

Obedience: The Narrow Way

Matthew 5:1-2 (MSG) When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is teaching His disciples, not preaching to sinners. In fact, **The Message** introduces this passage to show us that Jesus always expects more from His disciples than He does from the crowd.

As He “climbs higher” with His disciples, instead of Jesus telling us what HE wants to do for US (salvation), He now tells us what He wants US to do for HIM (discipleship). The Sermon on the Mount is about becoming a “climbing companion” of Jesus.

Jesus concludes the Sermon on the Mount by teaching us about OBEDIENCE. His teachings are powerful, but they do us absolutely no good if we don't put them into practice! So Jesus ends His most famous sermon by contrasting, not the saved and the unsaved, but TWO KINDS OF BELIEVERS. To do so, Jesus uses three comparisons ...

TWO ROADS (Matthew 7:13-14)

Matthew 7:13-14 (NLT) You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose the easy way. But the gateway to life is small, and the road is narrow, and only a few ever find it.

The Greek word translated "narrow" is “tethlimmene” which means "restricted or confined.”

The Greek word translated "broad" is “eurychoros” which comes from two words – “eurys” meaning "broad" and "chora" meaning "country.”

The "broad way" is a word picture describing a wide-open country with no fences or boundaries. With no rules or regulations, its residents may go anywhere they want and live their lives as undisciplined as they choose. They need not worry about getting off the road ... they cannot, for there is no road!

BUT JESUS SAYS THAT THIS UNDISCIPLINED WAY OF SO-CALLED “FREEDOM” LEADS TO THEIR DESTRUCTION!

TWO TREES (Matthew 7:15-23)

Matthew 7:15-23 (GW) Beware of false prophets. They come to you disguised as sheep, but in their hearts they are vicious wolves. You will know them by what they produce. People don't pick grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles, do they? In the same way every good tree produces good fruit, but a rotten tree produces bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, and a rotten tree cannot produce good fruit. Any tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and thrown into a fire. So you will know them by what they produce. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the person who does what my Father in heaven wants. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we force out demons and do many miracles by the power and authority of your name?' Then I will tell them publicly, 'I've never known you. Get away from me, you evil people.'

FALSE PROPHETS are preachers who say what the people want to hear (and not just on doctrinal matters!) But their FRUIT (the practical long term effects of their teaching) identifies them as false ministers.

Jeremiah 23:30-32 (NLT) "Therefore," says the Lord, "I stand against these prophets who get their messages from each other— these smooth-tongued prophets who say, 'This prophecy is from the Lord!' Their imaginary dreams are flagrant lies that lead my people into sin. I did not send or appoint them, and they have no message at all for my people," says the Lord.

Notice that these false prophets could be “apostolic” believers – they preach in Jesus' name and they are filled with the Holy Spirit (they call Him “Lord”). BUT THEY NEVER LET GOD'S SPIRIT LEAD THEM INTO OBEDIENCE!

1 Corinthians 12:3 (KJV) Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.

These “disciples” will be utterly astonished at the judgment when they find out that the Lord doesn't recognize them as His children. The Greek language of Matthew 7:23 gives the sense of God saying, “I never approved you; I bore that long enough – now begone!”

TWO HOUSES (Matthew 7:24-27)

Matthew 7:24-27 (MSG) These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock. But if you just use my words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.

Many so-called disciples today look at the Word of God as an “incidental addition” to their life. They HEAR it preached, but they only OBEY its teachings if they are convenient for them. As a result, the “house” they are building looks good but it has no foundation, because OBEDIENCE is the foundation of the Christian life.

The foundation of a house is extremely important even though it is hidden.

EVERY PERSON IS BUILDING A HOUSE.

In Scripture, the word “house” can be used ...

- of a person’s own life (Matthew 12:43-45)
- of a person’s family (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- of the church itself which is the Lord’s house (1 Peter 2:5-9)

Whether a person is building a life, a character, a family, a society or a church, the Bible principle is to BUILD CAREFULLY!

1 Corinthians 3:10-13 (MSG) Using the gift God gave me as a good architect, I designed blueprints; Apollos is putting up the walls. Let each carpenter who comes on the job take care to build on the foundation! Remember, there is only one foundation, the one already laid: Jesus Christ. Take particular care in picking out your building materials. Eventually there is going to be an inspection. If you use cheap or inferior materials, you'll be found out. The inspection will be thorough and rigorous. You won't get by with a thing.

EVERY PERSON IS EITHER A WISE OR FOOLISH BUILDER.

Proverbs 24:3-4 (KJV) Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches.

The Biblical concept of “hearing” is the same as “obedience” – in other words, if you don’t DO what is said, you didn’t really HEAR it! There are many similarities between the two builders in Jesus’ parable; in fact, the only real difference between the wise man and foolish man is a foundation, which Jesus calls obedience.

Luke 6:46 (KJV) And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

James 1:22 (KJV) But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

The foundation of a person’s life is obedience to the Word of God. Disobedience in your life is like building a house with no foundation.

Psalm 11:3 (KJV) If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Ephesians 2:20 (KJV) And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

THERE ARE THREE MAJOR TESTS OF A HOUSE.

FLOODS

Isaiah 59:19 (KJV) So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.

Revelation 12:15 (KJV) And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

FLOODS REPRESENT ATTACKS FROM SATAN

WINDS

Ephesians 4:14 (GW) Then we will no longer be little children, tossed and carried about by all kinds of teachings that change like the wind. We will no longer be influenced by people who use cunning and clever strategies to lead us astray.

WINDS REPRESENT FALSE DOCTRINE

RAINS

Isaiah 4:6 (KJV) And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

RAINS REPRESENT LIFE’S TRIALS

Whether you are building a life, a character, a family or a church, this threefold test of your house will come – it is just a matter of time. So what is the difference between a wise disciple and a foolish disciple? Simply this: the wise disciple is OBEDIENT to the Lord no matter what attacks, false doctrines or trials come his way. The foolish man’s house went up the quickest but lasted the shortest time. The wise man’s house took much more time to build but lasted the longest time. We need to build for the long term!

OBEDIENCE IS THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE!

James 1:22-25 (NLT) And remember, it is a message to obey, not just to listen to. If you don't obey, you are only fooling yourself. For if you just listen and don't obey, it is like looking at your face in a mirror but doing nothing to improve your appearance. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you keep looking steadily into God's perfect law—the law that sets you free—and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.