is simple, yet profound. If we have been truly saved, then the Holy Spirit of God lives within us and He gives us the desire to be well-pleasing to our Heavenly Father. Do you want to please God? Search deep down inside and ask yourself, "Do I want to please God?" If you can't immediately and emphatically say, "Yes!" then you had better check your ticket to make sure the destination is listed as Heaven and not Hell.

Perhaps your answer is, "Yes, I want to please God, but I'm not doing a very good job." If that's the case, then go into your prayer room, get on your knees, pour out your heart to God, and continually and consistently keep asking Him to help you be the son or daughter He wants you to be. That's the first step. The next is to continually seek His righteousness, and be prepared to do a lot of knocking!

Let me assure you that He will never leave you nor forsake you and He will not disappoint you!

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