

# CHAPTER 7

This chapter continues and concludes Christ's sermon on the mount, which is purely practical, directing us to order our conversation aright, both toward God and man; for the design of the Christian religion is to make men good, every way good. We have,

- I.** Some rules concerning censure and reproof (v. 1-6).
- II.** Encouragements given us to pray to God for what we need (v. 7-11).
- III.** The necessity of strictness in conversation urged upon us (v. 12-14).
- IV.** A caution given us to take heed of false prophets (v. 15-20).
- V.** The conclusion of the whole sermon, showing the necessity of universal obedience to Christ's commands, without which we cannot expect to be happy (v. 21-27).
- VI.** The impression which Christ's doctrine made upon his hearers (v. 28, 29).

## ⌄ MATTHEW 7:1-6

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Our Saviour is here directing us how to conduct ourselves in reference to the faults of others; and his expressions seem intended as a reproof to the scribes and Pharisees, who were very rigid and severe, very magisterial and supercilious, in condemning all about them, as those commonly are, that are proud and conceited in justifying themselves. We have here,

**I.** A caution *against judging* v. 1, 2. There are those whose office it is to judge — magistrates and ministers. Christ, though he made not himself a Judge, yet came not to unmake them, for by him *princes decree justice*; but this is directed to private persons, to his disciples, who shall hereafter *sit on thrones judging*, but not now. Now observe,

**1.** The prohibition; *Judge not*. We must judge ourselves, and judge our own acts, but we must not judge our brother, not magisterially assume such an authority over others, as we allow not them over us: since our rule is, to be *subject to one another*. *Be not many masters*, <sup><501></sup>James 3:1. We must not sit in the judgment-seat, to make our word a law to every body. We must not judge our brother, that is, we must not *speak evil* of him, so it is explained, <sup><501></sup>James 4:11. We must not *despise him*, nor *set him at nought*, <sup><510></sup>Romans 14:10. We must not judge rashly, nor pass such a judgment upon our brother as has no ground, but is only the product of our own jealousy and ill nature. We must not make the worst of people, nor infer such invidious things from their words and actions as they will not bear. We must not judge uncharitably, unmercifully, nor with a spirit of revenge, and a desire to do mischief. We must not judge of a man's state by a single act, nor of what he is in himself by what he is to us, because in our own cause we are apt to be partial. We must not judge the hearts of others, nor their intentions, for it is God's prerogative to try the heart, and we must not step into his throne; nor must we judge of their eternal state, nor call them *hypocrites*, *reprobates*, and *castaways*; that is stretching beyond our line; what have we to do, thus to judge another man's servant? Counsel him, and help him, but do not judge him.

**2.** The reason to enforce this prohibition. *That ye be not judged*. This intimates,

**(1.)** That if we presume to judge others, we may expect to be ourselves judged. He who usurps the bench, shall be called to the bar; he shall be judged of men; commonly none are more censured, than those who are most censorious; every one will have a stone to throw at them; he who, like Ishmael, has his hand, his tongue, *against every man*, shall, like him, have *every man's* hand and tongue *against him* (<sup><512></sup>Genesis 16:12); and no mercy shall be shown to the reputation of those that show no mercy to the reputation of others. Yet that is not the worst of it; they shall be judged of God; from him they shall receive the *greater condemnation*, <sup><501></sup>James 3:1. Both parties must appear before him (<sup><510></sup>Romans 14:10), who, as he will relieve the *humble sufferer*, will also resist the *haughty scorner*, and give him enough of judging.

**(2.)** That if we be modest and charitable in our censures of others, and decline judging them, and judge ourselves rather, *we shall not be judged of the Lord*. As God will forgive those that forgive their brethren; so he will

not judge those that will not judge their brethren; the *merciful shall find mercy*. It is an evidence of humility, charity, and deference to God, and shall be owned and rewarded by him accordingly. See <sup><640></sup>Romans 14:10.

The judging of those that judge others is according to the law of retaliation; *With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged*, v. 2. The righteous God, in his judgments, often observes a rule of proportion, as in the case of Adonibezek, <sup><000></sup>Judges 1:7. See also <sup><630></sup>Revelation 13:10; 18:6. Thus will he be both justified and magnified in his judgments, and all flesh will be silenced before him. *With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*; perhaps in this world, so that men may read their sin in their punishment. Let this deter us from all severity in dealing with our brother. *What shall we do when God rises up?* <sup><3914></sup>Job 31:14. What would become of us, if God should be as exact and severe in judging us, as we are in judging our brethren; if he should weigh us in the same balance? We may justly expect it, if we be extreme to mark what our brethren do amiss. In this, as in other things, the violent dealings of men return upon their own heads.

**II.** Some cautions *about reproof*. Because we must not judge others, which is a great sin, it does not therefore follow that we must not reprove others, which is a great duty, and may be a means of *saving a soul from death*; however, it will be a means of saving our souls from sharing in their guilt. Now observe here,

**1.** It is not every one who is fit to reprove. Those who are themselves guilty of the same faults of which they accuse others, or of worse, bring shame upon themselves, and are not likely to do good to those whom they reprove, v. 3-5. Here is,

**(1.)** A just reproof to the censorious, who quarrel with their brother for small faults, while they allow themselves in great ones; who are quick-sighted to spy *a mote* in his eye, but are not sensible of *a beam* in their own; nay, and will be very officious to *pull out the mote out of his eye*, when they are as unfit to do it as if they were themselves quite blind. Note,

**[1.]** There are degrees in sin: some sins are comparatively but as *motes*, others as *beams*; some as a *gnat*, others as a *camel*: not that there is any sin little, for there is no little God to sin against; if it be a *mote* (or *splinter*, for so it might better be read), it is in the eye; if a *gnat*, it is in the throat;

both painful and perilous, and we cannot be easy or well till they are got out.

[2.] Our own sins ought to appear greater to us than the same sins in others: that which charity teaches us to call but a *splinter in our brother's eye*, true repentance and godly sorrow will teach us to call a *beam in our own*; for the sins of others must be extenuated, but our own aggravated.

[3.] There are many that have *beams in their own eyes*, and yet do not consider it. They are under the guilt and dominion of very great sins, and yet are not aware of it, but justify themselves, as if they needed no repentance nor reformation; it is as strange that a man can be in such a sinful, miserable condition, and not be aware of it, as that a man should have a beam in him eye, and not consider it; but the god of this world so artfully blinds their minds, that notwithstanding, with great assurance, they say, *We see*.

[4.] It is common for those who are most sinful themselves, and least sensible of it, to be most forward and free in judging and censuring others: the Pharisees, who were most haughty in justifying themselves, were most scornful in condemning others. They were severe upon Christ's disciples for *eating with unwashen hands*, which was scarcely a *mote*, while they encouraged men in a contempt of their parents, which was a *beam*. Pride and uncharitableness are commonly *beams* in the eyes of those that pretend to be critical and nice in their censures of others. Nay, many are guilty of that secret, which they have the face to punish in others when it is discovered. *Cogita tecum, fortasse vitium de quo quereris, si te diligenter excusseris, in sinu invenies; inique publico irasceris crimini tuo* — *Reflect that perhaps the fault of which you complain, might, on a strict examination, be discovered in yourself; and that it would be unjust publicly to express indignation against your own crime.* Seneca, *de Beneficiis*. But,

[5.] Men's being so severe upon the faults of others, while they are indulgent of their own, is a mark of hypocrisy. *Thou hypocrite*, v. 5. Whatever such a one may pretend, it is certain that he is no enemy to sin (if he were, he would be an enemy to his own sin), and therefore he is not worthy of praise; nay, it appears that he is an enemy to his brother, and therefore worthy of blame. This spiritual charity must begin at home; "*For how canst thou say, how canst thou for shame say, to thy brother, Let me help to reform thee, when thou takest no care to reform thyself?*" Thy own

heart will upbraid thee with the absurdity of it; thou wilt do it with an ill grace, and thou wilt expect every one to tell thee, that *vice corrects sin: physician, heal thyself;*” *I prae, sequar — Go you before, I will follow.* See <sup><412></sup>Romans 2:21.

[6.] The consideration of what is amiss in ourselves, though it ought not to keep us from administering friendly reproof, ought to keep us from magisterial censuring, and to make us very candid and charitable in judging others. “Therefore *restore with the spirit of meekness, considering thyself* (<sup><401></sup>Galatians 6:1); what thou has been, what thou art, and what thou wouldst be, if God should leave thee to thyself.”

(2.) Here is a good rule for reprovers, v. 5. Go in the right method, *first cast the beam out of thine own eye.* Our own badness is so far from excusing us in not reprovng, that our being by it rendered unfit to reprove is an aggravation of our badness; I must not say, “I have *a beam in my own eye,* and therefore I will not help my brother with the *mote out of his.*” A man's offence will never be his defence: but I must first reform myself, that I may thereby help to reform my brother, and may qualify myself to reprove him. Note, Those who blame others, ought to be blameless and harmless themselves. Those who are *reprovers in the gate,* reprovers by office, magistrates and ministers, are concerned to *walk circumspectly,* and to be very regular in their conversation: an *elder must have a good report,* <sup><502></sup>1 Timothy 3:2, 7. The snuffers of the sanctuary were to be of pure gold.

2. It is not every one that is fit to be reprovng; *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,* v. 6. This may be considered, either,

(1.) As a rule to the disciples in preaching the gospel; not that they must not preach it to any one who were wicked and profane (Christ himself preached to publicans and sinners), but the reference is to such as they found obstinate after the gospel was preached to them, such as blasphemed it, and persecuted the preachers of it; let them not spend much time among such, for it would be lost labour, but let them turn to others, <sup><413></sup>Acts 13:41. So Dr. Whitby. Or,

(2.) As a rule to all in giving reproof. Our zeal against sin must be guided by discretion, and we must not go about to give instructions, counsels, and rebukes, much less comforts, to hardened scorers, to whom it will certainly do no good, but who will be exasperated and enraged at us. Throw a pearl to a swine, and he will resent it, as if you threw a stone at

him; *reproofs* will be called *reproaches*, as they were (<sup><2115></sup>Luke 11:45; <sup><2110></sup>Jeremiah 6:10), therefore give not to dogs and swine (unclean creatures) holy things. Note,

[1.] Good counsel and reproof are a holy thing, and a pearl: they are ordinances of God, they are precious; as an *ear-ring of gold*, and an *ornament of fine gold*, so is the wise reprover (<sup><2112></sup>Proverbs 25:12), and a wise reproof is *like an excellent oil* (<sup><2115></sup>Psalm 141:5); it is *a tree of life* (<sup><2118></sup>Proverbs 3:18).

[2.] Among the generation of the wicked, there are some that have arrived at such a pitch of wickedness, that they are looked upon as dogs and swine; they are impudently and notoriously vile; they have so long *walked in the way of sinners*, that they have sat down *in the seat of the scornful*; they professedly hate and despise instruction, and set it at defiance, so that they are irrecoverably and irreclaimably wicked; they return with *the dog to his vomit*, and with the *sow to her wallowing in the mire*.

[3.] Reproofs of instruction are ill bestowed upon such, and expose the reprover to all the contempt and mischief that may be expected from dogs and swine. One can expect no other than that they will trample the reproofs under their feet, in scorn of them, and rage against them; for they are impatient of control and contradiction; and they will turn again and rend the reprovers; rend their good names with their revilings, return them wounding words for their healing ones; rend them with persecution; Herod rent John Baptist for his faithfulness. See here what is the evidence of men's being *dogs* and *swine*. Those are to be reckoned such, who *hate reproofs* and reprovers, and fly in the face of those who, in kindness to their souls, show them their sin and danger. These sin against the remedy; who shall heal and help those that will not be healed and helped? It is plain that God has determined to destroy such. <sup><2116></sup>2 Chronicles 25:16. The rule here given is applicable to the distinguishing, sealing ordinances of the gospel; which must not be prostituted to those who are openly wicked and profane, lest holy things be thereby rendered contemptible, and unholy persons be thereby hardened. *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs*. Yet we must be very cautious whom we condemn as dogs and swine, and not do it till after trial, and upon full evidence. Many a patient is lost, by being thought to be so, who, if means had been used, might have been saved. As we must take heed of calling the *good*,

*bad*, by judging all professors to be hypocrites; so we must take heed of calling the *bad, desperate*, by judging all the wicked to be *dogs and swine*.

[4.] Our Lord Jesus is very tender of the safety of his people, and would not have them needlessly to expose themselves to the fury of those that will *turn again and rend* them. Let them not be *righteous over much*, so as to destroy themselves. Christ makes the law of self-preservation one of his own laws, and *precious is the blood* of his subjects to him.

## Ⓜ MATTHEW 7:7-11

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Our Saviour, in the foregoing chapter, had spoken of prayer as a commanded duty, by which God is honoured, and which, if done aright, shall be rewarded; here he speaks of it as the appointed means of obtaining what we need, especially grace to obey the precepts he had given, some of which are so displeasing to flesh and blood.

**I.** Here is a precept in three words to the same purport, *Ask, Seek, Knock* (v. 7); that is, in one word, “Pray; pray often; pray with sincerity and seriousness; pray, and pray again; make conscience of prayer, and be constant in it; make a business of prayer, and be earnest in it. *Ask*, as a beggar asks alms.” Those that would be rich in grace, must betake themselves to the poor trade of begging, and they shall find it a thriving trade. “*Ask*; represent your wants and burthens to God, and refer yourselves to him for support and supply, according to his promise. *Ask* as a traveller asks the way; to pray is to *enquire of God*, <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Ezekiel 36:37. *Seek*, as for a thing of value that we have lost, or as the merchantman that *seeks goodly pearls*. *Seek by prayer*, <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Daniel 9:3. *Knock*, as he that desires to enter into the house knocks at the door.” We would be admitted to converse with God, would be taken into his love, and favour, and kingdom; sin has shut and barred the door against us; by prayer, we knock; *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Christ knocks at our door (<sup>Ⓜ</sup>Revelation 3:20; <sup>Ⓜ</sup>Song of Solomon 5:2); and allows us to knock at his, which is a favour we do not allow to common beggars. Seeking and knocking imply something more than asking and praying.

1. We must not only *ask* but *seek*; we must second our prayers with our endeavors; we must, in the use of the appointed means, *seek* for that which we *ask* for, else we tempt God. When the dresser of the vineyard asked for a year's respite for the barren fig-tree, he added, *I will dig about it*, <sup>DEUT</sup>Luke 13:7, 8. God gives knowledge and grace to those that search the scriptures, and wait at Wisdom's gates; and power against sin to those that avoid the occasions of it.

2. We must not only *ask*, but *knock*; we must come to God's door, must *ask* importunately; not only pray, but plead and wrestle with God; we must *seek* diligently; we must continue knocking; must persevere in prayer, and in the use of means; must endure to the end in the duty.

II. Here is a promised annexed: *our labour* in prayer, if indeed we do labour in it, *shall not be in vain*: where God finds a praying heart, he will be found a prayer-hearing God; *he shall give thee an answer of peace*. The precept is threefold, *ask, seek, knock*; there is *precept upon precept*; but the promise is sixfold, *line upon line*, for our encouragement; because a firm belief of the promise would make us cheerful and constant in our obedience. Now here,

1. The promise is made, and made so as exactly to answer the precept, v. 7. *Ask, and it shall be given you*; not lent you, not sold you, but *given you*; and what is more free than gift? Whatever you pray for, according to the promise, whatever you *ask, shall be given you*, if God see it fit for you, and what would you have more? It is but *ask* and have; *ye have not, because ye ask not*, or *ask* not aright: what is not worth asking, is not worth having, and then it is worth nothing. *Seek, and ye shall find*, and then you do not lose your labour; God is himself *found of those that seek* him, and if we find him we have enough. "*Knock, and it shall be opened*; the door of mercy and grace shall no longer be shut against you as enemies and intruders, but opened to you as friends and children. It will be asked, *who is at the door?* If you be able to say, a friend, and have the ticket of promise ready to produce in the hand of faith, doubt not of admission. If the door be not *opened* at the first *knock, continue instant in prayer*; it is an affront to a friend to *knock* at his door, and then go away; though he tarry, yet wait."

2. It is repeated, v. 8. It is to the same purport, yet with some addition.



(1.) It is made to extend to all that pray aright; “Not only you my disciples shall receive what you pray for, but *every one that asketh, receiveth*, whether Jew or Gentile, young or old, rich or poor, high or low, master or servant, learned or unlearned, they are all alike welcome to *the throne of grace*, if they come in faith: *for God is no respecter of persons.*”

(2.) It is made so as to amount to a grant, in words of the present tense, which is more than a promise for the future. *Every one that asketh*, not only *shall* receive, but *receiveth*; by faith, applying and appropriating the promise, we are actually interested and invested in the good promised: so sure and inviolable are the promises of God, that they do, in effect, give present possession: an active believer enters immediately, and makes the blessings promised his own. What have we in hope, according to the promise, is as sure, and should be as sweet, as what we have in hand. *God hath spoken in his holiness*, and then *Gilead is mine, Manasseh mine* (~~AND~~ Psalm 108:7, 8); it is all mine own, if I can but make it so by believing it so. Conditional grants become absolute upon the performance of the condition; so here, *he that asketh, receiveth*. Christ hereby puts his *fiat* to the petition; and he having all power, that is enough.

3. It is illustrated, by a similitude taken from earthly parents, and their innate readiness to give their children what they ask. Christ appeals to his hearers, *What man is there of you*, though never so morose and ill-humoured, *whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?* v. 9, 10. Whence he infers (v. 11), *If ye then, being evil*, yet grant your children's requests, *much more will your heavenly Father give you the good things you ask*. Now this is of use,

(1.) To *direct* our prayers and expectations.

[1.] We must come to God, as children to a *Father in heaven*, with reverence and confidence. How naturally does a child in want or distress run to the father with its complaints; *My head, my head*; thus should the new nature send us to God for supports and supplies.

[2.] We must come to him for *good things*, for those he *gives to them that ask him*; which teaches us to refer ourselves to him; we know not what is good for ourselves (~~AND~~ Ecclesiastes 6:12), but he knows what is good for us, we must therefore leave it with him; *Father, thy will be done*. The child is here supposed to *ask bread*, that is necessary, and *a fish*, that is wholesome; but if the child should foolishly ask for *a stone*, or *a serpent*,

for unripe fruit to eat, or a sharp knife to play with, the father, though kind, is so wise as to deny him. We often ask that of God which would do us harm if we had it; he knows this, and therefore does not give it to us. Denials in love are better than grants in anger; we should have been undone ere this if we had had all we desired; this is admirably well expressed by a heathen, Juvenal, *Sat.* 10.

*Permites ipsis expendere numinibus, quid  
Conveniat nobis, rebusque sit utile nostris,  
Nam pro jucundis aptissima quaeque dabunt dii.  
Carior est illis homo, quam sibi: nos animorum  
Impulsu, et caeca, magnaue cupidine ducti,  
Conjugium petimus, partumque uxoris; at illis  
Notum est, qui pueri, qualisque futura sit uxor.*

*Entrust thy fortune to the powers above.  
Leave them to manage for thee, and to grant  
What their unerring wisdom sees thee want:  
In goodness, as in greatness, they excel;  
Ah, that we lov'd ourselves but half so well!  
We, blindly by our headstrong passions led,  
Seek a companion, and desire to wed;  
Then wish for heirs: but to the gods alone  
Our future offspring and our wives are known.*

(2.) To encourage our prayers and expectations. We may hope that we shall not be denied and disappointed: we shall not have *a stone for bread*, to break our teeth (though we have a hard crust to employ our teeth), nor *a serpent for a fish*, to sting us; we have reason indeed to fear it, because we deserve it, but God will be better to us than the desert of our sins. The world often gives *stones for bread*, and *serpents for fish*, but God never does; nay, we shall be heard and answered, for children are by their parents.

[1.] God has put into the hearts of parents a compassionate inclination to succour and supply their children, according to their need. Even those that have had little conscience of duty, yet have done it, as it were by instinct. No law was ever thought necessary to oblige parents to maintain their legitimate children, nor, in Solomon's time, their illegitimate ones.

[2.] He has assumed the relation of a Father to us, and owns us for his children; that from the readiness we find in ourselves to relieve our children, we may be encouraged to apply ourselves to him for relief. What

love and tenderness fathers have are from him; not from nature but from the God of nature; and therefore they must needs be infinitely greater in himself. He compares his concern for his people to that of a father for his children (<sup><433></sup>Psalm 103:13), nay, to that of a mother, which is usually more tender, (<sup><263></sup>Isaiah 66:13; 49:14, 15. But here it is supposed, that his love, and tenderness, and goodness, far excel that of any earthly parent; and therefore it is argued with a *much more*, and it is grounded upon this undoubted truth, that God is a better Father, infinitely better than any earthly parents are; *his thoughts are above theirs*. Our earthly fathers have taken care of us; we have taken care of our children; much more will God take care of his; for they are evil, originally so; the degenerate seed of fallen Adam; they have lost much of the good nature that belonged to humanity, and among other corruptions, have that of crossness and unkindness in them; yet they *give good things to their children*, and they *know how to give*, suitably and seasonably; *much more will God*, for he takes up when they forsake, (<sup><471></sup>Psalm 27:10. And, *First*, God is more knowing; parents are often foolishly fond, but God is wise, infinitely so; he knows what we need, what we desire, and what is fit for us. *Secondly*, God is more kind. If all the compassions of all the tender fathers in the world were crowded into the bowels of one, yet compared *with the tender mercies of our God*, they would be but as a candle to the sun, or a drop to the ocean. God is more rich, and more ready to give to his children than the fathers of our flesh can be; for he is the Father of our spirits, an ever-loving, ever-living Father. The bowels of Fathers yearn even towards undutiful children, towards prodigals, as David's toward Absalom, and will not all this serve to silence disbelief?

## <sup><412></sup>MATTHEW 7:12-14

### THE BROAD AND NARROW WAY

Our Lord Jesus here presses upon us that righteousness towards men which is an essential branch of true religion, and that religion towards God which is an essential branch of universal righteousness.

**I.** We must make righteousness our rule, and be ruled by it, v. 12. *Therefore*, lay this down for your principle, to do as you would be done by; therefore, that you may conform to the foregoing precepts, which are

particular, that you may not judge and censure others, go by this rule in general; (you would not be censured, therefore do not censure), Or that you may have the benefit of the foregoing promises. Fityly is the law of justice subjoined to the law of prayer, for unless we be honest in our conversation, God will not hear our prayers, <sup><2015></sup>Isaiah 1:15-17; 58:6, 9; <sup><300></sup>Zechariah 7:9, 13. We cannot expect to receive *good things* from God, if we do not *fair* things, and that which is *honest*, and *lovely*, and of *good report* among men. We must not only be devout, but honest, else our devotion is but hypocrisy. Now here we have,

**1.** The rule of justice laid down; *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them.* Christ came to teach us, not only what we are to know and believe, but what we are to do; what we are to do, not only toward God, but toward men; not only towards our fellow-disciples, those of our party and persuasion, but towards men in general, all with whom we have to do. The golden rule of equity is, to do to others as we would they should do to us. Alexander Severus, a heathen emperor, was a great admirer of this rule, had it written upon the walls of his closet, often quoted it in giving judgment, honoured Christ, and favoured Christians for the sake of it. *Quod tibi, hoc alteri* — *do to others as you would they should do to you.* Take it negatively (*Quod tibi fieri non vis, ne alteri feceris*), or positively, it comes all to the same. We must not do to others the evil they have done us, nor the evil which they would do to us, if it were in their power; nor may we do that which we think, if it were done to us, we could bear contentedly, but what we desire should be done to us. This is grounded upon that great commandment, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* As we must bear the same affection to our neighbour that we would have borne to ourselves, so we must do the same good offices. The meaning of this rule lies in three things.

**(1.)** We must do that to our neighbour which we ourselves acknowledge to be fit and reasonable: the appeal is made to our own judgment, and the discovery of our judgment is referred to that which is our own will and expectation, when it is our own case.

**(2.)** We must put other people upon the level with ourselves, and reckon we are as much obliged to them, as they to us. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as they, and they as much entitled to the benefit of it as we.

**(3.)** We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with, and deal accordingly. If I were making such a one's bargain, labouring under such a one's infirmity and affliction, how should I desire and expect to be treated? And this is a just supposition, because we know not how soon their case may really be ours: at least we may fear, lest God by his judgments should do to us as we have done to others, if we have not done as we would be done by.

**2.** A reason given to enforce this rule; *This is the law and the prophets*. It is the summary of that second great commandment, which is one of the two, *on which hang all the law and the prophets*, <sup>420</sup>Matthew 22:40. We have not this in so many words, either *in the law or the prophets*, but it is the concurring language of the whole. All that is there said concerning our duty towards our neighbour (and that is no little) may be reduced to this rule. Christ has here adopted it into this law; so that both the Old Testament and the New agree in prescribing this to us, to do as we would be done by. By this rule the law of Christ is commended, but the lives of Christians are condemned by comparing them with it. *Aut hoc non evangelium, aut hi non evangelici. — Either this is not the gospel, or these are not Christians.*

**II.** We must make religion our business, and be intent upon it; we must be strict and circumspect in our conversation, which is here represented to us as entering in at a *strait gate*, and walking on in a *narrow way*, v. 13, 14. Observe here,

**1.** The account that is given of the bad way of sin, and the good way of holiness. There are but two ways, right and wrong, good and evil; the way to heaven, and the way to hell; in the one of which we are all of us walking: no middle place hereafter, no middle way now: the distinction of the children of men into saints and sinners, godly and ungodly, will swallow up all to eternity.

Here is,

**(1.)** An account given us of the way of sin and sinners; both what is the best, and what is the worst of it.

**[1.]** That which allures multitudes into it, and keeps them in it; *the gate is wide, and the way broad*, and there are many travellers in that way. *First,*

“You will have abundance of liberty in that way; *the gate is wide*, and stands wide open to tempt those that go right on their way. You may go in at this gate with all your lusts about you; it gives no check to your appetites, to your passions: you may *walk in the way of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes*; that gives room enough.” It is a *broad way*, for there is nothing to hedge in those that walk in it, but they wander endlessly; a *broad way*, for there are many paths in it; there is choice of sinful ways, contrary to each other, but all paths in this *broad way*.

*Secondly*, “You will have abundance of company in that way: *many there be that go in* at this gate, and walk in this way.” If we *follow the multitude*, it will be *to do evil*: if we go with the crowd, it will be the wrong way. It is natural for us to incline to go down the stream, and do as the most do; but it is too great a compliment, to be willing to be damned for company, and to go to hell with them, because they will not go to heaven with us: if many perish, we should be the more cautious.

[2.] That which should affright us all from it is, that it *leads to destruction*. Death, eternal death, is at the end of it (and the way of sin tends to it), — everlasting *destruction from the presence of the Lord*. Whether it be the high way of open profaneness, or the back way of close hypocrisy, if it be a way of sin, it will be our ruin, if we repent not.

(2.) Here is an account given us of the way of holiness.

[1.] What there is in it that frightens many from it; let us know the worst of it, that we may sit down and count the cost. Christ deals faithfully with us, and tells us,

*First*, That *the gate is strait*. Conversion and regeneration are *the gate*, by which we enter into this way, in which we begin a life of faith and serious godliness; out of a state of sin into a state of grace we must pass, by the new birth, ~~400~~ John 3:3, 5. This is a *strait gate*, hard to find, and hard to get through; like a passage between two rocks, ~~400~~ 1 Samuel 14:4. There must be *a new heart, and a new spirit*, and *old things must pass away*. The bent of the soul must be changed, corrupt habits and customs broken off; what we have been doing all our days must be undone again. We must swim against the stream; much opposition must be struggled with, and broken through, from without, and from within. It is easier to set a man against all the world than against himself, and yet this must be in conversion. It is a *strait gate*, for we must stoop, or we cannot go in at it; we must become as little children; high thoughts must be brought down; nay, we must strip,

must deny ourselves, put off the world, *put off the old man*; we must be willing to forsake all for our interest in Christ. *The gate is strait* to all, but to some straiter than others; as to the rich, to some that have been long prejudiced against religion. *The gate is strait*; blessed be God, it is not shut up, nor locked against us, nor kept with a flaming sword, as it will be shortly, <sup>4250</sup>Matthew 25:10.

*Secondly, That the way is narrow.* We are not in heaven as soon as we have got through the *strait gate*, nor in Canaan as soon as we have got through the Red Sea; no, we must go through a wilderness, must travel a *narrow way*, hedged in by the divine law, which *is exceedingly broad*, and that makes *the way narrow*; self must be denied, the body kept under, corruptions mortified, that are as a *right eye* and a *right hand*; daily temptations must be resisted; duties must be done that are against our inclination. We must endure hardness, must wrestle and be in an agony, must watch in all things, and walk with care and circumspection. We must go *through much tribulation*. It is *hodos tethlimmene* — *an afflicted way*, a way hedged about with thorns; blessed be God, it is not hedged up. The bodies we carry about with us, and the corruptions remaining in us, make the way of our duty difficult; but, as the understanding and will grow more and more sound, it will open and enlarge, and grow more and more pleasant.

*Thirdly, The gate being so strait and the way so narrow*, it is not strange that there are but *few that find it*, and choose it. Many pass it by, through carelessness; they will not be at the pains to find it; they are well as they are, and see no need to change their way. Others look upon it, but shun it; they like not to be so limited and restrained. Those that are going to heaven are but few, compared to those that are going to hell; a remnant, a little flock, like the grape-gleanings of the vintage; as the eight that were saved in the ark, <sup>4080</sup>1 Peter 3:20. *In vitia alter alterum trudimus; Quomodo ad salutem revocari potest, quum nullus retrahit, et populus impellit* — *In the ways of vice men urge each other onward: how shall any one be restored to the path of safety, when impelled forwards by the multitude, without any counteracting influence?* Seneca, *Epist.* 29. This discourages many: they are loth to be singular, to be solitary; but instead of stumbling at this, say rather, If so few are going to heaven, there shall be one the more for me.

[2.] Let us see what there is in this way, which, notwithstanding this, should invite us all to it; it *leads to life*, to present comfort in the favour of God, which is the life of the soul; to eternal bliss, the hope of which, at the end of our way, should reconcile us to all the difficulties and inconveniences of the road. Life and godliness are put together (~~600B~~2 Peter 1:3); *The gate is strait and the way narrow* and up-hill, but one hour in heaven will make amends for it.

2. The great concern and duty of every one of us, in consideration of all this; *Enter ye in at the strait gate*. The matter is fairly stated; life and death, good and evil, are set before us; both the ways, and both the ends: now let the matter be taken entire, and considered impartially, and then choose you this day which you will walk in; nay, the matter determines itself, and will not admit of a debate. No man, in his wits, would choose to go to the gallows, because it is a smooth, pleasant way to it, nor refuse the offer of a palace and a throne, because it is a rough, dirty way to it; yet such absurdities as these are men guilty of, in the concerns of their souls. Delay not, therefore; deliberate not any longer, but *enter ye in at the strait gate; knock* at it by sincere and constant prayers and endeavors, *and it shall be opened*; nay, a wide door shall be opened, and an effectual one. It is true, we can neither go in, nor go on, without the assistance of divine grace; but it is as true, that grace is freely offered, and shall not be wanting to those that seek it, and submit to it. Conversion is hard work, but it is needful, and, blessed be God, it is not impossible if we strive, ~~603B~~Luke 13:24.

## ~~4075~~MATTHEW 7:15-20

### WARNING AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS

We have here a caution against *false prophets*, to take heed that we be not deceived and imposed upon by them. *Prophets* are properly such as foretel things to come; there are some mentioned in the Old Testament, who pretended to that without warrant, and the event disproved their pretensions, as Zedekiah, ~~4121B~~1 Kings 22:11, and another Zedekiah, ~~3021~~Jeremiah 29:21. But *prophets* did also teach the people their duty, so that *false prophets* here are false teachers. Christ being a Prophet and a *Teacher come from God*, and designing to send abroad teachers under



him, gives warning to all to take heed of counterfeits, who, instead of healing souls with wholesome doctrine, as they pretend, would poison them.

They are false teachers and *false prophets*,

**1.** Who produce false commissions, who pretend to have immediate warrant and direction from God to set up for *prophets*, and to be divinely inspired, when they are not so. Though their doctrine may be true, we are to *beware* of them as *false prophets*. False apostles are those who *say they are apostles, and are not* (~~66B~~ Revelation 2:2); such are *false prophets*. “Take heed of those who pretend to revelation, and admit them not without sufficient proof, lest that one absurdity being admitted, a thousand follow.”

**2.** Who preach false doctrine in those things that are essential to religion; who teach that which is contrary to *the truth as it is in Jesus*, to *the truth which is accordingly to godliness*. The former seems to be the proper notion of *pseudo-propheta*, a *false* or pretending *prophet*, but commonly the latter falls in with it; for who would hang out false colours, but with design, under pretence of them, the more successfully to attack the truth. “Well, beware of them, suspect them, try them, and when you have discovered their falsehood, avoid them, have nothing to do with them. Stand upon your guard against this temptation, which commonly attends the days of reformation, and the breakings out of divine light in more than ordinary strength and splendour.” When God's work is revived, Satan and his agents are most busy. Here is,

**I.** A good reason for this caution, *Beware of them, for they are wolves in sheep's clothing*, v. 15.

**1.** We have need to be very cautious, because their pretences are very fair and plausible, and such as will deceive us, if we be not upon our guard. *They come in sheep's clothing*, in the habit of *prophets*, which was plain and coarse, and unwrought; they *wear a rough garment to deceive*, ~~83B~~ Zechariah 13:4. Elijah's mantle the Septuagint calls *he melote* — a *sheep-skin* mantle. We must take heed of being imposed upon by men's dress and garb, as by that of the scribes, who *desire to walk in long robes*, ~~20B~~ Luke 20:46. Or it may be taken figuratively; they pretend to be sheep, and outwardly appear so innocent, harmless, meek, useful, and all that is good, as to be excelled by none; they feign themselves to be just men, and

for the sake of their clothing are admitted among the sheep, which gives them an opportunity of doing them a mischief ere they are aware. They and their errors are gilded with the specious pretences of sanctity and devotion. Satan turns himself *into an angel of light*, <sup>(~~4113~~)</sup>2 Corinthians 11:13, 14. The enemy has *horns like a lamb* (<sup>(~~631~~)</sup>Revelation 13:11); *faces of men*, <sup>(~~601~~)</sup>Revelation 9:7, 8. Seducers in language and carriage are *soft as wool*, <sup>(~~613~~)</sup>Romans 16:18; <sup>(~~310~~)</sup>Isaiah 30:10.

**2.** Because under these pretensions their designs are very malicious and mischievous; *inwardly they are ravening wolves*. Every hypocrite is a goat in sheep's clothing; not only not a sheep, but the worst enemy the sheep has, that comes not but to tear and devour, to *scatter the sheep* (<sup>(~~410~~)</sup>John 10:12), to drive them from God, and from one another, into crooked paths. Those that would cheat us of any truth, and possess us with error, whatever they pretend, design mischief to our souls. Paul calls them *grievous wolves*, <sup>(~~411~~)</sup>Acts 20:29. They raven for themselves, *serve their own belly* (<sup>(~~613~~)</sup>Romans 16:18), make a prey of you, make a gain of you. Now since it is so easy a thing, and withal so dangerous, to be cheated, *Beware of false prophets*.

**II.** Here is a good rule to go by in this caution; we must *prove all things* (<sup>(~~311~~)</sup>1 Thessalonians 5:21), *try the spirits* (<sup>(~~611~~)</sup>1 John 4:1), and here we have a touchstone; *ye shall know them by their fruits*, 16-20. Observe,

**1.** The illustration of this comparison, of the fruit's being the discovery of the tree. You cannot always distinguish them by their bark and leaves, nor by the spreading of their boughs, but *by their fruits ye shall know them*. The fruit is according to the tree. Men may, in their professions, put a force upon their nature, and contradict their inward principles, but the stream and bent of their practices will agree with them. Christ insists upon this, the agreeableness between the fruit and the tree, which is such as that,

**(1.)** If you know what the tree is, you may know what fruit to expect. Never look to gather *grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles*; it is not in their nature to produce such fruits. An apple may be stuck, or a bunch of grapes may hang, upon a thorn; so may a good truth, a good word or action, be found in a bad man, but you may be sure it never grew there. Note,

**[1.]** Corrupt, vicious, unsanctified hearts are like thorns and thistles, which came in with sin, are worthless, vexing, and for the fire at last.

[2.] Good works are *good fruit*, like grapes and figs, pleasing to God and profitable to men.

[3.] This *good fruit* is never to be expected from bad men, and more than *a clean thing out of an unclean*: they want an influencing acceptable principle. *Out of an evil treasure* will be brought forth *evil things*.

(2.) On the other hand, if you know what the fruit is, you may, by that, perceive what the tree is. *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit*, nay, it cannot but *bring forth evil fruit*. But then that must be reckoned the fruit of the tree which it brings forth naturally and which is its genuine product — which it brings forth plentifully and constantly and which is its usual product. Men are known, not by particular acts, but by the course and tenour of their conversation, and by the more frequent acts, especially those that appear to be free, and most their own, and least under the influence of external motives and inducements.

2. The application of this to the false prophets.

(1.) By way of terror and threatening (v. 19); *Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is hewn down*. This very saying John the Baptist had used, <sup><18></sup>Matthew 3:10. Christ could have spoken the same sense in other words; could have altered it, or given it a new turn; but he thought it no disparagement to him to say the same that John had said before him; let not ministers be ambitious of coining new expressions, nor people's ears itch for novelties; to write and speak the same things must not be grievous, for it is safe. Here is,

[1.] The description of barren trees; they are trees that do *not bring forth good fruit*; though there be fruit, if it be not *good fruit* (though that be done, which for the matter of it is good, if it be not done well, in a right manner, and for a right end), the tree is accounted barren.

[2.] The doom of barren trees; *they are*, that is, certainly they shall be, *hewn down, and cast into the fire*; God will deal with them as men use to deal with dry trees that cumber the ground: he will mark them by some signal tokens of his displeasure, he will bark them by stripping them of their parts and gifts, and will cut them *down* by death, *and cast* them *into the fire* of hell, a fire blown with the bellows of God's wrath, and fed with

the wood of barren trees. Compare this with <sup><3812></sup>Ezekiel 31:12, 13; <sup><2744></sup>Daniel 4:14; <sup><4816></sup>John 15:6.

(2.) By way of trial; *By their fruits ye shall know them.*

[1.] *By the fruits* of their persons, their words and actions, and the course of their conversation. If you would know whether they be right or not, observe how they live; their works will testify for them or against them. The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses's chair, and taught the law, but they were proud, and covetous, and false, and oppressive, and therefore Christ warned him disciples to *beware of them* and of their *leaven*, <sup><4123></sup>Mark 12:38. If men pretend to be prophets and are immoral, that disproves their pretensions; those are no true friends *to the cross of Christ*, whatever they profess, *whose God is their belly*, and *whose mind earthly things*, <sup><5188></sup>Philippians 3:18, 19. Those are not taught nor sent of the holy God, whose lives evidence that they are led by the unclean spirit. God puts the treasure into earthen vessels, but not into such corrupt vessels: they may declare God's statutes, but what have they to do to declare them?

[2.] *By the fruits* of their doctrine; their fruits as prophets: not that this is the only way, but it is one way, of trying doctrines, *whether they be of God* or not. What do they tend to do? What affections and practices will they lead those into, that embrace them? If *the doctrine be of God*, it will tend to promote serious piety, humility, charity, holiness, and love, with other Christian graces; but if, on the contrary, the doctrines these prophets preach have a manifest tendency to make people proud, worldly, and contentious, to make them loose and careless in their conversations, unjust or uncharitable, factious or disturbers of the public peace; if it indulge carnal liberty, and take people off from governing themselves and their families by the strict rules of *the narrow way*, we may conclude, that *this persuasion comes not of him that calleth us*, <sup><4818></sup>Galatians 5:8. *This wisdom is from above*, <sup><5015></sup>James 3:15. *Faith and a good conscience* are held together, <sup><5019></sup>1 Timothy 1:19; 3:9. Note, *Doctrines of doubtful disputation* must be tried by graces and duties of confessed certainty: those opinions come not from God that lead to sin: but if we cannot *know them by their fruits*, we must have recourse to the great touchstone, to the law, and to the testimony; do they speak according to that rule?

## ~~402~~ MATTHEW 7:21-29

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

We have here the conclusion of this long and excellent sermon, the scope of which is to show the indispensable necessity of obedience to the commands of Christ; this is designed to clench the nail, that it might fix in a sure place: he speaks this to his disciples, that sat at his feet whenever he preached, and followed him wherever he went. Had he sought his own praise among men, he would have said, that was enough; but the religion he came to establish is in power, not in word only (~~400~~ 1 Corinthians 4:20), and therefore something more is necessary.

**I.** He shows, by a plain remonstrance, that an outward profession of religion, however remarkable, will not bring us to heaven, unless there be a correspondent conversation, v. 21-23. All judgment is committed to our Lord Jesus; the keys are put into his hand; he has power to prescribe new terms of life and death, and to judge men according to them: now this is a solemn declaration pursuant to that power. Observe here,

**1.** Christ's law laid down, v. 21. *Not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, into the kingdom of grace and glory.* It is an answer to that question, ~~401~~ Psalm 15:1. *Who shall sojourn in thy tabernacle? — the church militant; and who shall dwell in thy holy hill? — the church triumphant.* Christ here shows,

**(1.)** That it will not suffice to say, *Lord, Lord;* in word and tongue to own Christ for our Master, and to make addresses to him, and professions of him accordingly: in prayer to God, in discourse with men, we must call Christ, *Lord, Lord;* we say well, for *so he is* (~~403~~ John 13:13); but can we imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven, that such a piece of formality as this should be so recompensed, or that he who knows and requires the heart should be so put off with shows for substance? Compliments among men are pieces of civility that are returned with compliments, but they are never paid as real services; and can they then be of an account with Christ? There may be a seeming importunity in prayer, *Lord, Lord:* but if inward impressions be not answerable to outward expressions, we are but *as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.* This is not to take us off from saying, *Lord, Lord;* from praying, and being earnest

in prayer, from professing Christ's name, and being bold in professing it, but from resting in these, in the *form of godliness*, without *the power*.

(2.) That it is necessary to our happiness that we *do the will of Christ*, which is indeed *the will of his Father in heaven*. *The will of God*, as Christ's *Father*, is his will in the gospel, for there he is made known, as *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: and in him our Father. Now this is his will, that we believe in Christ, that we repent of sin, that we live a holy life, that we *love one another*. *This is his will, even our sanctification*. If we comply not with the will of God, we mock Christ in calling him *Lord*, as those did who put on him a gorgeous robe, and said, *Hail, King of the Jews*. Saying and doing are two things, often parted in conversation of men: he that said, *I go, sir*, stirred never a step (~~423~~ Matthew 21:30); but these two things *God has joined* in his command, and *let no man that puts them asunder* think to *enter into the kingdom of heaven*.

2. The hypocrite's plea against the strictness of this law, offering other things in lieu of obedience, v. 22. The plea is supposed to be *in that day*, that great day, when every man shall appear in his own colours; *when the secrets of all hearts shall be manifest*, and among the rest, the secret pretences with which sinners now support their vain hopes. Christ knows the strength of their cause, and it is but weakness; what they now harbour in their bosoms, they will then produce in arrest of judgment to stay the doom, but it will be in vain. They put in their plea with great importunity, *Lord, Lord*; and with great confidence, appealing to Christ concerning it; *Lord*, does thou not know,

(1.) That *we have prophesied in thy name*? Yes, it may be so; Balaam and Caiaphas were overruled to prophesy, and Saul was against his will *among the prophets*, yet that did not save them. These *prophesied in his name*, but he did not send them; they only made use of his name to serve a turn. Note, A man may be a preacher, may have gifts for the ministry, and an external call to it, and perhaps some success in it, and yet be a wicked man; may help others to heaven, and yet come short himself.

(2.) That *in thy name we have cast out devils*? That may be too; Judas *cast out devils*, and yet was a *son of perdition*. Origen says, that in his time so prevalent was the name of Christ to *cast out devils*, that sometimes it availed when named by wicked Christians. A man might *cast devils out* of others, and yet have a devil, nay, be a devil himself.

**(3.)** That *in thy name we have done many wonderful works*. There may be a faith of miracles, where there is no justifying faith; none of that *faith which works by love* and obedience. Gifts of tongues and healing would recommend men to the world, but it is real holiness or sanctification that is accepted of God. Grace and love are *a more excellent way than removing mountains, or speaking with the tongues of men and of angels*, <sup><411></sup>1 Corinthians 13:1, 2. Grace will bring a man to heaven without working miracles, but working miracles will never bring a man to heaven without grace. Observe, That which their heart was upon, in doing these works, and which they confided in, was the wonderfulness of them. Simon Magus wondered at the miracles (<sup><413></sup>Acts 8:13), and therefore would give any money for power to do the like. Observe, They had not many good works to plead: they could not pretend to have done many gracious works of piety and charity; one such would have passed better in their account than *many wonderful works*, which availed not at all, while they persisted in disobedience. Miracles have now ceased, and with them this plea; but do not carnal hearts still encourage themselves in their groundless hopes, with the like vain supports? They think they shall go to heaven, because they have been of good repute among professors of religion, have kept fasts, and given alms, and have been preferred in the church; as if this would atone for their reigning pride, worldliness, and sensuality; and want of love to God and man. *Bethel is their confidence* (<sup><413></sup>Jeremiah 48:13), they are *haughty because of the holy mountain* (<sup><361></sup>Zephaniah 3:11); and boast that they are *the temple of the Lord*, <sup><410></sup>Jeremiah 7:4. Let us take heed of resting in external privileges and performances, lest *we deceive ourselves*, and perish eternally, as multitudes do, *with a lie in our right hand*.

**3.** The rejection of this plea as frivolous. The same that is the Law-Maker (v. 21) is here the Judge according to that law (v. 23), and he will overrule the plea, will overrule it publicly; he *will profess to them* with all possible solemnity, as sentence is passed by the Judge, *I never knew you*, and therefore *depart from me, ye that work iniquity*. — Observe,

**(1.)** Why, and upon what ground, he rejects them and their plea — because they were *workers for iniquity*. Note, It is possible for men to have a great name for piety, and yet to be *workers of iniquity*; and those that are so will *receive the greater damnation*. Secret haunts of sin, kept under the cloak of a visible profession, will be the ruin of the hypocrites. Living in known sin nullifies men's pretensions, be they ever so specious.

(2.) How it is expressed; *I never knew you*; “I never owned you as my servants, no, not when you *prophesied in my name*, when you were in the height of your profession, and were most extolled.” This intimates, that if he had ever known them, as *the Lord knows them that are his*, had ever owned them and loved them as his, he would have known them, and owned them, and *loved them, to the end*; but he *never did know* them, for he always knew them to be hypocrites, and rotten at heart, as he did Judas; therefore, says he, *depart from me*. Has Christ need of such guests? When he came in the flesh, he called sinners *to him* (<sup>403</sup>Matthew 9:13), but *when he shall come again in glory*, he will drive sinners *from him*. They that would not *come to him* to be saved, must *depart from him* to be damned. To *depart from Christ* is the very hell of hell; it is the foundation of all the misery of the damned, to be cut off from all hope of benefit from Christ and he mediation. Those that go no further in Christ's service than a bare profession, he does not accept, nor will he own them in the great day. See from what a height of hope men may fall into the depth of misery! How they may go to hell, by the gates of heaven! This should be an awakening word to all Christians. If a preacher, one that *cast out devils*, and wrought miracles, be disowned of Christ for *working iniquity*; what will become of us, if we be found such? And if we *be* such, we shall certainly be found such. At God's bar, a profession of religion will not bear out any man in the practice and indulgence of sin; therefore *let every one that names the name of Christ, depart from all iniquity*.

II. He shows, by a parable, that hearing these sayings of Christ will not make us happy, if we do not make conscience of doing them; but that if we hear them and do them, we are *blessed in our deed*, v. 24-27.

1. The hearers of Christ's word are here divided into two sorts; some that hear, and do what they hear; others that hear and do not. Christ preached now to a mixed multitude, and he thus *separates them, one from the other*, as he will at the great day, when *all nations shall be gathered before him*. Christ is still speaking from heaven by his word and Spirits, speaks by ministers, by providences, and of those that hear him there are two sorts.

(1.) Some that *hear his sayings and do them*: blessed be God that there are any such, though comparatively few. To hear Christ is not barely to give him the hearing, but to obey him. Note, It highly concerns us all to do what we *hear* of the saying of Christ. It is a mercy that we *hear his sayings*: *Blessed are those ears*, <sup>4136</sup>Matthew 13:16, 17. But, if we practise



not what we hear, we *receive* that *grace in vain*. To *do* Christ's *sayings* is conscientiously to abstain from the sins that he forbids, and to perform the duties that he requires. Our thoughts and affections, our words and actions, the temper of our minds, and the tenour of our lives, must be conformable to the gospel of Christ; that is the doing he requires. All the *sayings* of Christ, not only the laws he has enacted, but the truths he has revealed, must be done by us. *They are a light*, not only to *our eyes*, but to *our feet*, and are designed not only to *inform* our judgments, but to *reform* our hearts and lives: nor do we indeed believe them, if we do not live up to them. Observe, It is not enough to *hear* Christ's *sayings*, and understand them, *hear* them, and remember them, *hear* them, and talk of them, repeat them, dispute for them; but we must *hear, and do* them. *This do, and thou shalt live*. Those only *that hear, and do*, are *blessed* (<sup><218></sup>Luke 11:28; <sup><837></sup>John 13:17), and are akin to Christ. <sup><120></sup>Matthew 12:50.

(2.) There are others who *hear* Christ's *sayings and do them not*; their religion rests in bare hearing, and goes no further; like children that have the rickets, their heads swell with empty notions, and indigested opinions, but their joints are weak, and they heavy and listless; they neither can stir, nor care to stir, in any good duty; *they hear* God's *words*, as if they desired to *know his ways*, like a people *that did righteousness, but they will not do them*, <sup><330></sup>Ezekiel 33:30, 31; <sup><280></sup>Isaiah 58:2. Thus they deceive themselves, as Micah, who thought himself happy, because he had a Levite to be his priest, though he had not the Lord to be his God. The seed is sown, but it never comes up; they see their spots in the glass of the word, but wash them off, <sup><312></sup>James 1:22, 24. Thus they put a cheat upon their own souls; for it is certain, if our hearing be not the means of our obedience, it will be the aggravation of our disobedience. Those who only *hear* Christ's *sayings, and do them not*, sit down in the midway to heaven, and that will never bring them to their journey's end. They are akin to Christ only by the half-blood, and our law allows not such to inherit.

2. These two sorts of hearers are here represented in their true characters, and the state of their case, under the comparison of two builders; one was *wise*, and *built upon a rock*, and his building stood in a storm; the other *foolish*, and *built upon the sand*, and his building fell.

Now,

(1.) The general scope of this parable teaches us that the only way to make sure work for our souls and eternity is, to *hear and do the sayings of the*

Lord Jesus, *these sayings of his* in this sermon upon the mount, which is wholly practical; some of them seem hard sayings to flesh and blood, but they must be done; and thus we *lay up in store a good foundation for the time to come* (<sup>50B</sup>1 Timothy 6:19); a *good bond*, so some read it; a bond of God's making, which secures salvation upon gospel-terms, that is a *good bond*; not one of our own devising, which brings salvation to our own fancies. They make sure the *good part*, who, like Mary, when they hear the word of Christ, *sit at his feet* in subjection to it: *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.*

(2.) The particular parts of it teach us divers good lessons.

[1.] That we have every one of us a house to build, and that house is our hope for heaven. It ought to be our chief and constant care, to *make our calling and election sure*, and so we make our salvation sure; to secure a title to heaven's happiness, and then to get the comfortable evidence of it; to make it sure, and sure to ourselves, *that when we fail, we shall be received into everlasting habitations.* Many never mind this: it is the furthest thing from their thoughts; they are building for this world, as if they were to be here always, but take no care to build for another world. All who take upon them a profession of religion, profess to enquire, what they shall *do to be saved*; how they may get to heaven at last, and may have a well-grounded hope of it in the mean time.

[2.] That there is a *rock* provided for us to build this house upon, *and that rock is Christ.* He is *laid for a foundation*, and *other foundation can no man lay*, <sup>23B</sup>Isaiah 28:16; <sup>48B</sup>1 Corinthians 3:11. He is *our Hope*, <sup>50B</sup>1 Timothy 1:1. Christ in us is so; we must ground our hopes of heaven upon the fulness of Christ's merit, for the pardon of sin, the power of his Spirit, for the sanctification of our nature, and the prevalency of his intercession, for the conveyance of all that good which he has purchased for us. There is that in him, as *he is made known*, and made over, *to us in the gospel*, which is sufficient to redress all our grievances, and to answer all the necessities of our case, so that he is *a Saviour to the uttermost.* The church is *built upon this Rock*, and so is every believer. He is strong and immovable as a *rock*; we may venture our all upon him, and shall not be made *ashamed of our hope.*

[3.] That there is a remnant, who by hearing and doing the *sayings of Christ*, build their hopes *upon this Rock*; and it is their wisdom. Christ is our only *Way to the Father*, and the obedience of faith is our only *way to*

Christ: for to *them that obey him*, and to *them only*, he *becomes the Author of eternal salvation*. Those *build upon Christ*, who having sincerely consented to him, as their Prince and Saviour, make it their constant care to conform to all the rules of his holy religion, and therein depend entirely upon him for assistance from God, and acceptance with him, *and count every thing but loss and dung that they may win Christ*, and be found in him. Building upon a rock requires care and pains: they that would make their *calling and election sure*, must *give diligence*. They are wise builders who *begin to build* so as they may be *able to finish* (<sup><240></sup>Luke 14:30), and therefore lay a firm foundation.

[4.] That there are many who profess that they hope to go to heaven, but despise this *Rock*, and build their hopes *upon the sand*; which is done without much pains, but it is their folly. Every thing besides Christ is sand. Some build their hopes upon their worldly prosperity, as if they were a sure token of God's favour, <sup><318></sup>Hosea 12:8. Others upon their external profession of religion, the privileges they enjoy, and the performances they go through in that profession, and the reputation they have got by it. They are called Christians, were baptized, go to church, hear Christ's word, say their prayers, and do nobody any harm, and, if they perish, God help a great many! This is the light of their own fire, which they walk in; this is that, upon which, with a great deal of assurance, they venture; but it is all sand, took weak to bear such a fabric as our hopes of heaven.

[5.] That there is a storm coming, that will try what our hopes are bottomed on; *will try every man's work* (<sup><413></sup>1 Corinthians 3:13); *will discover the foundation*, <sup><313></sup>Habakkuk 3:13. *Rain, and floods, and wind, will beat upon the house*; the trial is sometimes in this world; *when tribulation and persecution arise because of the word*, then it will be seen, who only heard the word, and who heard and practiced it; then when we have occasion to use our hopes, it will be tried whether they were right, and well-grounded, or not. However, when death and judgment come, then the storm comes, and it will undoubtedly come, how calm soever things may be with us now. Then every thing else will fail us but these hopes, and then, if ever, they will be turned into everlasting fruition.

[6.] That those hopes which are built upon Christ the Rock will stand, and will stand the builder in stead when the storm comes; they will be his preservation, both from desertion, and from prevailing disquiet. His profession will not wither; his comforts will not fail; they will be his

strength and song, *as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast*. When he comes to the last encounter, those hopes will take off the terror of death and the grave; will carry him cheerfully through that dark valley; will be approved by the Judge; will stand the test of the great day; and will be crowned with endless glory, ~~2~~2 Corinthians 1:12; ~~2~~2 Timothy 4:7, 8. *Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord, when he comes, finds so doing, so hoping.*

[7.] That those hopes which foolish builders ground upon any thing but Christ, will certainly fail them on a stormy day; will yield them no true comfort and satisfaction in trouble, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment; will be no fence against temptations to apostacy, in a time of persecution. *When God takes away the soul, where is the hope of the hypocrite?* ~~8~~Job 27:8. It is as *the spider's web*, and as *the giving up of the ghost*. He shall *lean upon his house, but it shall not stand*, ~~8~~Job 8:14, 15. It fell in the storm, when the builder had most need of it, and expected it would be a shelter to him. It fell when it was too late to build another: *when a wicked man dies, his expectation perishes*; then, when he thought it would have been turned into fruition, *it fell, and great was the fall of it*. It was a great disappointment to the builder; the shame and loss were great. The higher men's hopes have been raised, the lower they fall. It is the sorest ruin of all that attends formal professors; witness Capernaum's doom.

**III.** In the two last verses, we are told what impressions Christ's discourse made upon the auditory. It was an excellent sermon; and it is probable that he said more than is here recorded; and doubtless the delivery of it from the mouth of him, into whose lips grace was poured, did mightily set it off. Now,

**1.** *They were astonished at this doctrine*; it is to be feared that few of them were brought by it to follow him: but for the present, they were filled with wonder. Note, It is possible for people to admire good preaching, and yet to remain in ignorance and unbelief; to be astonished, and yet not sanctified.

**2.** The reason was because he taught them *as one having authority, and not as the scribes*. The scribes pretended to as much authority as any teachers whatsoever, and were supported by all the external advantages that could be obtained, but their preaching was mean, and flat, and jejune:

they spake as those what were not themselves masters of what they preached: the word did not come from them with any life or force; they delivered it as a school-boy says his lesson; but Christ delivered his discourse, as a judge gives his charge. He did indeed, *dominari in conscionibus* — *deliver his discourses with a tone of authority*; his lessons were law; his word a word of command. Christ, upon the mountain, showed more true authority, than the scribes in Moses's seat. Thus when Christ teaches by his Spirit in the soul, he teaches with authority. He says, *Let there be light, and there is light.*